

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAR

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is AAR my date of birth is 1947. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Background

2. My mother's name was which is her maiden name. My father's name was My father was a national. He arrived in Scotland during the war and served in Aberdeen as part of the Eastern Seaboard Defence. I have two brothers, ABL and My mother met my father at his barracks when the dancing was on. She was only when she got pregnant with me. As a result of this they were married. My brother ABL was born in and my other brother was born the following year

Life before care

3. I stayed in the family home at Dumbarton until 1957. This was when my mother left us. My brothers have told me that they remember a big argument in the house between my mother and father. My father then came upstairs and told us that my mother had left and we wouldn't see her again.
4. After this my maternal grandmother came to look after us before she went back to Montrose. We then had a housekeeper looking after us for a while.

5. I don't remember why we were eventually put into care. The first place we went to was Bellevue in Rutherglen.

Bellevue Children's Home, Rutherglen

6. My two brothers went into Bellevue with me. I think that this was 1957 as [REDACTED] ABL had his first communion in [REDACTED]. This was the year after we went there. I now know that Daughters of Charity ran this home.
7. I don't remember being taken to Bellevue or anything about the first day I was there. I don't think there was any involvement with the courts in us going to Bellevue. I know that my father paid towards our keep there. It might have been a referral by a local parish priest as this also happened at that time.
8. I look upon this as being the time that I lost my brothers. I never saw them other than on a Friday when my father visited.

Routine at Bellevue Children's Home

9. Bellevue was like a country house. It was at the top of a hill and there were a couple of extensions on the building.

Daily routine

10. I was really young when I went to Bellevue so I don't remember much about the daily routine. We were fed and clothed, so I suppose I should be grateful for that.

Mealtimes

11. All the boys and girls ate together. The boys were on one side and the girls on the other side. That's all I can remember.

Dormitories

12. There were separate dormitories for the boys and girls at Bellevue. We were split up into different age groups. There was a group up to 5 years old. Then there was 5 to 8, another one 8 to 11 and the older group was 11 to 14. I think that it was two lots of 12 beds in each dormitory.
13. There was a sister and a lay member of staff for each group, but I think that there was a shortage of staff. Sister **EAB** was what I would call "our bully". She was in charge of my age group.

School

14. I went to primary school in Rutherglen. I sat my qualifications there to get into secondary at which was in was an all-girls' school run by nuns.
15. When I went to I had to get up early and get the bus and a train to school.
 The sisters resented this. They used to say to me, "You think you're cleverer than anyone else. Well we'll beat that out you".
16. On one occasion when I got back from school I had my end of term report card. It was sealed so I didn't know what it said. I had to give it to Sister **EAB** She was serving soup at the time. When she had seen the report card she took the ladle out of the pot and hit me on the head with it. She said, "Do you think that you are cleverer than the other children?"
17. Sister **EAB** used to lock me in the sewing room to do my homework. It wasn't a big room. I didn't like it because I was on my own. I don't know why she did this to me.
18. I want to be fair and point out that there were good people as well. The head teacher at Bellevue was Sister **EAA** She was very good and kept a motherly eye on us.

Birthdays and Christmas

19. I don't remember anything about Christmas at Bellevue. For some reason I think we got to go home at Christmas but I'm not sure. I never had a birthday celebrated. I don't think anything was ever personalised for us. It was more like herding everywhere for meals and washing, everything.

Visits/Inspections

20. My father used to visit every Friday. That's the only time that I saw my brothers. The visit only lasted about an hour. When my father visited he always had gifts and toys. After the visit the nuns confiscated what my father had given me. When we asked about these things we would receive a beating from the nuns. I think that the nuns resented that we had regular visits.

Personal hygiene

21. We used to all wash together in the communal bathing areas. You had to show your hands to the nuns when you washed them. They would also check your elbows and behind your ears. The nuns would always say that you were dirty even though it wasn't true. Sister EAB would lift you up by your ears when she said you hadn't washed right. You were sent back to wash again. We would play a trick and not wash. When the nuns checked again they would then say you were okay even though we were just the same as before. This showed they were just punishing us for the sake of it. We also used to get a bath once a week.

