

PE1933/CC: Allow the Fornethy Survivors to access Scotland's redress scheme

Petitioner written submission, 14 August 2024

The Fornethy Survivors would like to express their deepest thanks and appreciation to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee and to those MSPs who have offered their unwavering support. We are fully satisfied with the direction and content contained in the letter to the DFM, Kate Forbes, dated the 24th July 2024, and appreciate their due diligence in following through with the recommendations.

The written submission from Redress Scotland does not acknowledge that the new information and evidence that Fornethy **was a school** and not a short-term respite or rehabilitation scheme. The eligibility regulations still place the onus on the survivors to produce their own records which were kept by the Glasgow Corporation and either lost or destroyed. There is pressure in that and injustice! The onus should be on those defaulting organisations to provide that proof!

At the meeting held on the 12th June, when the Committee took evidence from Redress Scotland, they clearly stated that successful applications were dependent on meeting the Terms and Conditions of the redress criteria. **Would it be fair to ask that if survivors placed applications for redress now, based on the new evidence, that their applications might stand a better chance of success in line with the “assumption of truth” that they allayed to?** They were asked to look at the appropriateness of the legislation rather than the terms and conditions. Their submission gives the survivors no sense that anything might change.

New evidence from the archives

Although enough factual evidence demonstrates the purpose of Fornethy, further compelling evidence has been gleaned from the archives:

1. The Education Department were clearly concerned about years 4, 5 and 6 Secondary Aged pupils from Hyndland, Cleveden, Jordanhill and Hillhead Glasgow Secondary Schools who were sent to Fornethy on a work experience placement and who reported:

“The pupils sent there were clearly traumatised by the clear signs of abuse they saw while giving little ones showers”.
2. GCC Summary Director’s Report’s main recommendation to close Fornethy as a residential educational centre at the end of June 1993 in order to effect savings of £483,000 – “the Education Department would have no further use of Faskally, Fornethy and St. Columba’s”.
3. Scheme of Residential Education – Fornethy Residential School, near Alyth – girls
4. The GCC from the archive dated 8th April 1982 states:

“It is difficult to recruit teachers of any sort for these schools. If we recruited Head Teachers with the kind of expertise mentioned, we should have fewer problems, and we could then, possibly find a sympathetic staff”.

“We cannot guarantee vacancies in ordinary schools”.

This tells us of the challenges in staff recruitment of regular schools let alone residential schools needing a particular calibre of staff. The type of staff that were at Fornethy wouldn't necessarily be sympathetic to the needs of young girls away from home. We know it was the complete opposite being bullies and perpetrators of abuse. The report continues:

“In fact, I doubt the wisdom of putting five year olds into such a context”.

The red flags were there all along and seen in the context and challenge of the Education Department recruiting quality staff. There was a shortage of good staff; they couldn't guarantee supervision and there was doubt about the wisdom of very young children being placed there at all.

New Evidence from video footage: inside Fornethy, July 2024

“Exploring with Natasha” – who filmed inside Fornethy, uploaded her findings onto YouTube¹. Please watch this video as it corroborates our experiences:

- Paperwork photographed from a fireplace depicting communications about Fornethy sent to parents prior to girls being sent there – i.e. what is Fornethy; what clothing needs were; what will happen there. This official document states:
“It is an educational centre providing environmental studies for primary six classes with a resident teaching staff”.
- Photographs of the two Coats' sisters who commissioned Fornethy with a bronze plaque which states that Fornethy was bequeathed as “**Fornethy Residential School**”. The school was officially opened and owned by the GCC from 1961. **The purpose was a school**. Not for medical or respite purposes but educational purposes.
- Natasha admits to crying all the way home when she learned what had happened at Fornethy. She uploaded pictures from her visit and one of the most harrowing pictures was that of some rooms which were caged off and with the installation of children's blinds in the sash windows behind. This raises questions as to why some rooms had cages, knowing that some of our number remember being locked up. This has been traumatising to say the least.

¹ YouTube: Inside Fornethy House | A Shocking Discovery

- Evidence of the blue light above some of the dormitory rooms which we remember and corroborates that we were there.
- Images of the dining room with the hatch have triggered traumatic memories for many of the Survivors as the place where they were force fed.

The video also shows the remoteness of the place, how creepy, chilling, and haunting these visual memories are for the survivors. There was no escape; nowhere to run to; trapped and with no way to tell your parents what was going on.

In the context of this video may we invite you to take yourself there and imagine –

- you are only 8 years old being told “you’ll never see your mummy again” and to then have your stay extended
- being locked up in one of those caged rooms
- the long dark corridors at night when you were made to stand for hours
- how frightening to be told by staff of the “ghosts in the fireplaces”
- being taken from your bed at night and being sexually abused.

[See our submission dated 6th June 2022 for a comprehensive list of abuse.](#)

Dare to put yourself in our footsteps! You will feel something ugly and unbearable even as an adult ... let alone a little child.

Further Work

It is our intention to keep raising our profile in the public space, however we might do that. There is increasing interest from the media giving coverage. Another protest is planned. Our story needs to be told, however we can tell it, for if we don't tell it the bad people win – what will the ending be? That is up to the Scottish Government to set us free, not cage us in now but to help us heal.

Conclusion and Request

We would like to ask for a public debate if the letter to the DFM does not meet with any positive change for us.

Trust is indeed sacred.

Hard evidence can be provided upon request.