

# **The Quality of Silence**

**Observations of the oppressive societal factors currently obstructing child victims and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse from reporting their abuser, within the European Union.**

Dr Matthew McVarish  
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## Introduction

During my award-winning project, the “Road to Change”, I walked ten thousand miles visiting thirty-two European nations raising awareness of child sexual abuse on TV, radio and newspaper in 30 languages, inspiring many survivors to speak out, encouraging international collaboration between organisations and provoking legislative reform. The Scottish government has commissioned me to share my experiences in writing this ‘Think piece’ that could be used to inform policy.

In this dossier, I will share my many observations of best practice, the current situation for child victims and adult survivors and their future prospects, gained from my many encounters with survivors, agencies, police, parliamentarians and government personnel across our continent, and beyond. I will also share my personal journey, from victim to activist, through support from Scotland’s own organisations, police and judicial system.

## The Road to Change

The Road to Change project was a 10,000 mile walk, designed to create social and political change that would help end of child sexual abuse in Europe. On May 31st 2013, I left London on foot and set out to visit every EU capital city. I completed the walk in Edinburgh on February 7th 2015, being joined for my last mile by over a thousand supporters from across Europe and beyond.

By walking such an extraordinary distance, I attracted substantial international media, creating a crucial platform to raise awareness of this urgent issue and inspire many survivors to speak out. My goal once reaching the cities was to engage the powers that be. Encouraging numerous governments and parliaments to begin the discussions of legislative reform, requesting abolition of the Statute of Limitations on survivors reporting childhood sexual abuse. The project would also begin to create a Europe wide network between organisations that are currently all fighting the same battle in isolation.

Why I walked 10,000 miles – origin of the project.

My uncle and Godfather, Terence McMonagle, sexually abused three of my brothers and I throughout our childhoods. As the youngest, when I insisted he stop touching me at aged thirteen, on March 24th 1996, all abuse stopped but the silence began.

By 2008, all four of us were struggling with depression, with each of my brothers at times requiring medication, but we had still never spoken about it. Yet our predatory uncle was still working as a respectable schoolteacher and running football teams of young teenage boys.

I knew our silence was dangerous. By saying nothing we were all allowing him to continue. As the most emotionally stable, I felt it was up to me to initiate meaningful action. I needed to create profound change but I could not force my brothers to seek therapy. Instead, I wrote a play.

‘To Kill a Kelpie’ was inspired by our personal experiences. While in reality there were four of us, the story is about twins who were sexually abused by their uncle. Following his death, they reunite after years apart and for the very first time, over two bottles of whisky, discuss the abuse they had suffered. One brother has spent years in therapy while the other has never discussed it. The play explores many related issues and illustrates the very different places the brothers find themselves in their minds as a result of their chosen coping mechanisms. I hoped that witnessing the tragedy of our current situation depicted on stage might provoke crucial discussion.

I raised the funds to stage the play by walking the West Highland Way (96 miles) for sponsorship via public donation, and secured a production with professional actors through support from Glasgow’s ‘Glasgay’ festival. I invited my brothers to attend a performance. Expecting the play may be emotionally triggering for them, I

safeguarded the entire premiere by inviting staff from Scotland's Moira Anderson Foundation (MAF) to also be in attendance. They provide specialised therapeutic and psychiatric support, as well as legal advice, for child victims and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Leaflets with information on services were placed strategically around the venue and their founder, Sandra Brown OBE, conducted a post-show discussion. This ensured it was sensitively handled.

The play was the perfect catalyst. Within just a few months, guided by MAF's solid expertise, all four of us made police statements and our uncle was arrested, charged, prosecuted and sentenced for the crimes he had committed decades before. It was not about revenge or compensation; it was about child protection.

My brothers continued to attend MAF for support throughout the trial and beyond court- and today they are further along the road to recovery- but the exceptionally quick timescale we witnessed took both us and MAF by surprise.

At the time, we didn't appreciate that ours had been a remarkably smooth road to obtain justice in many ways. However, following our uncle's incarceration in 2010, I fully appreciated that my play was a powerful tool, and since it had so effectively instigated action within my family, I wondered if it could help others.

I had reached out to the US based organisation, Stop the Silence: Stop Child sexual abuse, Inc., hoping they could contribute funding to the Glasgow performance, but they preferred to take my play to the States. I had received some criminal damages compensation after my uncle's sentencing, so was able to pay for professional rates for a director, actors and stage-manager and some funds were also sourced US-side.

Again with support from Sandra Brown, I approached Creative Scotland, who gave me a grant to take 'To Kill a Kelpie' to New York. MAF also partnered Stop the Silence in Washington DC, to assist with the Off-Broadway production and we then toured the play round cities across the United States, including a special run of performances at the IVAT (Institute of Violence, Abuse and Trauma) Conference in San Diego. As in Scotland, we invited various American organisations that specialise in child sexual abuse prevention, mitigation and therapeutic services for survivors, to performances. Flyers from these organisations, local to each theatre, were made available within the auditorium and specialists joined me on stage after each show to host an audience talk back.

After every performance, no matter what city, we witnessed attendees disclosing histories of sexual abuse, many of them disclosing for the very first time. One seventy-year-old gentleman in San Francisco revealed in front of a packed theatre that his stepfather had abused him and his brother, and yet they had never discussed it together. Following the performance, he went home and called his brother, ending a sixty-year silence.

I hadn't intended to make the leap from playwright to activist but the positive impact of the work was so immediate that I felt compelled to share the story with as many audiences as possible. Touring a theatre production costs are high but travelling with a DVD costs relatively nothing and could have the same effect. I returned to Scotland and collaborated with my eldest brother, an award-winning filmmaker, to adapt my

play for screen. All four of us worked on the film-shoot, which was another cathartic experience for us as a family, and 'To Kill a Kelpie' the movie was created. Stop the Silence decided to screen it at universities across the States and I contributed, the film igniting as much discussion as the play. We earned a special invitation to host a screening for the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta.

In 2011, while working as an actor and playwright in London, I struck upon the idea of showing the film in every European city, to encourage millions of survivors across our continent to end their silence. I had no idea where I would find funding to pay for a film screening tour of this nature.

Sometimes, after my uncle had molested me again, he took me to the cinema. One night the film was 'Forrest Gump'. As Forrest ran across America he was rushed by journalists demanding to know why he was doing this. Forrest said he just felt like running. I recall feeling that this was a shame, an opportunity wasted. If he had something to say, it would have reached millions.

My uncle once told me not to tell anyone. Now an adult, I decided I wanted to tell 500 million people. In a light-bulb moment I decided I would show the film in every European capital and I would make the journey on foot. It would then take two years of logistical planning and fundraising but I'd leave London and walk 10,000 miles to end the silence around child sexual abuse. What I couldn't have predicted was that in those two planning years, the vision of how to tackle the problem would expand.

The 'Road to Change' was not about raising money- though funds to cover what we were doing were necessary and welcome- it required to raise awareness on a spectacular scale, but it was not just an awareness campaign either; it had developed into a political crusade with various objectives focused on creating specific social and legislative changes.

It made me confront some of the most gruelling challenges of my life. It saw me having to transform from a cheery children's TV star to a Doctor solemnly addressing the United Nations; it led me to meet Pope Francis and receive a personal blessing in the Vatican, it encouraged legal change in various nations and I also advised the Council of Europe on reform across all forty-seven European nations- reform which will enhance human rights over a territory of eight hundred and twenty million people.

Since completing my walk in February 2015, to be invited back to the United Nations to contribute to discussions of upcoming international development strategies is a breath-taking outcome. The Road to Change has become a global movement, and momentum will go on.

## How did we do it?

The project took fully two years to prepare. Mostly, this was psychological preparation but operational logistics also came together in the six months leading up to my first mile in London, to ensure my vision would emerge.

Four organisations collaborated internationally to help me progress the project. The only home-based agency was Scotland's Moira Anderson Foundation (MAF) a national charity, with whom I had already close links, and direct experience of the services they provide to survivors.

Out with the UK, I enlisted the assistance of Ariel Foundation International (based in Geneva), Innocence in Danger (with eight offices internationally) and Stop the Silence: Stop Child Sexual Abuse, Inc. (based in Washington DC). By the finish line, I had formed my own NGO called the Raphael International Foundation that became a new partner in the project.

MAF coordinated much of the fundraising done by friends and well-wishers, and its treasurer and book keeper ensured that cash flow from donations provided a 'drip feed' to help with costs, monitoring tax relief income from a Just Giving website. MAF representatives attended the London send-off and planned and organised all festivities for the last mile, from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood.

Ariel Foundation contributed in quite a number of ways, including inviting me to speak at the United Nations when I walked across the Alps. Dr King, it's Founder, even stepped in as the back up driver of the follow van for three weeks, as I walked from Amsterdam to Berlin. Innocence in Danger collated contacts and information to help us access various policymakers and NGOs and Stop the Silence assisted with some of the information that I would disseminate along with my own experience of being sexually abused.

The structure of my idea was simple, at least on paper. I would walk up to thirty miles a day until I reached the next capital city, where I would stop for five days and meet survivors, the press, NGOs and policy makers as well as dignitaries. We also planned to show the film 'To Kill a Kelpie' in every city with a post-show talk. We managed to keep to this schedule well.

In Luxembourg, my second country reached, I was invited to meet the British Ambassador, Alice Walpole, who walked with me when I set off for Brussels. This attracted the project's first major media attention with good television coverage; the Ambassador then contacted every other embassy in the EU, to tell them to expect us. This support proved crucial, as embassies were able to provide contacts within each nation's government, media and third sector. Our impending arrival was effectively heralded each step of the way, and 'word of mouth' was astonishing as social networks spread the news too. The Press in Scotland also began to follow what was happening and regular bulletins appeared in the Scottish Sunday Mail, etc.

## The Road to Change team.

Thousands of people became involved in the project but the core Road to Change Team were actually just four full time volunteers, including a single walker, me. Linus Akerlind, the Road Co-coordinator, drove the follow van to a pre-arranged location where he and I slept every thirty miles or so. He handled all the daily practicalities such as food, shelter and communication technology. Amanda Stuart Thompson, the Project Manager, was the liaison person between the British Embassy and also the various individuals I would engage with once I reached each city. Amanda travelled from city to city by plane, bus or car ahead of me to help me set up meetings in preparation for my arrival on foot. Once there, her role was as official project photographer, recording many of the introductions or interviews on film for our own use.

