

PE1596/E

Our Ref: JD/CMcC

16 February 2016

Mr M McMahon MSP
Convenor
Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr McMahon MSP (Convenor),

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to Petition PE1596 (In Care Survivor Service Scotland). We consider this petition to express the anxieties of victims and survivors of abuse in care, at a particular point in time, reflecting a level of uncertainty and concern about the development of services to address their needs.

We believe that there are two specific issues which need to be addressed in relation to this petition. The first concerns the new 'Survivor Support Fund' model which has been put out to tender by the Scottish Government, and in particular the need for clarity about what this model entails. The second concerns the future of 'In Care Survivors Service Scotland' beyond its current period of funding.

New Survivor Support Fund /Service Model

In December 2014, in response to the Scottish Human Rights Commission's *Interaction on Historic Abuse of Children in Care*, the Cabinet Secretary for Education stated that the Scottish Government would lead the development of a support fund for survivors of abuse while in care. At the start of 2015, CELCIS was commissioned to undertake a consultation with key stakeholders, including victims and survivors of abuse, about the National Inquiry on Historic Abuse, and on the Survivor Support Fund and other commitments to the InterAction Action Plan. The full report of the consultation was published in April 2015.

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The conclusion of the report summarised views on the Survivor Support Fund as follows:

“Many respondents framed their answer to the question about the key purpose of the Survivor Support Fund in terms of what it should achieve for survivors in reparation for what had happened to them in childhood. Advocacy was considered important to help survivors access the things that they might need, as well as information on services.

Most respondents identified that counselling was essential, and this included specialised counselling which would address trauma and abuse, mental health problems and addictions. Physical health needs should also be addressed. Support should be provided in terms of education, employment, benefits, legal advice, housing and practical support. Support should also be provided to families of survivors.

It was considered important that existing services be supported and expanded, and equal access to services across Scotland is important, particularly in rural areas.

Survivors, who had experienced abuse in care or institutional settings, as well as a number of organisational respondents, considered that compensation should be part of the Survivor Support Fund. Compensation should be fair and proportionate and address the financial hardship of survivors, making up for missed opportunities. This would also allow survivors choice in the ways in which they might want to access services.”

(Kendrick and Shaw, 2015, p. 39)¹

The Scottish Government undertook further consultations with victims and survivors of abuse in the summer of 2015.

It is important to note that, in line with the consultation responses above, the specifications for the new Survivor Support Fund/Services Model sets out the wider range of areas to be covered, including: psychological well-being and safety; emotional well-being; education; housing; legal support social well-being; and physical health. The new model also includes provision for a Discretionary Fund, and further work is being carried out on the detail of this in conjunction with survivors. The new model for the Support Fund/Services is also much larger in scale than existing services, with a budget of £13.5 million over 5 years.

We welcome the principles upon which the new model has been established: empowerment, control, choice and continuity - future support is to be person-centred and lifelong with the survivor at the heart of the process.

¹ The full report is available at: <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00477569.pdf>

The petitioners have acknowledged the value of the breadth of the new service model and the level of funding. However, precisely because of these differences in breadth and scale, we do not consider that the new service model can be compared directly to the current In Care Survivors Service Scotland, as at times is done in the Petition. Indeed, the specifications for the new Support Fund/Services include reference to counselling and therapeutic services.

“Counselling and Therapy: Specify the knowledge, skills and competencies you require of counsellors and/or therapists delivering psychological therapeutic interventions to Survivors.” (Scottish Government, In Care Survivor Support Fund/Services Specifications)

The new model, then, is much broader in scope than current services and encompasses existing services within this broader scope. This leads on to the second issue, the current In Care Survivors Service Scotland.

In Care Survivors Service Scotland

The ‘In Care Survivors Service Scotland (ICSSS)’ was established in 2008 following recommendations from the Shaw Review. It provides services to victims and survivors of in care abuse, and their families, including counselling and support, advocacy, friendship and help in accessing records. An evaluation at the end of the first three years (Karatzias, 2011) found that its services were highly valued by survivors, support workers and managers. The counselling services were found to have a positive impact on mental health problems and psychological distress, and survivors reported high satisfaction rates with their use of advocacy services, which included help in accessing records, preparing for meetings and support in meetings. Survivors also made extensive use of the informal support provided.

The Petitions Committee has heard further testimony of the value that victims and survivors place in the ICSSS.

It is in this context then that uncertainty about the future funding of ICSSS has created high levels of anxiety. In this period of transition, it is important that the existing support services for victims and survivors of abuse in care are maintained. We believe, therefore, that it is important that ICSSS’s immediate future is secured, and we understand that discussions are currently under way to address this.

In relation to the longer term future of ICSSS, it seems that there is scope within the new Survivor Support Fund/Service to provide for such services, and the specifications for the new model clearly state that services can be commissioned where appropriate. We would certainly encourage those considering the parameters of the new Survivor Support Fund / Service to take

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into full account the needs, both in the short and long term, of survivors who currently use In Care Survivor Service Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

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