

# Abuse victim's glowing praise for inquiry is heartening

12 Sep 2016 / [Stephen Naysmith](#)

Negativity surrounding the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry has overshadowed the difficult and important work it is trying to do.

Concerns provoked by the resignation of key employees of the inquiry, former chair Susan O'Brien QC and panel member professor Michael Lamb earlier this year were unavoidable.

Our coverage of complaints lodged against a civil servant, Jessica McPherson – tangentially connected to the Inquiry, also within Government, through her work setting up the In Care Survivor Support Fund to help victims of abuse – has been a frustration.

Representatives of the independent inquiry point out that she doesn't work for them, or the Scottish Government's sponsoring department.

Ask any member of most survivor groups if she has been involved in the setting up of the inquiry, though, and they say she has. Many count her among their frustrations with their experience of being involved in the inquiry. Perceptions matter. That is why it is heartening to hear from some survivors of abuse about their positive experience of taking part in the core business of the inquiry – evidence gathering.

Richard Tracey, 47, says physical abuse within his foster family in Ayrshire was compounded by sexual abuse by a friend of the family, as well as apparent indifference in the local social services department. When he was finally moved to a residential school, he was physically abused there too.

Typically of many victims of abuse, he has sought answers and an apology from the authorities and got nowhere. A recent experience of taking part in the Scottish Government's National Confidential Forum on institutional care was so unsatisfactory, that it left him suicidal.

His verdict on two days giving evidence to the inquiry last week couldn't be more different.

"I have never felt so at ease," he told me. "I am starting counselling, arranged with their help, paid for by the support fund and I am to contact them at any time, if I need.

"I would urge all survivors to help the inquiry in getting the whole picture of the real horrors of child abuse and the true impact it has. I really am grateful."

Deputy First Minister John Swinney has his work cut out dealing with some of the dissatisfaction swirling around the abuse inquiry. But testimonials such as this will be a major factor in determining whether it can do its job