My brother, Maurice Smith, was 'ground control' and lynchpin of the operation. He stayed at home in Scotland, but was on the end of the phone to help any of us with whatever problems we would come across. He also created much of the publicity materials we needed: the flyers and website for the project. He had supplies sent out to wherever we were.

My job was to walk and talk. As well as walking 30 miles each day, I would continually post updates on social media and prepare talks and presentations for the city ahead. I had to make sure I didn't get injured (as if I did, the entire project would stop) I also had to observe and learn as much as was feasible in limited time, about the various legislation and social climate for survivors in each country. A central aim of my role was to meet politicians and government ministers to encourage abolition of their Statute of Limitations. I would forge positive relationships with organisations in each city and also tell my story repeatedly to the press and media in each nation.

## Other support and sponsorship.

We approached over 200 companies for corporate backing but disappointingly, received none. Small-scale fundraisers were held, at first by good friends and relatives, and the Glasgow company, Fleet Alliance, donated £2000 to get us started. Then the public began to donate to the Moira Anderson Foundation specifically for the Road to Change project, and interest grew as the walk progressed. It was public support that eventually carried us to the finish line.

Fundraisers were held in countries across Europe and the world as people heard of the walk and wanted to make sure the project reached its goals. Messages that appeared on social networks from leading Scots such as Judy Murray and her sons, Lorraine Kelly, and from many entertainers, actors and TV celebrities really highlighted warm support for what we were attempting. When I set out from London, we had raised enough to reach Amsterdam. Reaching Amsterdam, we had enough to reach Helsinki, and so the project continued. Everything was on a shoestring, and occasionally there was not enough in the kitty to cover our basic food costs, so we had to make the best of it. We never had guaranteed funding but I always believed we would make it home.



What we know: CSA carries a life sentence for the victim.

A major frustration when discussing childhood sexual abuse on national platforms is the sheer number of experts, particularly policy makers and authorities, who have not examined the latest research which has been ascertained at great effort and expense to further our understanding of the issues and enhance our ability to tackle them, while those who have digested the studies are themselves frustrated by the glacial pace that new learning is integrated across all systems and services.

Most pivotal to my campaigning for the urgent need for survivors to end their silence are the discoveries by Dr Vincent Filetti and his colleagues during his pivotal 1998 Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study.

This comprehensive research illuminates the aftermath in the life of the victim, as they become an adult following sexual trauma in childhood, though these outcomes can result from any and all forms of child maltreatment. Originally an examination of what causes obesity, the researchers began to realise that the vast majority of adults living with an eating disorder were in various ways attempting to cope with an adverse childhood experience. Their focus then shifted from finding the root cause of obesity to revealing how a traumatic experience derails the child's entire future, in various complex yet extremely common ways.

Simply put, a person sexually abused in childhood will most probably die younger than someone who wasn't. This may seem like a radical statement but we have known this for nearly two decades.

Each victim's life after the abuse is unique but collectively it is as simple as this:

Sexually abusing a child interrupts their natural mental development. This imprint deeply within their neurology is invisible from the outside, so the child has no visible scars, yet their compromised neurodevelopment manifests first within their psychology, how they see themselves and the world around them, causing any number of a myriad emotional and social dysfunctions, from low self-esteem or depression to inability to trust or sexual compulsion. Still invisible to those around them, the victim's serious internal damage from the trauma eventually becomes evident in their behaviour. With impaired cognitive function the ageing victim is now far more vulnerable to adopting health-risk behaviours such as addiction, promiscuity or developing an eating disorder etc. These life choices of course lead to increased risk of disease, disability and social problems resulting in the premature death of the survivor.

An economic impact study of child sexual abuse was conducted and published in Ireland (Aug 2014) which again confirmed the findings of the ACE Study with statistics suggesting male survivors in Ireland are three times more likely to be unemployed due to sickness or disability.

One simple example is smoking. A sexually abused child is twice as likely to smoke in adulthood. Smoking puts them at a far higher risk of developing various smoking related illness and premature death.

Consider how many people in our society struggle with depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, homelessness, domestic violence or even cancer. All of these outcomes in adult life have now been proven as resulting from sexual abuse in childhood. How much does every government spend each year attempting to solve all these health and social problems, when they would in fact see a drastic reduction in all of them if they prioritised a comprehensive campaign to reduce child sexual abuse?

It is astonishingly clear. Many sexually violated boys grow up in environments where they cannot easily discuss their trauma. This even subconscious frustration can often lead to anger, which commonly becomes channelled through violence; hence perpetrating domestic violence has been proven as a possible consequence of sexual abuse in childhood.

Even chronic disease such as cancer has now been linked to sexual trauma in childhood, as the person grows up with a continuous and often unprocessed psychological stress, which eventually starts to disrupt their physiology.

Of course, like the original abuse itself, these negative outcomes can be prevented. With the right physiological support, the faulty wiring within the child's brain can be corrected but presently the vast majority of victims in Europe do not have access to such services required to achieve this.

Consider now the scale of the injustice for the child who has had their innocence irreparably stolen and now their future impaired by some selfish individual(s).

With this concept now in mind, the reason behind my continuous message of urging survivors to end their silence is twofold. Of course the priority is child protection. Until they identify their offender the authorities cannot act and other children remain at risk but equally as urgent is the survivors own psychological recovery, which begins when they decide to address what happened to them, and the sooner this happens the more chance of regaining the original positive trajectory of their life, from before they were violated.

My hope is that this information and how abuse so clearly impacts the survivor's entire life, and the scale to which this is causing a massive drain on government resources annually to clean up, is disseminated more actively and implemented more compassionately by experts when making decision in the lives of survivors.

Every Judge, lawyer and indeed anyone involved in child maltreatment prosecution and mitigation in Scotland should be trauma-informed and understand and apply the ACE study to their work, as I have personally witnessed miscarriages of justice within our system through basic lack of understanding of these truths.

## Personal Experience: Ignorance of injustice.

On the day of our uncle's hearing, our advocate suggested that we all file for Criminal Damages Compensation. The Moira Anderson Foundation assisted with this too, submitting the forms on our behalf once we had completed them. A very sterile chart made exact distinction between the precise sexual acts and their remuneration value and while I was reasonably comfortable detailing the abuse that I had suffered, evidently one of my brothers was not. This brother has been diagnosed with three social and emotional disorders, which his psychologist report linked directly to the sexual abuse he suffered as a child. These mental conditions, caused by my uncle's maltreatment of him, have had an immeasurable impact on the quality of his life, as he struggles to complete any paperwork or official form that he perceives as being important. Of course, this has also been divesting with regards his education. Various attempts to complete any college courses have all ended before gaining a single qualification. His social anxiety and difficulty with paperwork means that a college environment is particularly problematic for him, so his career prospects have been severely impacted. These problems have not manifested in my life or my other two brothers' though we all suffered the same sexual abuse, and further evidence to the concept of the Quality of Silence being unique to each survivor, even if they are brothers with the same offender.

When we received notification of the amount we were to expect, the discrepancy appeared. Three of us had been awarded the maximum grant in relation to the crimes, £22,000, and one of us was awarded less than half of this, £8000. We had all suffered the exact same sexual abuse by our uncle yet one brother was so uncomfortable completing the form, where he was required to write in detail the exact sexual acts that our uncle had performed on him, he could not do this. As he had not provided enough detail, he was awarded only the amount relating to the lesser offences that he was comfortable enough to write down. I was furious at the officers who had made this misjudgement. It was clear that we had all experienced the same abuse, our applications were linked and from the same trial. The full details of what all four of us had endured had already been recorded by the police, read out in a public court and recorded again by the press and media during the live hearing. As we had now been awarded money for our suffering, we found ourselves in a terrible situation where one brother felt that what had happened to him must not have been as bad. That was not true and now an administrative mishap could further detrimentally affect his recovery.

Of course he appealed against their decision on the basis that his original form had been incomplete, and so began another excruciating fourteen-month process where he again had to seek another solicitor. I resented the decision of the compensation body, as they dropped us in a horrible mess where one brother, who has already been through enough, would now have to fight for money. Not because any of us ever wanted any money, but as we needed them to acknowledge that he had been just as violated as we had.

My brother chased the system for over a year, complying with every demand and requirement, involving various visits to his solicitor and another psychologist report was attained. When a review of the situation finally took place, we were informed that he had now been rightfully awarded the same amount as the rest of us (£22,000) but

that they were now deducting £11,000 because he had been found driving without insurance. Months before this decision, he had been stopped by the police while driving our father's car that he believed he was insured to drive but apparently anyone awarded criminal damages compensation automatically lose half their grant if they themselves have any criminal conviction. Driving a vehicle you are not insured to drive results in an immediate £300 fine and six points on your license, which he had already complied with, yet it was now about to cost him a further £11,000. Secondly, the incident where he was found to be driving without insurance happened in the time between their first offer of £8000 and this review, and so should not have been a factor in their decision at all but most crucially, the only reason my brother was driving without insurance was because he believed he was insured.

The Police had stopped him while driving our father's car due to one a break light connection having fallen out, when they discovered that he did not have a fully comprehensive policy. When he renewed his insurance months before, the company had sent him another form, which he in his compromised ability to complete such paperwork had typically failed to complete accurately and assumed that he had simply signed up for the same policy as last year, but they had change it. This tiny oversight, that only he in countless millions would be at a particular risk of making, meant he had been driving a car that he believed he was insured to drive. Hardy a criminal, my brother felt so exhausted by the constant stream of undeserved hurdles.

The most infuriating event in this entire debacle was the final hearing, where he and I sat before a panel and his hapless solicitor tried to explain the complexity of the situation. I was actively observing the proceedings that I can confidently quote what was said to my brother: "If you had been caught driving drunk or on drugs, I could see how that has anything to do with you having been abused but you were just trying to get away with driving without insurance and so we can have no leniency". This statement, by an official acting on behalf of the authorities of Scotland, was horrific. Firstly, as this made no acknowledgement of whether my brother might be suicidal at this time, when being wrongfully accused of criminal behaviour might fatally compromise his self esteem, but also as it clearly showed that these officials have no sensitivity or understanding of how to communicate with survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Furthermore, it shows that their knowledge of the multitude of complex and subtle ways a sexual trauma in childhood can affect one's adult life. My brother, as has been proven in court, has a little understood but very real disability in relation to completing forms. This outcome of his sexual abuse in childhood did in fact cause him to overlook a key detail in his insurance document that resulted in him driving without insurance and now he was being left to feel that he was a criminal who did not deserve the same recompense as his innocent brothers.

