

## Lawyer claims Barnardo's "compounded abuse" by destroying records



The Sunday Herald 4<sup>th</sup> June 2017 Peter Swindon [@PeterSwindon](#) Group Investigations Writer



What were Barnardo's trying to hide by destroying records? survivors' solicitor asks

SOLICITOR Lindsay Bruce, who is working with survivors, maintains that Barnardo's had "compounded the abuse" by destroying records.

She also said survivors seeking justice are "disadvantaged" by the children's charity's decision to systematically dispose of the files over three decades.

Bruce, of legal firm Thomsons, said: "It's a huge disadvantage when there's a loss of records. It's a blockade which makes it very difficult. And if that was done with a knowledge of a cover-up then that's deeply disturbing.

"Survivors of abuse feel systematically let down by institutions. In the case of Barnardo's the people in question would feel particularly let down because, primarily, they have been given a reason – for

example the records were lost in a flood – but then to find out there’s actually a policy on destroying records compounds the distress, compounds the mistrust, it compounds the abuse.

“That’s a big problem. If you take away the legalities, on a basic moral and ethical level you’re systematically lying to people about what’s happened to records. That does raise questions about why the records were destroyed and why this policy was in place.”

Bruce has worked on high-profile cases including mesh implants, PIP breast implants, metal on metal hip replacements, baby ashes and hepatitis C.

She said she has had problems sourcing records in the past – but that these had been overcome – and she encouraged survivors to come forward.

“I have seen this before in various other scandals I’ve been involved in, like the baby ashes scandal [where parents were given other children's cremated ashes]," she said. "We were told a lot of things had happened to records and then they were found. Then they said they didn’t have entries. Then we found out some entries were falsified. Evidence has a way of coming out – not for everyone, but we have the survivors and they are the best record we have got and they should speak out.

“In the case of Barnardo’s I just find it unbelievable that they actually had a policy [of destroying records]. It makes me question what they were seeking to hide.

“And there was no recognition of the impact of what was being said at the inquiry on the individuals who were abused in the care of Barnardo’s. I know the inquiry has to have points of reference, I understand that. But surely being aware of the consequences of your actions on survivors should be at the centre.”

A spokeswoman for the inquiry said evidence has been taken from “many survivors” through the hearings, private sessions and documentary evidence about the abuse of children in care.

She added: “The inquiry has invested in a wide-ranging public information campaign and is working closely with various organisations to encourage those with relevant information to come forward.”

Abuse survivors can contact the inquiry by calling 0800 0929300 or emailing [talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot](mailto:talktous@childabuseinquiry.scot).