Medical care

22. One of the staff used to come in and put lotion on your hair. It was then combed with a bone comb. I think this was to get the carcasses out. There was a problem with lice in those days.

Abuse at Bellevue Children's Home

23. I remember one occasion on a Friday night. We were all put to bed earlier than normal. We started having a pillow fight and some of the pillows burst. A nun came in and saw what we were doing. The next morning at five we were woken and had to get out of bed. We were taken in our bare feet and given buckets of cold water. It was freezing and dark. It was the middle of winter. We had to go on our hands and knees and scrub the floors. If any of us spoke we were hit. The punishment seemed disproportionate to what we had done.
24. Anytime you were beaten they used brush handles and coat hangers to hit you. They also used brushes with the lacquered handles to hit us over the knuckles. The punishments were delivered with anger and rage. I remember some of the nuns had Irish accents. We couldn't understand what they were saying a lot of the time. The sisters would knock the children off their feet when they were beating them. I don't think they knew how to deal with us.
25. I remember when I received a beating the sister would say, "No wonder your mother left you" and "No wonder your father put you into care". This created a stigma and you blamed yourself for being in care.
26. I found out from ██████ that he had been beaten with a cane because he had measles. The sisters said that was the badness coming out of him and they would beat it out him.
27. ██████ ABL also told me about a time after he had had a bath. The sister who was supervising, Sister ██████ AGI asked him to stay behind. ██████ ABL suffered from psoriasis on his elbows and knees. When the other boys left the sister asked ██████ ABL to remove his shorts. She had a jar of ointment, which ██████ ABL thought was for the psoriasis. She then started to rub ointment to his genital area. ██████ ABL said she didn't stop until she saw that it had had an effect on him. ██████ ABL thought it gave her

some sort of sexual pleasure. ABL would have been about 10 or 11 at that time.

ABL said that he was going to tell on her, and it never happened again.

28. There were daily beatings by Sister EAB There was always a reason in her head for doing this even if you had done nothing wrong.

Reporting of abuse at Bellevue Children's Home

29. I didn't tell anyone about the abuse at Bellevue. ABL told me that he had told our father. Father said to him that nuns wouldn't do this.

Leaving Bellevue Children's Home

30. In 1961 Bellevue closed and we all moved to Smyllum. Some of the sisters went as well.

Smyllum Orphanage, Smyllum Park, Lanark

31. There were more children at Smyllum than Bellevue. I think that there was about 60 boys and 60 girls. There were all ages, babies up to 17 years. You were given a number and that followed you everywhere. It was on your clothes, dishes and on everything.

Routine at Smyllum

Dormitories

32. As I was in my “teens” when I went to Smyllum the dormitories were different. They were partitioned off and you had your own space. It was curtained off. There was a small cupboard beside the bed.

Mealtimes

33. We all ate together in a refectory. You all had your own plate, cutlery and cup. I don't remember anything else about mealtimes other than it was not very nice food. If you didn't eat what was put in front of you then it was given to you at the next mealtime. My record was three days without eating what I was given. I think that was in relation to porridge.

Clothing

34. We had a school uniform provided. I can't remember, but I'm sure we had a change of clothes as well. These were kept in your cupboard. If you were given clothes by your parents they were taken off you. You would wear what had been handed in to the home. I think this was to try and teach you humility.

Chores

35. We had duties that were rotated. When I worked in the laundry I had one of the more horrible experiences. If the nuns were menstruating they would use homemade pads. These were all gathered up in a basket. None of them were wrapped in bags. We had to lift them out of the basket and put them in the washing machine.
36. There were no cleaners at Smyllum. We would do all the chores like polish the floors and clean the toilets. The chores were all on a rota basis.

School

37. At Smyllum I still went to [REDACTED] secondary school. I had to leave early in the morning to go to school. Sometimes I was back late if I was playing [REDACTED] I wasn't

treated any differently at school because I was from Smyllum. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I did very well at school and managed to obtain a number of Highers.

38. Sister [REDACTED] EAA had also moved to Smyllum when Bellevue closed. I think that she looked out for me, and may have seen something in me. The rest of the nuns would still make out that I thought I was better than everyone else because I had done well at school.