## The Statute of Limitations: Legislated injustice.

A time limit on reporting child sexual abuse is literally a foreign concept, as the UK has no such restriction, but in most European countries victims are still subject to a deadline on disclosing to the police, otherwise the crime technically expires and their testimony is ignored.

All European nations are party to the European Convention on Human Rights in which it was agreed that in the determination of his civil right every citizen is entitled to a fair a public hearing. Also, in the UN declaration on the rights of victims of crimes, which was adopted by the general assembly in 1985, it was again agreed that all victims have the right to access the mechanism of justice for the harm they have suffered. This outdated law not only violates all victims basic human rights, it is creating an urgent child protection crisis, with numerous known sex offenders left in contact with other children.

The limitation is different in almost every nation. The average is ten years once the victims turns eighteen, effectively giving survivors until age twenty-eight to press charges (Luxembourg, Finland, Estonia etc.) In 2012, Germany extended theirs to thirty years once they turn twenty-one, effectively increasing the deadline for making a report from age twenty eight to age fifty-one, yet in the Czech Republic, have a nebulous system where the limitation relates to the length of prison sentence the crime would receive.

I met with every Government, Parliament and Ombudsman who would let me speak, and thus the project successfully encouraged review of this problem in eight individual countries. For example, after only three days of my first meeting with an MP in Slovakia, I was invited to speak at a press conference at the Parliament in Bratislava, were they announced the launch of a motion to abolish their limitation. Their Ombudsman also recommended the abolition be added to a new national strategy being drawn up to tackle CSA.

Speaking at a press conference in Budapest, during the International Victims Day Conference, I stated before their national media that if my uncle had sexually abused me in their country they would not have arrested him. They insisted that this was not true but according to their legislation, which had been shown to me by the head of crime prevention in the Hungarian police, my statement was accurate. Nine months later, Hungary's parliament voted in favour of abolishing their limitation. I received private messages from personnel from within their Judicial and Child welfare systems, who had been present at the conference, thanking me for exposing the problem so publicly that day.

The abolition has similarly been taken into further discussion in Malta, Portugal, Romania and all three Baltic countries but the real turning point on the walk happened in Zagreb. I met with their Ombudsman to request the abolition but was told this was impossible, as they had only recently created the limitation. They explained that as Croatia ratified the Lanzarote Convention they were required to introduce a limitation. I was sure this was inaccurate.

The Lanzarote Convention was created by the Council of Europe in 2007, signed by all forty-seven member-states and currently ratified by thirty-four, it is treaty containing 55 excellent measures for improving prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Article 33 pertains to the Statute of Limitations, stating that the countries limitation must allow enough time for the victim to make a police report. Croatia had no limitation but as Article 33 is written on the assumption that your country does, they interpreted it to mean they must implement one.

I decided to take this discovery to the Council of Europe, and not only request a clarification of the intent of Article 33 but to amend it entirely, stating that for reasons of child protection all member states must immediately abolish any limitation on victims reporting child sexual abuse.

From Zagreb I walked to Geneva as I had been invited to give the keynote speech on a discussion called 'Child protection through legislation', during the United Nations Human Rights Council Conference. I highlighted the situation with the Statute of Limitations and presented my ABC plans for reform.

Plan A: Encourage the Council of Europe to amend Article 33 to recommend immediate abolition. This would enhance human rights across a territory of 820 million people.

Plan B: Encourage the European Parliament to create a new directive mandating the abolition. The MP who had adopted my suggestions and launched a motion in the Slovakian parliament had become an MEP in the seven months I had been walking since Bratislava. I could call on his support but even if successful this would only change legislation for 500 million people.

Plan C: Collect one million signatures to have the abolition tabled within the European Parliament.

Next, I reached Strasbourg and was joined for a walk by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorborg Jegland. I explained the situation to him and he agreed it needed to be discussed. The next opportunity to address the entire committee of the Lanzarote Convention would be after I had reached Edinburgh.

In February 2015, I completed the walk then in June I flew back to Strasbourg to finally make my presentation before all member state nations requesting the amendment to Article 33.

Their response to my request will take perhaps another year, though with various countries currently already in the process of abolition the outlook is hopeful. Fortunately, while I was making my presentation for the Council of Europe, the United Nations were also in Strasbourg holding international cross-regional discussions of child protection and they invited me to chair a debate. I was now speaking on a global platform with representatives present from eighty countries and heads of global NGOs such as UNICEF and ECPAT. The United Nations are presently contrasting a global development strategy for 2016 and I have requested the abolition be included. The idea was welcomed and talks continue.

## Personal Experience - The injustice of justice.

During a meeting with a member of the Lanzarote Committee in Strasbourg, I hit upon an alarming realisation about the case against my uncle. I was asking them to seek to secure that abolition of the Statute of Limitations be mandated across all forty-seven European nations and she objected, suggesting that removing the limitation could give survivors false hope of a conviction, as she believed that a case that does not end in conviction might be more damaging for the survivor than not having sought justice at all. I was bewildered by this perspective. Many cases do not proceed to court because they do not have enough supporting evidence but according to our agreed human rights, every citizen has the right to seek to access the mechanisms for justice for the harm they have suffered. We do have the right to make that police report, then like any crime it is then the behest of the Procurator Fiscal with the case has weight enough to proceed, but every survivor must be allowed to have their statement taken, and not automatically ignored based on the date of the offence. She saw my logic but I was still bemused by her previous stance that we should not allow survivors to even attempt to press charges unless we are sure they will have a successful case. It was then that it dawned on me how unusual the case against my uncle had been, in that it had gone comparatively smoothly in relation to the far greater majority of cases.

Firstly the entire process, from us making our statement to the judge sentencing him, was only eighteen months. My uncle also pled guilty, on the advice of his lawyer after they examined the weight of evidence we had against him. My brothers and I could describe intimate details of his anatomy, although we had never discussed this between ourselves. This meant none of us were subjected to being cross examined in a public court. The only time we were questioned on his conduct was back when we gave the initial police statement. It did mean however that he received the maximum reduction on his sentence, shortening it from nine to six years, of which I believe he only served four.

One of my brothers is still regularly medicated for depression and continues to have occasional psychotic episodes, which affect his marriage and his own children's lives to this day. Was our uncle sitting in prison for four years in anyway redressing this? I try not to concern myself with opinions on how weak sentencing undermines the very idea of justice. My only wish was for our uncle to be unable to abuse any more children and I trust that once he was let out of prison, our systems would still ensure this. Regardless, our case had been relatively straightforward and had a successful outcome. Ironically, this was not the ideal experience for me to then become an advocate for encouraging every other survivor to report their offender. Unwittingly, I was regarding the judicial system through the rose-tinted spectacles of an unusually simple case. This never occurred to me until I was facing one of the people who could influence a legislative reform for 820 million people. I now appreciate that we had been extremely fortunate and most cases do not run as uneventfully as ours had. Still, I will not refrain from encouraging survivors to report their offender, especially if that person is still in contact with children.

## The Quality of Silence

In my keynote speech during the October 2014 United Nations Human Rights Council Conference in Geneva, I presented these findings as evidence of why all nations must immediately abolish any Statute of Limitations on reporting child sexual abuse.

I am often asked: 'How do we encourage all survivors to disclose the sexual abuse they have suffered?' But in order to begin answering this question we must first understand why the vast majority currently chooses to remain silent.

I discovered while walking round both the wealthiest and most impoverished areas of thirty-two nations that the reasons each survivor does not report their offender, or even speak about their experiences, are in fact very different and unique to each territory. Quite literally, though the outcome appears the same, female survivors in Stockholm are reluctant to disclose abuse for entirely different reasons than female survivors in Warsaw, who are again silent for reasons completely different to those obstructing the women in Belfast. Therefore, none of these victims stand to benefit much from a general awareness campaign devised and orchestrated across Europe out of Strasbourg. To end the silence around child sexual abuse internationally, we cannot simply promote understanding of the prevalence of abuse and its life-altering damage, we must tailor our approach to tackling the taciturnity in respect to the individual causes of it, which are particular to each geographic location. This could mean nationally, regionally or merely by community.

I refer to this phenomenon as the 'Quality of Silence' and if fully understood, the information pertained within this discovery could potentially progress great improvements in every nation's strategy for preventing child sexual abuse, as if sensitively applied could enhance authorities and organisations ability to address these issues more comprehensively, effectively increasing identification of sex offenders and prosecution of dangerous individuals who are currently still living among the community posing a definite threat to children.

The Quality of Silence has two key facets: the *Internal Factors* and the *External Factors*, or, to imagine them another way, the psychological factors and the environmental factors. The unique combination of these elements, specific to each victim, collectively conspires to ensure their silence.

As the ACE study reveals, and research continues to advance our understanding of the severe neurological impact of sexual abuse in childhood, all victims regardless of nationally are subject to the same internal factors, which impeded their willingness or ability to disclose the abuse. A Scottish child's brain develops at the same rate and via the same process as a Spanish child's, and so both are equally vulnerable to developing depression, anxiety or other psychological dysfunctions. Some survivors develop PTSD as a result of the sexual violations and so verbally disclosing their experiences is practically an impossibility. Some can be so traumatised that they legitimately cannot remember the incidents until some random occurrence later in life unlocks the memories.



Though sexual violation in childhood can interrupt mental development to the same degree, irrespective of race, each individual victim's resilience and ability to overcome these Internal Factors is then dependent on their External Factors; the circumstances of their own environment, and no child anywhere can control the particular qualities of their social or cultural habitat.

I will use my own experience of being abused and subsequent years of silence to illustrate this, the quality of my silence.

It seems like an odd statement but I admitted during my presentation at the Scottish Parliament, in the concluding week of my walk, that while there is nothing fortunate about being sexually abused, having visited the rest of Europe, I feel lucky to have been sexually abused in Scotland. This is because I now fully understand that being born where I was gave me a far greater chance of disclosing the abuse and recovering from the psychological trauma. This good fortune was not within my control, I could just as easily have been born in rural Romania where my chances of either would be bleak. Scotland has no Statute of Limitations to stop me pressing charges, it has a supportive police force who are actively engaged in improving their own practices of guiding victims through the judicial process and Scotland has government supported services and various charitable organisations who are freely available to assist survivors with their various emotional and legal needs. The vast majority of victims in Europe do not currently have any of these.

