

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

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Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convenor
Finance and Public Administration Committee
Edinburgh
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By email only

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22 May 2025

Dear Mr Gibson

Cost-effectiveness of Scottish public inquiries

Thank you for your letter of 24 April 2025.

I had hoped to be able to respond sooner but we are in the midst of public hearings in relation to Phase 9 of our investigations examining the provision of residential care in establishments for children and young people with long-term healthcare needs, additional support needs and disabilities.

By way of context, I would refer you to my published findings for Case Study 6. For the purposes of the first bullet point in its remit, the Committee may find it helpful to understand the decision-making process which led to the establishment of this inquiry: [The response of the Scottish Government between August 2002 and December 2014 to Petition PE535, and other key issues raised by adult survivors of childhood abuse experienced in care in Scotland arising after the petition was presented to the Scottish Parliament.](#)

Turning to your request for a breakdown of costs under the same seven categories as published by the Scottish Covid Inquiry. Each public inquiry will require different resourcing according to its particular focus and objectives, as reflected in its Terms of Reference ('ToR'). They will thus, inevitably, categorise their costs differently. The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) does not break down its costs under those seven categories. We have, however, extracted the attached information for our most recent years and hope that this will assist the Committee.

Further to my observation regarding the differing foci of different inquiries, as SCAI's ToR show, the focus of this inquiry is extremely wide ranging. Those ToR require investigation into all forms of the abuse of children in residential care in Scotland over a period dating back to 'within living memory'. To state the obvious, no inquiry

knows what it is going to find until it begins its investigations and they progress. SCAI's investigations have uncovered evidence dating back to the late nineteenth century and, as published on our website, we have announced 117 separate focused investigations.

I would also refer the Committee to the terms of s17 of the Inquiries Act 2005 which require the Chair of an inquiry to have regard to the need to avoid any unnecessary cost when making any decision as to the procedure or conduct of the inquiry. The provision calls for a consistently rigorous approach to expenditure and I take that responsibility very seriously as, I am sure, does the Minister in relation to discharging the duties arising from s.39 of the Act.

The Committee will also, no doubt, appreciate that there are financial controls contained in ss39 and 40 of the Act. Conscious of that, we liaise regularly with SCAI's sponsor team on financial matters, including budgeting, and our costs are submitted in accordance with Scottish Government finance processes.

Your sincerely,

Rt. Hon Lady Smith
Chair of Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry - Operating Costs 2022 to 2025

	Total	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Accommodation & Operational Costs	£10,246,228.01	£3,159,206.24	£3,745,394.96	£3,341,626.81
Witness Costs	£1,450,158.87	£419,854.07	£531,628.40	£498,676.40
Staffing & External Advice Costs	£28,688,128.60	£9,917,556.96	£9,695,908.50	£9,074,663.14
Total	£40,384,515.48	£13,496,617.27	£13,972,931.86	£12,914,966.35