

Anonymous Submission

During the 1970s I attended St Joseph's College, Dumfries, along with two other pupils from my primary school who passed the 11+ and were subsequently enrolled at St Joseph's College Dumfries as 'boarding pupils' and the costs were met by the local authority.

To date, the current local authority, Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council and the Marist Order who operated St Joseph's College have failed to provide documentary evidence that the costs for my attendance at the College were met by the then local authority. Both organisations have been served with 'freedom of information' requests for this information and both have stated such documentation no longer exists – they having destroyed it/or lost it, as it was no longer required for accountancy purposes.

I have documentary evidence I was enrolled at St Joseph's College as a 'boarder' and medical records and other documentation to prove my attendance. In addition I have a copy of Dumfries County Council accounts 1970 (Abstract of Accounts) detailing fees, bursaries and allowances and confirmation there were twenty applications for High School Bursaries. Eighteen out of twenty applications were approved.

This proves I attended a boarding school and Higher School Bursaries were being paid by the local authority at that time.

However, the accounts do not name pupils or the college and even though no one disputed the fact I attended this institution or that my fees were met by the local authority when I gave evidence to the Child Abuse Inquiry. Both organisations had representatives engaging with the inquiry.

A recent update from the Scottish Government Re: Redress for survivors of historical child abuse in care, note 6, dated August 2020, page 3, Who will be eligible, second category, which I should fall into:

'or where arrangements were made by a local authority to send children to board in schools not managed by that authority and the authority met the costs'.

If I and my fellow survivors cannot provide documentary evidence, through no fault of our own, that the local authority met our costs, we will be ineligible for financial redress, the way the Bill is currently presented.

I do not believe discriminating against survivors because organisations chose to lose or destroy evidence is the aim of the government and I believe it would be unjust if it was allowed to happen. It would turn into a postcode lottery and survivors would feel cheated and deprived of justice.

Surely a signed declaration, or some other legal declaration could suffice. As the investigator who looked at my case stated I can prove in all probability that I attended the College and that fees were paid by the local authority, surely this should be enough, after all no-one questioned my account of my time at this educational establishment when I gave evidence so why should I now be denied redress.