Having said this, Scotland- while streets ahead in many respects with agencies of the calibre of the Moira Anderson Foundation- is not the flagship for child protection in Europe, not yet.

I was twenty-five years old before I reported my uncle to the authorities. If all Scottish victims take as long as I did to identify their offender countless more victims could continue to emerge in future, needlessly. Journalists asked me on the walk, if the abuse was so bad why did it take me twelve years to tell the police? It took me twelve years to tell the police because the abuse was so bad.

Over a decade elapsed between the date my uncle last molested me and the point when I finally overcame both the Internal and External Factors to end my silence. Here is why:

### My Internal Factors:

When I was in my mid to late teens I was already in therapy experiencing the early stages of developing clinical depression. I planned my suicide. I was experimenting with illegal drugs and I was deeply confused about my sexuality.

A teenage boy from the west of Scotland, I chose to move four hundred miles away and even give a fake name to my therapist before I felt safe enough to discuss any of these issues, and yet it would still take me a further eight years of counselling to reach the point when I was emotionally strong enough to make the crucial leap into officially disclosing and pressing charges. How many victims have access to this many years of free psychological support?

A particularly sensitive factor is the illusion of having consented to the abuse by my own body's apparent willingness to cooperate with the sexual experiences. It is often assumed that when a boy's penis becomes erect it signifies a mental arousal, when in fact it can be achieved very easily by unwanted oral or dextral manipulation by an offender. Male survivors have reported feeling their own body betrayed them by having reached orgasm and ejaculated while being interfered with by someone they did not consent to. Regardless of any mental objection, the physical sensation can be pleasurable due to our anatomical mechanics; in this sense sexual abuse is particularly confusing for boys. I recall assessing my own situation in the later years of primary school (aged 9 or 10). I had been regularly molested since very early primary age and I had no reason to believe the abuse would ever stop, so I made the decision to try and enjoy it. This was a logical strategy in my desperate circumstances that would later cause me many years of feeling deep shame, and countless hours of therapy, believing I had given consent to my uncle, who was in his forties while I was in primary school.

Add these internal obstacles to the External Factors that I was oppressed by, which were unique to my circumstances, and I developed a powerfully galvanized silence.

#### My External Factors:

I was raised in a Catholic household and went to Catholic school; these are not environments conducive to open discussion of sexual matters. What little sex education I did receive contained no reference to sex even being possible with someone of the same gender, and any explanation of how to protect oneself from dangerous individuals was based on the concept of all offenders being a stranger, while research reveals they commit less than ten percent of abuse. Nothing in my education gave me any context to stop or even understand what was happening.

In general, Scottish men have relatively weak emotional literacy, are not accustomed in discussing such intimate problems and are practically assumed to avoid displaying vulnerability. As a teenage boy, I could comfortably talk about football and computer games but all other matters seemed dubious.

Some progress has been made since, but in Glasgow during the 1980s and 90s there was a potent fear towards and within the LGBT community. Scotland has since voted for marriage equality but as a teenage boy I was terrified that anyone might ever find out that I had had sexual contact with a man. That consuming fear was a direct contributing factor that kept me silence.

Even more sensitive to articulate is the fear still harboured towards some survivors due to stigma, the lingering ignorant suggestion that someone who has been abused will automatically become an abuser. The horrific murder of young girls Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman by Ian Huntley in 2002 was particularly supportive of this assumption, as many newspapers cited the reason he sexually assaulted and murdered those innocent children was because he had been sexually abused as a child. The general public may take from this that anyone who has been abused must be considered a threat to children, but further injustice was that it sent a poisonously

inaccurate message to survivors, who were coming to terms with their own experiences, that reinforced the notion that it is better for everyone if they just stay quiet. As my siblings began to have children of their own, I certainly became paranoid that if I disclosed the abuse I had suffered they might worry about their children's safety around me. I did not want to allow my uncle's insidious behaviour to further damage my relationships with my family and so this was yet another unique cause of the pressure to not mention the sexual abuse.

Conjoining these unshakeable External Factors with the psychologically stunting Internal Factors and I imagine myself as having been locked inside an invisible cage, that even I could not see or was even consciously aware of.

Every victim finds himself or herself trapped inside such a cage, usually unknowingly. In order to help them release themselves and empower them to report their offender, we must identify and fully comprehend what combination of factors, all out with their control, are constructing the bars of their unique cell, the Quality of their Silence.

On my journey, I did not find any nationality to be automatically comfortable talking about sex with children but it has been fascinating to observe and collect knowledge of the variety in the 'Quality of Silence' across one continent. I imagine there are many factors yet to be understood but those I gathered were cultural, economic, political, historical, religious, geographical and even linguistic, and indeed none within the victim's control. Listed below are the spectrum of External Factors which survivors from various countries described to me, that sustain their particular silence.

#### Cultural:

A female survivor in Sweden explained that women there are expected to refrain from showing anger; one must apparently always maintain a calm and collected demeanour. We should not minimise the resulting individual misery and national detriment of this engrained social convention. Anger is one of the most common residual outcomes of a sexual violation but in an environment where one cannot process this trauma as others can the result is silence, and this has been generational. This stifling cultural norm is evidently prevalent across much of Scandinavia, but does not appear to be an issue constricting the emotional expression of women in Italy. I was alarmed on various occasions by the public displays of very heightened emotions, with some females and males in rural Italy screaming at each other in the middle of the street.

Conversely, in many European cultures, from west to east, men cannot show vulnerability, and in fact this stoicism in never allowing themselves to be perceived as a victim is even evident in what services exist in each nation. I visited many 'Woman and child centres', 'Rape crisis centres' and even 'Resource centres for women'. These services appear to be marketed as for females only. What chances have most men in the majority of European countries in accessing the support they need to disclose when the services provided for them are repellent?

In Latvia, a staff member of 'MARTA', a rape crisis centre, told me that a man had once phoned asking for help. One man. Latvia is a country of over two million people

and, according to the World Health Organisation, every sixth Latvian male will be or has been sexually violated, yet in the nine year history of this public support service only one male survivor had ever approached them.

I understand that fighting against sexual violence began to grow around the time of the feminist movement and so is yet often wrongly perceived as being a solely feminine issue - but when I attended the male survivor conference in New York in November 2012, I met men from all over the world who travelled that distance because in their own country they have literally no one to talk to. A tiny minority of male survivors internationally is in the financial position to fly to New York and attend a conference just to access a safe and confidential environment where they can comfortably discuss their trauma.

In Cyprus, I observed a very unique cultural obstacle for victims but I imagine it could be found in other surrounding non-EU countries. Within families there prevails an unwritten rule that children do not ever speak ill of their elders. Invariably, the eldest member of the family is in effect sovereign and so their word is infallible. How could a child in this situation disclose abuse, seek emotional support or any kind of meaningful action to detain their offender?

The role of the media is a massively influential factor in the number of disclosures within any nation. In the UK, the media's overly sensationalised reporting of recent celebrity offenders has helped to desensitise discussion of child sexual abuse yet I wonder how many survivors now fear speaking out as the climate would suggest any disclosure receives a media frenzy. I regularly remind survivors that they need only tell a trusted friend, not a newspaper. The UK has stringent laws protecting the identity of victims but the same cannot be said about many other nations in Europe.

One Balkan newspaper was printing the names and pictures of children who had only just alleged abused against an adult, the case was yet to proceed. If this were the potential treatment of a child who disclosed sexual abuse, parents themselves would likely prevent their child from furthering any allegations and encourage them to remain silent.

I was interviewed by a Cypriot newspaper that later agreed to print an apology for how they had reported on my project. Their article described my brothers and I as 'alleged survivors'. My uncle pleaded guilty to sexually abusing us on the advice of his lawyer who had examined the weight of evidence we had against him, he was then sentenced to prison for his crimes and yet this newspaper chose to cast doubt on the validity of our testimonies and the credibility of the Scottish judicial system by continuing to refer to us as "alleged" survivors. If our uncle had murdered us would we be alleged dead children? As I explained in an open letter to their editor, the negative ramifications of this kind of negligent reporting are unquantifiable. It transmits a very clear message to the survivors of the nation that even if a court believes them the media will still fecklessly destroy their integrity and dignity. Fear of media misconduct is a frightening and very real External Factor currently silencing countless survivors, leaving their offenders free to violate countless children.

One particularly disgraceful behaviour, which continues to maintain silence, was explained to me by the survivor support agency 'ASPACI' in Madrid. They gave

examples of cases that never reached court because the child victim's own lawyer strongly advised the child's parents not to proceed. This was apparently not due to any concern for the child's wellbeing or validity of their evidence but purely because the lawyers themselves were too uncomfortable to discuss the details of the case in front of a courtroom. One lawyer told a child victim's mother that he himself had been abused as a child and it really was not a big deal, convincing her that she was overreacting, as being abused had not stopped him moving forward in his life and becoming a lawyer. I sat with my father and brothers in a crowded courtroom as the list of sexual attacks that we endured were read out in graphic detail before the entire court. It was not a pleasant experience for anyone present yet I admired our advocate for her professionalism and commitment to giving every person in the room a full and accurate mental picture of the horrific crimes. In other cultures, even the very professionals who are responsible for seeking justice on behalf of the children do not uphold this same level of respect for the process.

Consider:

*Are any of these cultural particularities currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish cultural scenarios that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more sensitively address these cultural issues, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

Economic:

Meeting with UNICEF in Slovakia, I learned of a woman whose children are currently being abused by her husband. When the UNICEF staff asked her how she had put up with it for so long, she said she thought it was normal. Her father used to abuse her so she thought it was just something that happens in life. This tragic situation is a matter of education, which is lacking because of combination of economic, political and religious factors, again all out with the victims control.

Economics of course directly impact what services are available. In Hungary, I could only find one organisation, ESTER, specialised in addressing child sexual abuse and they also profess to be the only organisation of their kind. They have five staff members attempting to serve a country of ten million people.

