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## Pair jailed for child sex crimes

**Two former care workers found guilty of abusing children at a Barnardo's home have been jailed for a total of 29 years.**

Margaret Hewitt, 69, formerly of Drain's Bay, Larne and Robert George Anderson, 46, from Ballycarry, but now living in England, were convicted of a catalogue of abuse at Belfast Crown Court in June.



Both defendants were placed on the sex offenders' register

On Tuesday, Anderson was sentenced to 18 years in prison, after being found guilty of 17 charges, including indecent assault, two charges of rape and gross indecency committed against five children between January 1979 and June 1981.

Hewitt was jailed for 11 years after being found guilty of 53 charges, including indecent assault, gross indecency and assault committed against eight children between December 1977 and June 1981.

### 'Disgraceful'

Most of the assaults took place at the Macedon home in Newtownabbey, on the outskirts of Belfast, more than 25 years ago.

Passing sentence, Mr Justice Weir said Hewitt and Anderson's crimes were "disgraceful".

He criticised Barnardo's management for allowing unqualified people to look after young children.

The judge said: "Making every possible allowance for the difference between residential social work standards then and now, such incompetence and neglect on the part of Barnardo's then management is difficult to comprehend."

The Macedon home in Newtownabbey was closed and demolished in 1981. It was in the grounds of what is now Hazelbank Park on the shores of Belfast Lough.



Macedon in Newtownabbey was closed and demolished in 1981

Liz Johnstone waived her right to anonymity to talk about how she was raped by Anderson and indecently assaulted by Hewitt.

"It is a great sensation knowing they are sent down and they cannot harm any more children," she said.

Another woman, Sandra Knowles, who was also raped by Anderson, said: "I will never forget what he did to me. But at least I have got my control back."

Linda Wilson, director of Barnardos Northern Ireland, said the charity was pleased that the children abused by Hewitt and Anderson had finally seen the pair brought to justice.

"The systems failed those children and clearly failed them," she said.

"I, along with other Barnardo colleagues, attended the court proceedings every day and heard at first hand how the systems at Macedon 25 years ago let some children down," she said.

Ms Wilson said it was important that victims of abuse felt confident in coming forward.

"We know that it takes a great deal of courage to do so. I hope that seeing the perpetrators punished for what they did will give the complainants in this case some comfort," she added.

Patricia Lewsley, SDLP, welcomed the sentences handed down.

"The sentencing is nothing in comparison to the many years of pain and suffering endured by the innocent children in this case. It is, however, welcome and I hope that this can bring some type of closure for the victims," she said.