

Money worry over child abuse inquiry

The Herald; 1st January 2020; [Tom Gordon](#)

Scottish Political Editor

Read more: [Money worry over child abuse inquiry](#)

SCOTTISH ministers resisted an inquiry into historic child abuse to avoid “admitting liability” and encouraging victims of other tragedies to seek money from the state.

Archive files show the Labour-LibDem coalition of 2004 also wanted to avoid prejudicing legal proceedings.

On 24 November 2004 the Scottish cabinet discussed a forthcoming debate at Holyrood about child abuse.

Peter Peacock, then the Labour **education** minister, said the key issue for victims was an apology from the state.

But in discussion, ministers said “there were risks associated with establishing a precedent which could encourage victims of other tragedies to seek an apology and possibly compensation from the state”.

Although precedents in Ireland and Wales made it “difficult to justify not providing an apology and, although the precedent in Ireland had involved the creation of a compensation fund, it should be possible to find a form of words which did not lead to Ministers admitting liability”.

The issue was discussed again at the following week’s cabinet. The minutes record: “In a discussion, it was noted that while the First Minister’s statement would address the desire for a public apology, the Executive could expect to be pressed further to agree to a public inquiry.

“Although the Executive had the greatest sympathy for the victims, it would be important to set out clearly why it was felt a public inquiry was not the best way to proceed.

“The Executive had also to avoid any action that might prejudice cases currently being pursued through the **courts**.”

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry was set up in October 2015 to look into cases of children suffering while in care across the country.

It started with opening statements in May 2017 and remains ongoing.