One my walk, I was also invited to visit some of the Roma communities in very rural Transylvania, without a doubt some of the most severely impoverished areas inside the European Union. When discussing the suggestion of teaching the children some form of 'Underwear rule' or other protective behaviours, the staff member asked me: 'What is the point in teaching them that what is happening to them is wrong, if nothing is going to happen if they complain about it?'. This question astonished me but in the economic realities of their situation I had to appreciate where she was deriving such a morbid perception. My contention remains, even if only for their own psyche, it is our duty to uphold the children's right to information that is important to their wellbeing.

Consider:

*Are any of these economic realities currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish economic scenarios that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more sensitively address these economic issues, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

Political:

Some authorities appear to think it reflects badly on them if children are sexually abused in their country, while others display their action plans to tackle abuse as a matter of pride. I met five senior police personnel in Bulgaria who when I said the 'Council of Europe tells us that one in five children will be abused', simply said adamantly, 'Not in our country'. If the police will not believe you, why speak to them?

In a number of nations, such as Croatia, Slovenia and even parts of London, recent political unrest, war or riots has created a palpable distrust of the police. In areas where people do not trust them, victims will not approach them for help but this was most uniquely illustrated in Belfast. In a meeting with the organisation NEXUS, it was explained to me how the intense Catholic-Protestant divide in Northern Ireland has added a layer of complexity to the reasons victims on either side choose to remain silent. In such a charged atmosphere, no one wishes to say anything that might damage the façade of his or her own side's integrity. The vast majority of sexual abuse is conducted by someone within the child's circle of trust but when communities are at war with each other, victims cannot disclose negative facts about your own side. This same intense exterior factor therefore silences survivors from both religions.

Consider:

*Are any of these political particularities currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish political scenarios that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more sensitively address these political issues, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

Legal:

Another complex political factor is a country's chosen punishment for offenders. Even within the UK, posts calling for the reinstatement of the death penalty for child sex offenders can often be found circulating social media but inclusion in the EU requires abolition of such measures. However some EU nations do actively conduct chemical

castration on sex criminals. This practice is known to affect the bone density of those who receive it and with the small but real margin of false accusations; I feel this to be an infringement of human rights. Personally, I believe this practice to be counterproductive, as it assumes sexual violation of children is motivated solely by some sexual desire of the offender, when in fact research into why anyone takes advantage of a child in this way has yet to yield any conclusive understanding. The danger in assuming that it derives from a sexual compulsion is that it lends weight to the argument that attraction to children is as natural a sexual orientation as homosexuality. Groups of individuals who claim to have been born with this desire have banded together and campaigned in some European nations to be recognised with the same rights as individuals of LGBTQ+. Thankfully now disbanded, I was horrified to learn as I walked through the Netherlands that Holland had recently been home to a political party called “Martyn,” who campaigned for the right to have sex with children. Dutch law even dictated that these men be given financial support and were housed in an office previously occupied by their Ministry of Justice. This is reminiscent of the notorious PIE organisation which somehow managed to flourish – thankfully briefly- some decades ago in London. The Paedophile Information Exchange, hard as it is to believe now, enjoyed support from high profile figures at one point before having to disband due to public disquiet that an agency was promoting sexual relationships between adults and children.

While politicians still in power who gave it support e.g., Harriet Harman, are now distancing themselves from how PIE was nurtured, and say they were effectively duped by its leaders, one has to question how it ever elicited support in the first place. It may also go some way to explaining why we have a substantial police inquiry currently underway involving Westminster connections.

The second reason, more pertinent to the quality of silence, that I believe punishments such as castration and death are counterproductive is that many victims, such as I, care about their abuser. Children often feel unable to take action that will ‘betray’ someone within their circle and sense the horrific repercussions disclosure will cause in the ranks of their extended family. A hallmark of disclosure is often sudden clamming up, or denying they had spoken, such is the sense of responsibility that goes with whistleblowing. Maya Angelou in her classic book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, highlights this phenomenon, as she herself for several years was an elective mute after suffering sexual abuse.

I wanted my uncle removed from contact with other children; I wouldn’t be able to live with his death on my conscience. If disclosing means a relative or family friend will be tortured or killed, it irrevocably secures the victim’s silence.

The country’s policies and procedure of processing allegations of sexual abuse very directly contributes to one’s decision wither to disclose abuse, as if they are likely to face a gruelling drawn-out court case in which they are required to repeatedly recount the humiliating details of their abuse for various professionals, they are more likely to choose silence. I heard of cases in Greece lasting eight years. If my child disclosed to me, I would think twice about pursuing justice if I knew they faced nearly a decade of having to vocally relive their nightmare for different interrogators. Scotland is not much better.

In December 2009, I was required to attend East Kilbride Police Station to identify my uncle from a video of nine men, with his lawyer as a witness. I expect this procedure is so engrained in the protocol that no one can see how infinitely more traumatising it is than at all necessary. I can appreciate such measures may be required in an abduction case, when the offender's identity could be questionable but in a case of incest, why did the courts need me to look my uncle in the eye so they can be sure it was indeed him that I was accusing? Of course he is my only uncle called Terence McMonagle. We had provided his full name, date of birth, place of work, home address and unique details of his genitals. Why were the authorities still unsatisfied that they had detained the correct man? Of course, they know who the accused is among the line of generally similar types but I will never be convinced that the cruel practice of subjecting the victim to facing their abuser is in any way necessary. I had not seen my uncle in twelve years, though he still featured in my dreams a few times a month, and I believe some survivors may be withholding their statements to avoid having to undergo experiences like this.

Consider:

*Are there other uniquely Scottish legal structures that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more sensitively address these legislative issues, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

Historical:

A considerable number of EU nations had recent Soviet occupations. One survivor in Estonia explained to me that the adult generation there seem to yet retain a sensibility of secrecy, and are automatically reluctant to involve any authorities in what they perceive as family business. This can be said of Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic and all newly capitalist European countries. It is a very real obstacle unique to these nations that is directly inhibiting survivor's willingness to disclose abuse and will take further generations to diminish. Journalists from these territories often told me that I was the first man they'd ever met who openly spoke about having been sexually abused, again approximately every sixth man in these countries is a survivor.

Consider:

*What recent events could be altering the Scottish public's attitude towards CSA and survivors?*

*How can we more strategically embrace these developments, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*



## Religious:

To reiterate, these are not the environments where abuse is more prevalent, these are qualities of each victim's social environments that make it extremely difficult to disclose histories of sexual abuse.

In staunchly religious communities sex is rarely discussed openly but LGBTQ+ equality is also commonly stymied. One newspaper interview I gave in Poland received a strongly homophobic reaction, in the online comments, because I was pictured wearing a 'skirt' (kilt) and quoted talking about sex with a man. Nothing in this article said I was gay, and my uncle abusing me did not turn me gay. In some parts of the world the practice of correctional rape can still be found, were groups of men actively rape women who identify as lesbian believing it will 'cure them'. The idea that you can alter someone's sexuality by sexually traumatising them is deeply unenlightened and dangerous yet many survivors across Europe refrain from disclosing for fear of the stigma, that they themselves will now be assumed as gay and inevitably outcast.

When I arrived in Malta, it had no services for adult survivors that were not run by a certain church. If you were one of the many victims of clerical abuse, how likely are you to access any kind of meaningful recovery or legal action when the support network is affiliated with the same institution as your offender?

The religious territories are behind on sexual education and are commonly more resistant to introducing any awareness program in schools that might arm a child with the communicational skills to disclose abuse early. The Austrian organisation 'Happy Kids' told me they have had some success entering schools in Vienna with developmentally appropriate educational materials but have met absolute resistance from the denominational schools. I encountered this obstacle personally while walking through my hometown of East Kilbride. BBC Reporting Scotland had arranged to film me visiting both my primary and high schools as I passed through during the final week of my walk but when I arrived at both I was told I could not speak to the pupils about child sexual abuse. I am aware of how to speak about this issue sensitively with children of all ages, from infancy up through teenage and into adulthood. Pope Francis himself had been quite willing to engage with me on the subject but both the Catholic Schools, that I was attending throughout the many years that my uncle was sexually abusing me, did not wish to discuss it. Unless matters suddenly change very dramatically, we can assume that around twenty percent of the children about to begin primary one in any school in Scotland this year will be sexually violated before they reach age eighteen. If anyone had entered my class at these very schools all those years ago and explained how to talk about being abused my entire life could have been very different.

Consider:

*Are any of these religious environments currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish religious environments that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more sensitively address these religion-based obstacles, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

## Geographical:

Most nations have a dense population in the cities and very sporadically spread inhabitants across the greater rural parts of the country. The significant proportion of the population therefore is farthest away from the services that do exist. I met one social worker in rural Transylvania who alone covers four villages, 3000 people that just she alone supports. In her career that spans three decades, she can recall only one reported case of sexual abuse. Apparently, money changed hands within the families and no further action was taken. The vast majority of Europe's population is logistically stranded miles from help.

Not only where one lives in the country but also the size of the country itself can be a contributing factor in victim's silence. There are three EU countries whose entire population is less than the city of Glasgow. A Luxembourgish Government official told me they cannot operate a child sex offenders register because if they made public the name of the offender it would be too easy for everyone to work out who the victim is.

## Consider:

*Are any of these geographic practicalities currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish geographic situations that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more effectively address these geographic practicalities, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

## Linguistic:

Still, even in the UK, if anyone asks why survivors refrain from disclosing abuse the answer is often offered that it is due to the shame but it is time that we all began to challenge what is it about our societies that automatically attributes blame to the victim of this crime instead of the criminal. On my travels, I uncovered a discrepancy in the very vocabulary used in many European nations to describe survivors of childhood sexual abuse. In fact, in many languages the word 'survivor' is never used when referring to people who were sexually abused in childhood and is reserved for individuals who have endured other horrific experiences such as a traffic accident or earthquake, evils that can easily be identified as out with the victim's control. We often observe survivors of the Holocaust speaking publicly about their traumatic past. Rightfully, they are all deeply respected for having undergone such atrocities that we all agree were not their fault, and speak with such dignity having endured such undignified maltreatment. But when survivors of childhood sexual abuse appear on television, their faces are often hidden and their voice disguised. Where is the dignity in this? Labelling survivors of sexual violence as 'victims' years after the crimes they

suffered is a gross injustice. These courageous individuals have also endured unimaginable cruelty yet there is a meandering stigma falsely associating these survivors with their experience.