Leisure time

39. There was a common room that had board games in it. I don't remember a television. My parents gave me books, but I don't remember books in Smyllum. There were acres of grounds outside. We could go out but the sisters were still there watching us. It wasn't segregated but the boys used to play football or work on the farm so we didn't have much contact with them.

Holidays/trips

40. I don't remember any trips with the school. My brothers told me about going to West Linton, but I don't remember. I do remember going to Montrose and staying with my grandmother in the summer holidays.

Helping during holidays

41. When I was about 14 years old I was given certain responsibilities. When the sisters or lay staff were off during the holidays I was asked to look after some of the younger children. I went to the sister one morning and I was given an induction. The boys I was to look after were aged 5 to 8. There was a bed provided for me in the dormitory. In the morning the sister showed me what I was to do. I had to wake the boys and they had to stand next to their beds. Their beds would then be checked to see if they had wet them. If the boys had wet their bed they were made to stand with the wet sheets over their heads.

42. The sister told me that if the boys had wet their beds they would have to go to the bath area. At the bath area they had to get in a cold bath with their wet sheets and wash them. I never made them do this and the boys liked me for this. I felt that this was an attempt by the sisters to brutalise my behaviour at the age of 14.
43. The time I looked after the boys varied and was dependant on how long the sister or lay member of staff was away for. I don't know who normally did this job. If it was a sister, they would be at a retreat. I think it was Sister [EAB] and the nun in charge, Sister [BAF] who decided to use me for this.
44. It was the same set up for the younger girls. Sister [HCC] was in charge of them. [REDACTED] was very good with the girls. I used to help her, and even after I left Smyllum I went back and visited her.

Birthdays and Christmas

45. At Smyllum nothing changed in relation to birthdays or Christmas. It was just the same as Bellevue.

Visits/Inspections

46. Friday was the day for visits at Smyllum. My father used to visit us every Friday, but my mother stopped visiting after a while. She would only ever visit sporadically anyway. I think sometimes my dad would take us home for the weekends. He would also take us out for runs in the car. This was the only time that I had contact with my brothers. There was no facility for sibling contact at any other time.
47. I never had anyone official visit me like a social worker. I can't remember any inspections. I'm quite sure that if there were any official visits then everything would have been prepared for that visit.

48. If there had of been a social worker who was either allocated to us or visited at the homes I think I would have spoken to them about what was happening.

Medical care

49. I don't remember anything about health care at Smyllum. I only remember going to the dentist once and having a bad reaction to the gas. I was in bed for a few days after this.
50. When I was at Smyllum I suffered from chilblains on my fingers. I was given gloves to wear but the chilblains just stuck to them when they were weeping. i never received any medical treatment for the chilblains that I remember.
51. We were given spoonful's of what I think was olive oil and malt. We were lined up and given it one at a time. I think this was to stop me getting the cold or the flu.

Abuse at Smyllum

52. There was a lay member of staff called [REDACTED] IAM and she worked at Smyllum. One day she came to my area in the dormitory. She said that Sister [REDACTED] EAB had sent her to make sure my bra fitted. When she was doing this she fondled my breasts. I was 13 years old and had not had any sex education. I felt a bit uncomfortable but I didn't know anything about what she was doing. I didn't know what the right way was to have a bra fitted.
53. The first time this happened I thought "Fair enough". After this it happened a few more times. After the third or fourth time I remember saying that I wasn't happy with this. I told her I was going to tell my dad and it didn't happen again. [REDACTED] IAM was in her late 20s. She had red hair and was Irish. I didn't tell anyone what had happened because of the fear that I would be beaten.

