

New film calls for change in the law to stop child abuse in sport

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Former BBC journalist Adrian Goldberg is calling for a change in the law to help tackle the scourge of child abuse in sport.

Mr Goldberg has recently released a film exploring the historic child abuse scandal linked with Celtic Boys Club.

In the film he interviews a survivor and family members of a victim, who claim that senior figures at the club and Celtic Football Club itself must have been aware of the rumours of abuse, but did nothing.

While Celtic FC has expressed sympathy for those who suffered abuse, it has always insisted Celtic Boys Club operated as a separate legal entity.

But Mr Goldberg and the families and survivors feel the club should acknowledge its 'corporate responsibility' and offer practical support.

Mr Goldberg said the case also highlighted the need for 'mandatory reporting' to become a legal requirement, meaning anyone with a reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused is legally obliged to report it.

"Researching this film made it clear how important the issue of mandatory reporting is.

This wouldn't necessarily stop the abuse, but had there been a law of mandatory reporting it would not have been able to flourish. People would have had a legal obligation to report their suspicions," he said.

Mr Goldberg's film, *The Celtic Boys Club Scandal*, is the first time the different strands of the scandal have been brought together in one place and presented in a coherent timeline. It can be seen here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-gfql8rrfw>

He said it had received a huge response, with more than 53,000 views since its release on March 13. Mr Goldberg said he first had the idea to make the film after he interviewed Michelle Gray, sister of abuse victim Andrew Gray, for his podcast. The podcast (podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/the-sfa-report/id1463963883?i=1000510023227) had 6,000 listens in just a few days and one listener suggested he should make a film.

"I realised there was more to the story than the interview could bring out. I started doing a bit of digging and found there was much more to tell," he said.

Mr Goldberg launched a crowdfunder and raised £15,000 to put the film together. He joined forces with filmmaker Laurence Lennard for the project.

The film starts with an interview with Michelle Gray and her mum Helene, talking about Andrew, who was abused when he was a 12-year-old player at Celtic Boys Club. Mr Goldberg said: "It took Andrew Gray 30 years to discuss what happened to him and once he did it brought all that trauma to the surface. He tried to take his own life three times."

Andrew died in a tragic swimming pool accident in Australia, but his testimony helped to bring his abuser to justice.

In the film, Mr Goldberg also talks to Tom Parry, founder of Mandate Now, an organisation calling for legislation requiring anyone who works with children to report suspected abuse.

Mr Goldberg said he hoped the film would not only raise awareness and help bring justice for the families, but would also add weight to the case for mandatory reporting to be made law.

He said: "There is a sense that justice has not been fully served in this case. Celtic Football Club has always said the boys club was a separate entity, but the evidence we have suggests that there was no clear division between the two. We just want to get justice for the victims.

"If you are a survivor or the family of a victim then the impact of that abuse lives on.

"People need practical help and support. We need Celtic to acknowledge their responsibility and we want to see a change in the law."

Michelle Gray is among a group of survivors and family members who have launched a civil case against Celtic FC, claiming that the club had 'corporate responsibility' and leaders failed to act on the abuse rumours.

A statement from Celtic FC said: "Celtic Football Club is appalled by any form of historic abuse and has great sympathy for those who suffered abuse and for their families. The Club is very sorry that these events took place.

"With regard to the allegations regarding historic abuse at Celtic Boys' Club (which, so far as we have been made aware, relate to the period prior to 1997), although Celtic Football Club is a separate organisation, we take these extremely seriously because of the historic contacts between the two organisations. Police investigations were given support, so as to seek to ensure that those individuals who abused young people were brought to justice.

"The club has been at the leading edge in Scottish football of putting welfare and safeguarding protections in place for our young people and continues to work with Scottish football to make it a safe place for young people."

Mr Goldberg said he will be continuing to follow the case in his podcast and the film will be updated should there be any developments.

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Notes:

Adrian Goldberg was a presenter of the Breakfast Show on BBC WM. He also presented The Politics Show on BBC TV for the Midlands region, and was a reporter on the BBC TV consumer programme Watchdog. He also presented for talkSPORT and 5 Live Investigates.

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