Consider:

*Are any of these linguistic obstructions currently present within Scotland?*

*Are there other uniquely Scottish linguistic junctures that could be restricting a report from a survivor here today?*

*How can we more effectively address these linguistic obstructions, support survivors and elicit more confident reporting?*

## Compound qualities

When, as often and naturally happens, we find sub-communities living within larger communities, the causes of silence become intricately more convoluted, and consequently more uniquely challenging to resolve.

Scotland has a richly diverse mix of migrants and refugee communities but to illustrate how the problem of silence becomes compounded, consider the quality of silence within Scotland's vibrant South Asian communities.

With the practice of arranged marriage still found among some families in Scotland, a girl who has had sexual contact before marriage, however unwillingly, may be viewed as less desirable and so to protect her marriageability some survivors choose to remain silent and even when some make a disclosure this is often apparently hushed up by her own family.

The services that exist to support all victims in Scotland are largely staffed and created by people not from ethnic minority backgrounds, which can make approaching them for support even more unlikely. At our recent development meeting we noted that even MAF materials are only in English, when many Scottish citizens speak Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Polish, Mandarin etc.

MAF are currently seeking to generate materials immediately to widen their linguistic reach to all the people of Scotland yet at present, some smaller organisations set up to support the Asian communities are staffed by people from within the Asian community. This again makes the service unapproachable for fear that what is discussed in confidence will find its way back to the rest of the community. I am not disparaging the professionalism of the staff of these organisations, I am highlighting the fears of the largely silent group of survivors within these communities.

Some disclosures that have reached the authorities required translators to investigate the case. Translating such official matters often falls to the church elders, whose own conservative views and agenda of avoiding 'shame' or 'scandal' can in fact hinder the progress of the authorities' investigation.

None of these issues were obstacles for me growing up in the west of Scotland yet I still took until age twenty five to make a full disclosure. How many children and survivors within the Scottish South Asian community are currently muted by these further hurdles? I only examined one sub-community; of course there will be various other particularities with the Africans, Polish, Chinese Scots etc.

### Quality of Silence on access to justice

Fortunately, no Scottish citizen is subject to a limitation on reporting, so regardless of when our survivors overcome their internal and external factors, they can always pursue prosecution. To give an example of the comparatively disastrous legal situation for the vast majority of survivors across Europe, I will share with you the current case of one male survivor that I encountered in Luxembourg.

Robi was born and grew up there, a very small country, so already it is extremely intimidating to make allegations when practically everyone knows everyone. He also lives in the Ex-pat community, making the insular dynamic even more constricting. It's also a very wealthy country; wealth appears to often bring a conservatism that contributes to a society that doesn't talk about certain things. Again, Luxembourg is a country where men must be men and cannot easily show vulnerability and as it is such a tiny country, it has one of the smallest LGBT communities of any nation. As I witnessed on the Road to Change, environments where LGBT equality requires progress incubate the silence of boys sexually abused by men, and on top of all that, this country still has no services for male survivors.

The statute of limitations in Luxembourg ends when the survivors reach age twenty-eight, as it does in Finland and Estonia and many others. Robi was thirty when he was finally ready to go to the police. He had missed his chance by two whole years. What was he doing in all that time? He was paying out thousands of his own earnings, putting himself through therapy trying to work through destructive addiction that he had developed as a result of having been sexually abused.

Robi once wrote to his offender during his journey toward recovery. Astonishingly, his offender wrote back apologising for sexually abusing him, in a hand-written letter that is signed and dated, but even with a written confession that the police have seen, Robi's offender is still working in contact with children. This man is a prominent member of the British Ex-pat community and apparently works with disadvantaged children who only speak German. Offenders commonly seek to gain a position of power with disadvantaged children, as their victim's testimony is less likely to be believed. There are also four languages currently in use in Luxembourg; Luxembourgish, French, English and German, so these children who Robi's offender chooses to work with are at a communicational disadvantage.

The stress of this whole situation has led to Robi having to leave the country, leaving behind his family, his home and the nation he was born in. He just can't stand by and watch innocent children be left under the supervision of a dangerous self-confessed child sex offender.

I was invited to lunch with a representative from the government of Robi's country, so I took along Robi's mother. We explained Robi's case and stressed that his offender must be immediately removed from contact with these children. The government personnel advised that she and Robi raise more money, hire a private detective and have them photograph any children that go into this man's home, because the signed confession that Robi received from this man is not valid evidence anymore. So, instead of changing their law allowing their police to act on the concrete evidence, they suggest using more children as bait to catch a man who would already be in prison in a number of other EU countries.

I also had a meeting with Luxembourg's Justice Minister who said then that new initiatives were being discussed. This was in July 2013 and still no announcement of reform. Barnador's research reveals an average offender commits up to 380 sexual crimes against children, how many might Robi's offender have committed in the past two years, while authorities aware of this individual continue to do nothing.

Robi's abuser lives near the border of a Germany, where the Limitation is age 51. So literally, if he had molested Robi just a few miles north, he would already be arrested. 2.5 million children are about to be abused in nations where the limitation is age 28. Millions more have far less time that Robi did.

Because of the myriad internal and external factors, the Statute of limitations is reporting threshold that the vast majority of victims will never reach.

## The Quality of Scotland's Silence

If you saw a man being strangled to death and you wanted to stop it, would you encourage the man to try harder to breathe or focus your energy on the person strangling him? Our work in ending the silence is not entirely with the survivors who are struggling to speak, it needs to focus more strategically on everyone else, those who sustain these environments where survivors struggle to speak.

Considering the concepts illustrated above in relation to survivors in Scotland, it becomes immediately clear that, to varying degrees, many of these Internal and External factors can still be found oppressing individuals here today, which are locking many of our people in needless suffering and allowing an unimaginable amount of dangerous child sex offenders to continue living in contact with our children unidentified.

Compare the likelihood of a boy disclosing abuse that attends St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School in Edinburgh's Sighthill with that of a Muslim girl attending Hutchesons Grammar in Glasgow's Crossmyloof. These will both be quite different from the chances of disclosure from any child attending Tiree Primary School. Examine the invisible cage obstructing the voice of a shelf-stacker in Stranraer's Tesco Metro then the one silencing a paramedic of Aberdeen's Royal Infirmary. We are a small but varied nation. Much work needs to be done to ascertain a fuller understanding of why much of Scotland's survivors are currently staying silent. It will require an extensive study conducted within each region and even within each religious community and ethnic minority, but victims in Scotland's central belt already

stand a far greater chance of both psychological recovery and legal action purely from their postcode. If such a comprehensive survey were conducted, more sensitively tailored educational materials and training could be targeted statically across the nation. With the positive political will of our government to address this issue, our lack of any legal restriction on reporting abuse, our progressive police force, the politicised nature of our people, the excellence of our academics and the outstanding quality of some of the services created by our charitable organisations, Scotland has the potential to pilot this approach and become a world leader in reducing and eventually eradicating sexual violence against children.

### How to use this information

Prosecutors in cases of historical childhood sexual abuse could develop the practice of examining in precise detail the quality of the victim's silence, which has caused the delay in reporting, and contribute this information as supporting evidence to their case.

Local authorities could more effectively tailor protective behaviours training, strategies of how to investigate disclosers and even review procedures of ascertaining translators for cases, if the unique quality of silence within each community was respectfully surveyed.

If certain stigmas proved prominent in the collective conscience of a region or nation, specific public health campaigns targeting these particular negative assumptions could move public perception forward and help dissolve myths, liberating various survivors to disclose.

National assessments of the quality of silence could begin to reveal pockets of high-risk areas, where convolutions of identified External Factors could currently be creating solid walls of silence that we are presently oblivious to. Resources could then be strategically redistributed to support the survivors in these territories towards making disclosures, effectively making the community safer for current and future generations of children.

## Best Practice

The third aim of the Road to Change, after raising awareness of CSA and catalysing legislative reform, was to encourage international collaboration, which meant that as well as engaging the press and government of each country I also met with whatever NGOs currently exist who are focused on these issues. From these encounters, and the three years previous while touring 'To Kill a Kelpie' round USA, I detail below what I consider to be the most innovative and effective practices I have witnessed, across various sectors, which as a survivor from Scotland I hope our nation can be inspired by and learn from.

### Support Services

l'association l'Ange Bleu                      [www.ange-bleu.com](http://www.ange-bleu.com)

### Justice Procedure

Barnahus    [www.bvs.is/english](http://www.bvs.is/english)

### Police Practice

Roze in Blauw                                      [www.rozeinblauw.nl](http://www.rozeinblauw.nl)

### Education

Centrs Dardedze                                  [www.centrsdardedze.lv](http://www.centrsdardedze.lv)

Moira Anderson Foundation                  [www.moiraanderson.org](http://www.moiraanderson.org)

### Training

CAST Training                                      [www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/cast](http://www.gundersenhealth.org/ncptc/cast)

### l'association l'Ange Bleu

Paris-based, "L'Association L'Ange Bleu" (Blue Angel Association) focus on reaching out to pedophiles, individuals who identify themselves as having an attraction towards children, and support them in making safe and legal choices to steer their desires away from violating a child. A documentary on their work has been broadcast a number of times and always instigates a surge of emails from individuals desperately seeking compassionate support of this nature. President and Founder, Latifa Madam Bennari said she only knows the film has been shown again when she receives another barrage of emails, even from people in various other French-speaking nations across the world. What struck me about this organisation was Madam Bennari's conviction that her method of reaching out and supporting pedophiles before they become offenders is the only true action being taken by anyone to directly prevent the sexual abuse of children. She maintains that all awareness campaigns and personal safety training programs, which are often

categorised as prevention methods, are in fact only education. They do not stop future sexual assaults on children; merely inform them, their families and relevant agencies how to react after an assault has taken place.

It is also her belief that sexually abusing children is not motivated by an individual's natural sexuality, rather a psychological malfunction caused by a significant yet unresolved experience in the pedophile's own childhood. Through her innovative therapeutic approach to psychology, many potential offenders have redirected their own thoughts and behaviours and countless sexual assaults on children have been prevented.

One example she gave was a man who called her from his mobile phone as he was walking down the street following a young girl he was about to rape. This assault was averted.

Plans to develop a new office in Luxembourg were halted when it was revealed that a member of the board of L'Association L'Ange Bleu is a convicted child sex offender. I appreciate why some may object to this but given the nature of their work, this individual's unique insights into the psychology of a child sex offender is invaluable.