54. When you were beaten there was always more than one sister present. They were never on their own. I find it difficult to believe that the sisters can deny what took place as they were either present or took part in the beatings.
55. █████ told me that when he was in isolation with the measles he thinks one of the sisters would come in and fondle him at night.
56. █████ ABL told me about █████ BAC who worked at the farm, which was part of Smyllum. █████ BAC was in charge of the band and also taught boxing. █████ ABL said that █████ BAC would come into the rooms when the boys were practicing their musical instruments. He would beat them up if they played a wrong note.
57. I know that Sisters █████ AFJ and █████ AGI were in charge of my brothers' groups. I think that they were just as cruel to the boys as Sister █████ EAB was to us girls. I think that the boys got more beatings than the girls.
58. For me the beatings never eased off. You just learned to live with it. I think the problem was that there was no training. Maybe they were just doing the best they could with limited resources.

Reporting of abuse at Smyllum

59. I have never told anyone, other than my brothers, about the abuse at Smyllum before I contacted the Inquiry.

Leaving Smyllum

60. When I finished school I applied for college. I didn't receive any support or assistance from Smyllum. I think I had developed a survival instinct and I did all my own applications. I was successful and went to Notre Dame, Downhill. It was part of

the University of Glasgow. By this time [REDACTED] ABL [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were back home with my father.

Life after the institution

61. I trained for 3 years to be a primary school teacher whilst I was at Notre Dame. I then became a sister with Notre Dame. I looked upon this as an opportunity to redeem myself. I could help to shape people's lives.
62. The [REDACTED] were founded to assist with the education of poor girls. In relation to my faith I only have a problem with the Daughters of Charity. This is because they don't acknowledge what happened. I don't want compensation. They had a duty to care for us when we were in the homes. What they did to the children in the name of the Catholic Church was unforgiveable.
63. In my adult life I have worked in South America assisting with health, literacy and sacramental preparation. I have also worked with refugees in London. In the late 1990's I returned to the [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Impact

64. To this day I struggle with the word "lovable" being associated with me. The nuns I would say took away my self-esteem and self-worth. As a result I don't let many people get too near me. I would say it's a self-protection mechanism. I sometimes lack confidence, although I have never failed at anything in my life.
65. I feel guilty about what happened to my brothers even though I couldn't do anything about this. I'm sure that they would know what happened to each other as they would have seen it.

66. I try and find forgiveness for what happened to me and my brothers. However, it is difficult. There has to be some accountability and responsibility for what happened.
67. I don't think a lot about the homes I was in. I have discussed a bit of what happened to me with my brothers but no one else. That was until I contacted the Inquiry. I have not reported any of what happened to me to the police.

Records

68. I have tried to obtain my records from my time in care. I have managed to get some information. I went to Bellevue in 1957, leaving there and going to Smyllum on [REDACTED] 1961. I didn't manage to get my leaving date for Smyllum. I have contacted Dumbarton local council regarding this, but they can't or won't provide any further information.

Other information

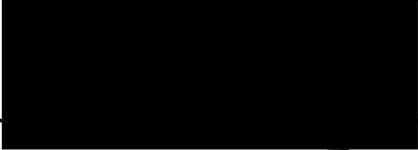
69. I remember a workshop in Mill Hill London in the late 1990s. The Daughters of Charity had invited us, [REDACTED] to do a day's conference for them. One of the sisters came over to me and asked to speak with me privately. The sister said to me that some of the other sisters from Daughters of Charity had recognised me from Smyllum. The sister said that all of the accusations of child abuse against Daughters of Charity were made up and untrue. She said that people were just trying to take them to court. The sister asked me as a sister to back her up in saying that that the allegations were untrue. I said to the sister, "You believe what was being said and multiply it by some and that was my experience". The sister just turned her back and walked away. As she did, she looked over her shoulder and said, "All the sisters were trained in child care".
70. I don't know the name of the sister that spoke with me. I think that that she may have been the provincial of the order or the local superior. I got the impression that she might have been dealing with the allegations at that time.

Lessons Learned

- 72. Children need someone who they can talk to and trust. Children are individuals with individual needs. They need to be understood and heard as individuals. There is a need for more guidelines. There should be more inspections of care homes for children. There should be monitoring and safeguarding procedures in place. There should be a more holistic approach towards the children's needs and interests.

- 73. There should have been more staff at Smyllum and Bellevue. This might have helped. Also if here had been more training in child care this could also have possibly helped.

- 74. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... 

Dated..... 30th August 2017