

Victims & Witnesses (Scotland) Bill

The Care Leavers Association

The following briefing notes have been drafted for Zachari Duncalf, prior to her appearance on behalf of the CLA before the Scottish Government's Health and Sport Committee on Tuesday 23rd April. The notes are based on my reading of the minutes of the Health and Sport Committee meeting of 26th March and in accordance with the current CLA policy on abuse in the care system.

The CLA has long experience of addressing the abuse issue on behalf of adult care leavers in a variety of contexts within the UK. We also have many members who have experienced abuse within the care system. Further, we have, for over a decade, also discussed abuse issues with many other adult care leavers who are not members and in a variety of contexts. Bearing in mind that we have much less expertise on the Scottish situation than those who presented evidence to the committee on 26th March 2013, we would add the following:

- Our agreement with David Whelan, Helen Holland and Chris Daly on the inadequacies of the Confidential Forum model with respect to providing justice for adults who were abused when in care as children.
- Our agreement with their comments on the inadequacies of the existing support arrangements and Helen Holland's call for the more generous Irish support model to be followed. In particular, the points made by Helen Holland about the length of time, and levels of support, needed by some people to deal with the aftermath of abuse accord with our own extensive experience of the deep impact of past abuse on some members and other adult care leavers.
- Likewise, we agree with the points made by Helen Holland, Chris Daly and David Whelan about the need for support during the process of giving evidence to the Confidential Forum. As they note, this can be a difficult experience for some people and they may need access to sensitive and expert support.
- We agree with Helen Holland's criticism of the evaluation process for the Pilot Forum. Evaluation two weeks after giving evidence is a weak – in our view, invalid – basis for assessing the impact of any process of this kind on such an emotionally-charged issue.
- We agree with the point put by those speaking on behalf of abuse survivors regarding the need to be able to identify one's evidence in the finished report. This speaks to the fact that giving evidence in this context is, for those giving it, fundamentally different to the normal process of giving evidence to government committees. It is always highly personal. Government bodies should therefore respond differently in the use of such evidence. They should also provide

personal evidence transcripts, i.e. their own transcripts, to all those who participate.

- As per our longstanding CLA policy on abuse in the care system, any legal time bars should be removed in relation to child abuse cases.

Jim Goddard
Chair
The Care Leavers Association

23 April 2013