Dublin's 'One in Four' organisation also conduct similar support programs but can only operate them once a week and must host them in the same building that is used to support victims the rest of the week. The practicalities of potential sex offenders sharing premises with sexual assault victims could make the already intense work very stressful for staff to coordinate.

The UK does have a phone line for such people here, operated by Stop it Now who have an office in Edinburgh, but examining their website it's clear that, understandably, they need to warn the people thinking of calling them for help that they can remain anonymous yet if they do share contact details and any suggestion that a child is at risk, their information will be passed on to the police. Consequently, the numbers of individuals utilising this service greatly under-represents the number who should.

The exact number of people in Scotland who conceal this sexual attraction towards children is unknown but if we subscribe to the Council of Europe's research that every fifth child in our nation will be sexually abused it confirms that we have a lot more people struggling with this attraction than we are currently comfortable accepting. We have only recently opened the gates to allow victims to speak out without causing hysteria. I can't imagine how long it will take before we are a society where anyone attracted to children can speak openly about their problem and receive only compassionate support. Hence, Scotland must greatly enhance services, and visibility of services, for our citizens who identify themselves as a potential threat to children and L'Association L'Ange Bleu are making the most measurable advances in reaching and supporting these individuals and preventing future sexual assaults on children.



## Barnahus

*“The Children’s House started its operation in November 1998 and serves all of Iceland. It is founded on the American model for child sexual abuse services referred to as “Children’s Advocacy Centre”.*

*The Children’s House is a child-friendly, interdisciplinary and multiagency centre whereby different professionals work under one roof in the investigation of child sexual abuse cases. It is a result of a partnership, among others between the State Police, the State Prosecution, the University Hospital and the Government Agency for Child Protection.*

*The basic concept of the Children’s House is to prevent the subjection the child to repeated interviews by many agencies in different locations. Research has shown that when this happens, it can be very traumatic for the child and can result in “re-victimisation”, i.e. it can have even more severe effects than the abuse itself. Also research has shown that repeated interviews are likely to distort the child accounts of events, in particular if there are many interviewers. Another important aspect of interviewing child victims is to reduce the level of anxiety of the child. Again research has shown that an anxious child is less likely to express itself than if it is comfortable. The Children’s House is designed to maximise the child’s comfort e.g. by toys, pictures and selection of colours.*

*In the Children’s House, the child is interviewed in a special room by a trained investigative interviewer. The interview is observed in a different room by a judge, who is formally in charge of the procedure, a social worker from the child protection authorities, the police, the prosecution, defence attorneys and the child’s advocate. The interview is videotaped and can be used in court at the main proceedings. This arrangement makes it possible most often only to take one interview with the child.*

*After the interview the child may have the medical examination in the on site medical clinic. The findings are documented by paediatricians through the use of a colposcope, state-of-the-art equipment that records the examination on a video.*

*The House also provides treatment services for child victims of sexual abuse and their families. The child is assessed for therapeutic purposes. Then an individual treatment plan is created and provided either at the facilities or, if the child lives outside of the capital area, as near to her/his home as possible.*

*On the 10th anniversary of the Children’s House in November 2008 more than two thousand children had been referred to the centre for investigative interviews, medical examination or treatment.”<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Bragi Guðbrandsson, General Director, Barnaverndarstofa/ The Government Agency For Child Protection, ICELAND

From my work as an adviser to the Moira Anderson Foundation, I have been privy to recent cases of child victims in Scotland who were so traumatised by our current process of victim interrogation that they literally soiled themselves in the dock while being cross examined in the courtroom. Our legislation supports this cruel counterproductive practice and I understand one pathetic measure allows our Judges to merely remove their wig if a child is becoming distressed.

To prevent this, the most effective process I have become aware of is the Icelandic 'Barnahus' (Children's home) system for sensitively supporting our child victims through the process. As our Assistant Chief Constable, Malcolm Graham, rightly commented on this idea, we cannot simply transplant a process from a foreign jurisdiction and expect the same success. Scotland's Lord Advocate, Frank Mulholland agreed that we need to update our legislation to accommodate this advanced practice. Catriona Dalrymple, Head of Policy at Scotland's Crown office and I discussed a simple step towards such a reform, as I have already been invited by Bragi Gudbrandsson, the founder of the 'Barnahus', to pay a visit to their centre in Iceland. If a fact finding mission were sent to Reykjavík, Catriona suggested then sitting together and examining the specific Scottish legislation that would need reformed in order to progress towards adopting a system of its kind here. Following this, a presentation at Scotland's parliament could be arranged to share the discoveries with our policy makers and hopefully move on its introduction here.

Most crucial to the success of this model in Scotland is the mandatory adoption of its practice by all Judges in every case of sexual abuse of child victims. This may require new legislation specifically ensuring this. I visited Zagreb's Child Protection Centre, which has created a similar set up but despite the great expense invested in building the facility and training experts to use it, their process has not been endorsed by Judges nationally, and while this excellent process exists in Croatia only ten children in ten years have benefited from it.

## Roze in Blauw

Like Police Scotland, Roze in Blauw (Pink in Blue) are members of EGPA (European Gay Police Association) and are a task force mostly comprised of homosexual or transgender officers focused on protecting and creating equality for the LGBTQ+ community within and out with the police. Established in 1998 in Holland, their successful model is now implemented in other provinces across the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, I met JT Loh who works with the founding group under their chairperson, Miss Ellie Lust. Miss Lust is also a spokesperson for the Dutch Police and her identical twin sister, Marja, is an investigator. The twins are openly lesbian and despite being respected professional police personnel both have short died hair which makes them quite distinct.

Refreshingly, the officers of Roze in Blauw's sexual orientation is as visible as it is inconsequential. Their ethos is that through being open about their sexuality they remain more approachable to victims of crime within the LGBTQ+ community. They attend and marching in uniform at many annual events throughout the Netherlands, such as Pink Saturday in June and the recent anti Putin protests.

Following my traumatic encounter with homophobia from officers of Edinburgh's Police back in 2003, I was quite moved when JT invited me to join the entire Pink in Blue squadron on their barge during the Gay Pride procession along Amsterdam's canals, the only gay pride parade in the world that is held on water.

Scotland has made great strides towards equality in the past decade but we still have far to go, especially with regards the circumstance for members of the trans community. As previously outlined in the Quality of Silence section, territories who promote fear of LGBTQ+ create an atmosphere that secures the silence of children abused by an adult of their same gender, for fear of the stigma of being involved in any perceivably gay sexual experience. Conversely, authorities that promote equality through leading by example are moving their society towards a more positive time when victims sexual crime of any nature are comfortable and confident enough to report their offender.

## Centrs Dardedze

The innovate child training centre 'Dardedze', takes groups of infants on a beautifully orchestrated make-believe adventure where they visit various worlds that present them with a variety of challenges, constructed to help the children gain understanding and confidence in their own ability to identify dangerous people and situations and what actions to take. Purpose-built just on the outskirts of Riga, the centre serves all Latvia, and the day I visited they were hosting a training session with teachers from every region.

When children arrive, they are given an otherworldly cloak and tiny suitcase then board a Harry Potter style imaginary train where they are transported to another land. They stop at several destinations, each carefully designed to challenge their young minds in problem solving which sensitively encourage them to examine what they may or may not have been taught about the world and empowers them to speak up if anyone ever violates them.

For example, in one world the children are shown a host of characters that either seems kind or unkind from their perceptive. One drawing was of a man with a Mohawk haircut smoking a cigarette. The children initially avoid this person but when they picture is spun around we learn that this person is in fact very kind and approachable. In the UK, we have actively taught our children never to speak to strangers but in many situations a stranger is the only person who a child can approach for help. The heavy anti-smoking campaigns we promote to prevent our children from taking up the hazardous habit has imprinted a disproportionate discrimination against smokers, assuming them all to be 'bad people'. Another world teaches the children to scream, which in Latvia is culturally uncommon, perhaps a residual condition for their recent soviet occupation; it is essential that children know it is sometimes okay and important to scream.

I was immensely impressed by this facility and it's impact, as the children loved the journey while also becoming enlightened and empowered yet none are even aware that they have been though some of the most crucial lessons of their lives so far.

## The Moira Anderson Foundation

Established in 2000, Airdrie based but serving all of Scotland, MAF support both child victims and adult survivors of CSA with counselling, therapy and legal advice. They also facilitate and deliver world class training for children and professionals such as the “Safe Hands” training courses and workshop programmes and awareness raising presentations to colleges, schools, nurseries, youth organisations, churches, etc., about keeping safe and the effects that childhood sexual abuse can have on the individual and society.

'Safe hands' was launched in Monklands in 2002 to promote 'Protective Behaviours', using a 'Whole School' approach and through workshops for parents and school assemblies. Talks to pupils are age appropriate from primary one to S6 and storytelling and drama sessions are available for pre- school pupils, which introduce the concept of feeling safe and sharing worries. Safe hands training can also be aimed at all ages and groups to promote personal safety strategies for everyone. It has been well received by many people including teachers, police, nursery staff and many other professionals and non-professionals.

The content of the training continues to evolve and incorporate latest information and MAF are currently developing a new curriculum that will span a child's entire school years with developmentally appropriate educational programmes, which already have drawn interest for various local authorities. Research indicates that children who have received such training are three times more likely to disclose abuse, and this is not only crucial for our ability to identify and remove dangerous individuals from contact with other children, the child's own psychological recovery and the prevention of the aftermath outlined in the ACE study can only begin with this crucial disclosure.

The Moira Anderson Foundation has had much success in reaching children across North Lanarkshire. Unfortunately, a postcode lottery dictates whether your child will benefit and again Scotland's denominational schools have been resistant to this training. In September 2015, Glasgow's City Council voted on adopting the Council of Europe's 'One in Five campaign', which was unanimously welcomed and my hope is now that they collaborate with MAF to incorporate the more details and advanced materials which they have generated within Scotland for Scottish children, then seek to gain an endorsement from the Council of Europe on the new system, which could possibly then travel back to Strasbourg from where our new world class system could be adopted by other nations.

The most crucial point is to make the public aware that these materials do not sexualise the child. Parents fear their child is too young to learn about sexual abuse but I always remind them that sadly their child is never too young to be molested. All this training does is teach infants and teens how to disclose any difficult experience to people who can help them and we will not progress without empowering all of our children in how to communicate. We cannot continue on this path and expect to eradicate abuse but resistance to this training has been met in various countries and most commonly from religious territories or schools. Children are equally at risk of sexual abuse regardless of their family's religion or culture and so we must now find a amicable but mandated means of reaching all children receiving this training. Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Scotland is subject

to, states that children have the right to information that is important to their health and wellbeing. Nothing is more threatening to a child's wellbeing, nor their entire future, than being sexually abused. A national strategic approach needs to be introduced to distribute this training to every child, which could require new world-leading legislation that circumvents any denominational objection.

## CAST

Child Advocacy Studies Training (CAST) was developed in USA by Victor Vieth and has so far trained over sixty thousand professionals, and growing. At the NYC Male Survivor conference in November 2012, while I was preparing for the walk, Victor gave a presentation on the high profile case of Gerry Sanduski. Highlighting the series of mistakes and malpractice that accommodated this one offender's prolific career of sexual assaults on children, Victor exposed how lack of appropriate training within the entire workforce involved in child maltreatment prosecution was the reason why so many disclosures were made by his victims and even witnesses to his assaults yet repeatedly no meaning action was taken.

Considering how most police, social workers and judges etc. do not feel fully equipped to handle the needs of their communities until they have been in their job for a number of years, Victor created the Child Advocacy Training Centre, a purpose built facility which contains various mock-up crime scenes or real life locations, such as apartments, houses, interview rooms, hospital and court rooms. The course is undergone by personnel from the entire spectrum of workforces involved in child protection and maltreatment prosecution.

Using case studies of actual incidents, actors are employed to play families or employees and they trainee has the opportunity to learn in situ the professional level of decision-making and practice that in reality is required to protect our children and ensure justice for victims. Similar approaches have practiced in Scotland with actors training doctors, lawyers and police but nothing on the scale and complexity of the Child Advocacy Centre, which continually incorporates developments in research to ensures all staff graduating from the training have a far more advanced comprehension of how to protect children based on the best information that exists.

CAST is beginning to enter Europe and so we could and should have it here in Scotland. As the entire program is designed to equip each trainee with a comprehensive spectrum of experiences, recreated from actual scenarios while incorporating the very latest discoveries from other fields, such as the most recent neurological impact studies, CAST is the best training being practice anywhere.

## Worst Practice

While one of the aims of the Road to Change project was to shine a light on best practice, I was more often frightened for survivors in many nations when I encountered negligent operations or misguided beliefs of their authorities and agencies.

Romania apparently practices an emergency measure for abuse cases that involves removing the offender from the home for only 48 hours. This can sometimes mean the abuser must sleep on the street for two days but is then simply allowed back into the home, to live with their victim again but are now furious at the child for causing them to sleep outside for two days. I cannot comprehend what this is intended to achieve.

In the Netherlands, I could only find one organisation that specialised in supporting victims and survivors of childhood sexual abuse. 'Kinder Misbrouk Nee' was not supported in any way by their government but was run by married couple that sold soap to fund their organisation; they made the soap in the same garage where they welcomed the swathes of desperate Dutch seeking their support. I was amazed when they explained that survivors in Holland must not speak to a therapist before they have made a report to the police, despite most victims requiring therapy in order to feel emotionally equipped to speak to the police. It is perceived that discussing histories of abuse with any psychologist will in some way dilute or pervert the victim's memory and so their testimony becomes invalidated. This practice is entirely backwards in relation to Scotland. My brother's provided written reports from their psychiatrists and psychologists that contributed as supporting evidence in the criminal case against our uncle. This unique policy is literally another 'Quality of Silence', only obstructing disclosers from survivors within the Netherlands, who may not feel emotionally equipped to proceed with criminal charges without first seeking psychological support, which is moral and logical option open to practically all other survivors across the western world. By the time I had reached Edinburgh on foot, Kinder Misbrouk Nee had shut down, due to lack of finance.

Anecdotally, as well as the senior police of Bulgaria refusing to believe that children are sexually abused in their country and the Spanish lawyers convincing the child victim's parents to drop the charges, as they themselves were too uncomfortable to defend them in court, I met a survivor in Slovenia who had been told by the police that she was lucky such an attractive man had even looked at her let alone had sex with her. Sadly, I can't imagine that these horrific incidents are unique and while we can hope they do not occur in Scotland we have legal parameters in place to prevent such treatment, or to redress them when they do.

Of all the frightening misconduct I witnessed in 32 nations, the most alarming situation is in the Republic of Ireland. Despite the steady rise in child sexual abuse disclosers, the Dublin based organisation CARI (Children at Risk Ireland) have had to downsize and even close other regional offices due to lack of funding. The media frenzy Ireland has hosted over the past decade, with high profile clerical and institutional abuse cases covered by all national newspapers, has created an advantage for adult survivors. CARI staff suggested the climate has changed so much that any adult coming forward now is practically guaranteed a court hearing

and compensation, due to some governmental PR agenda to be seen to be tackling child sexual abuse. While I feel this is in many ways wonderful, unfortunately this reactionary solution appears to have shifted the focus of resources disproportionality towards adult survivors, leaving behind the many children currently still at immediate risk. Today, thirty thousand reported cases of child sexual abuse in Ireland lie dormant on social workers desks. Extremely vulnerable children are living with their offender in homes that have been professionally assessed as high risk but the workload is too huge to tackle; yet when an adult speaks out the authorities act immediately. The complexity of this problem is in part created by the relatively sudden progression of liberalism within the culture and changing attitudes towards the Catholic Church but I had never imagined I would discover a situation where encouraging survivors to end their silence on mass would in fact make matters more dangerous for the children of the country.

In Malta, I discovered that the only services to support adult survivors were run by the church. Of course these would not be appealing for those who had been victims of clergy or members the church. A survivor there read about me in a newspaper and approached me on Facebook, we met and he explained that he wanted to start his own organisation, independent from any denomination. I then met with the Malta's Minister of Social Dialogue and commented on the country having no services out-with those created by the church and their urgent need to establish one, but also informed her that I had met a survivor who currently hoped to do just that. As part of her remit is to support NGOs, she expressed an interest in meeting him and so I introduced them to each other and I kept walking. I've have since heard that positive talks have begun, funding is being identified and they have already asked me to be a patron of their new 'Recovery Academy', the nations first independent service for adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

## Scotland

A police constable of Police Scotland joined me on for a few hours as I walked through his hometown of Prestwick. He explained that he can be called to take a statement from a survivor wishing to report a historic abuse case, during or at the end of a busy day attending more immediate situations yet in the middle taking of this statement he might have to suddenly abandon the survivor if another officer requires emergency back up. How can we create a system where survivors who may be extremely emotionally vulnerable are not left feeling unheard and undervalued during possibly the most traumatic event since the abuse itself, decades before? As sexual crimes now equate to nearly 70% of the cases in Scottish courts each year, could we establish of a unit of special police officers who solely manage cases and actively communicate with victims of recent and survivors of historic childhood sexual abuse?

In August 2014, a friend in Glasgow called as I was walking through Croatia, to tell me that he had finally phoned the police to report his offender and that officers was on their way to take his statement. That phone call had taken him nearly forty years.

I'd known about his situation for many years and how the psychological damage the abuse left him with had lead him to alcoholism and him still being medicated for depression. He has now been sober for twelve years but his addiction transferred to

an eating disorder. The devastation the sexual abuse he suffered in childhood has wrought in his adult life is entirely typical of the predictions within the ACE study.

His abuser was a scout leader in Scotland the 70s and 80s, but still lived in a high-rise across from a school. My friend's statement sparked a wave of reports from other survivors that has meant the case against their abuser has grown considerably, though the man is pleading innocent. I was distressed to learn that my friend had to reveal every intimate detail of what had happened to him to the first response officers who attended after his initial call. It then took five days before he was contacted by the police to inform him what action was being taken. When emotionally vulnerable survivors make the long-awaited step of contacting the police, they can be left with a crippling sense of helplessness and need to be reassured that the police are taking action.

One year on, the man is still living at home across from a school and my friend is still waiting to hear what's happening. Out of frustration, he phoned the Procurator Fiscal, who said they could not share any details of the case with him. Interestingly, he mentioned my name to them and explained that I am an activist for child protection and the rights of survivors and they then agreed to meet him to discuss his case.

This meeting was not sensitively handled. At the reception he was quizzed on what he there to discuss, and so - to a receptionist- he was forced to explain that he was there to discuss the status of the case against the man who had sexually abused him throughout his childhood. Other members of the public were present in the room. Staff of the PF who encounter victims of various crimes, in person or via telephone should be trauma informed as their words and actions could negatively impact the victims recovery.

The details he was given were still vague yet the PF assistant promised to call him once a month to update him on any progress. Four months later and he had not received any calls. This is not supporting a survivor of childhood sexual abuse in anyway. As a close friend, I am fortunate enough to be able to advise him on what support services are available to him but the neither police nor PF had advised him of any.

A hearing was finally set but then deferred as the accused, now aged 91, apparently was unable to stay awake during proceedings. National press reported on the abuser falling asleep in court which lead to more survivors coming forward, yet the article also identified my friend to the public, which he had not consented to.

A second attempt at a hearing was scheduled for Hogmanay 2015. My friend could not attend as he was too anxious yet no one from the PF were communicating with him on developments. He called numerous but was told that as it was New Years Eve, the staff would be leaving as soon as possible and he would have to wait until the fifth of January to hear what had happened in court that day. By then he would quite probably have learned in the newspapers what had occurred in the cases between himself and his offender. Finally, after pestering the office of the PF all morning, a member of staff agreed to arrange for someone to call him. Victims/survivors should not be made to feel they are burdening the service by simply requesting to be kept informed of proceedings, which affect their own life so severely.



This hearing too was deferred, as the accused was apparently absent due to illness. The now eighteen month wait, during which at no point was my friend even offered a leaflet on where to find support, was now delayed a further month. Understandable, my friend was emotionally exhausted and returning to his GP to review his own depression medication.

A phone call from the PF on January 8th 2016, informed my friend that his abuser had died. They offered to meet him to answer any questions but confirmed that the process will now simply stop.

At present, my friend is quite emotionally devastated and unsure what to do with this entire experience but certainly does not feel any sense of closure from having attempted to seek justice. It appears, offenders of a certain age are attempting to delay proceeding via any means until their own death, to avoid punishment.



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