

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LWA

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] LWA [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I have a daughter and a son though my son died a year ago. I have a grandson who I brought up and is seventeen. I am widowed. I have not worked for the last sixteen years.

Life before going into care

3. My mum was [REDACTED] and she married my dad who was [REDACTED]. I have an older sister, [REDACTED] though we have different dads. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were my full older brothers though both have since passed away. [REDACTED] was older than me and we were together throughout our time in care.
4. I have two other half siblings those being [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] whose father is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have since passed away.
5. The first thing I recall is being in a cot in [REDACTED] Dundee. I have vague memories of being in the house of Mrs [REDACTED] who our gran paid to look after us. It may be that I was there shortly before going into the shelter.

6. My father was an alcoholic and he and my mum split up. They had an argument and my mum took me and my brother [REDACTED] up to the street my dad lived in and left us there. Apparently I was two years old at the time. Whatever happened we ended up in the shelter.
7. I am not sure how long we stayed in the shelter but I definitely started primary school when I was there. It was St Mary's in Forebank. After we left the shelter me and [REDACTED] went to stay with a Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] Glasgow.
8. Again, I'm not sure how long we stayed there but I recall going to a primary school there and making my first communion. The [REDACTED] had children of their own called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as well as another son whose name I don't remember.
9. I only have good memories of my time there though years later [REDACTED] told me he had been sexually abused by the son whose name I don't recall. I don't recall how old I was when we left there but me and [REDACTED] were taken to Nazareth House in Kilmarnock.
10. Years later Mrs [REDACTED] told me that the reason we were moved on from her care was because she had fallen ill with bad health and was no longer able to look after us.

Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

11. A social worker called Gwen Chapman took us to Kilmarnock. I recall driving through the big gate and hearing the crushing of the white pebbles as we drove over them. There was a big statue of The Virgin Mary then I recall seeing this massive building. It looked rather daunting.
12. We were taken into what was called the parlour which was carpeted and had pictures of Jesus on the wall. Sister [REDACTED] LHZ then spoke to the social worker and me and [REDACTED] then the social worker left. I don't really remember what happened next.

13. The only thing I recall was seeing the big long corridors, the dormitories and lots of children and the fact that the nuns took our toys off us and put them in a big cupboard.
14. There were two groups of children in the home, each with a nun in charge of it. Me and [REDACTED] were put into Sister [REDACTED] LHZ group. I think it was a yellow and blue group. We were then separated with me going with the girls and [REDACTED] went with the boys. [REDACTED] was three years older than me.
15. There was a Mother Superior who died when we were there. I remember them putting her body in the chapel and we had to see it. Then there was Sister [REDACTED] LHZ and another nun whose name I don't recall but I seem to recall she was nicer than Sister [REDACTED] LHZ. There were also civilian staff.
16. On the first level there was an old folk's home and our dorms were on the floor above this. I remember we had to pass the old folk when going to bed and I was always scared of them.
17. On the ground floor there were male and female dining rooms and a recreation room where we had to do the full rosary every Monday and Friday. There was also a wash room with old fashioned sinks.
18. I would say there were twenty to thirty girls and the same amount of boys. I think the age group went from three or four up to sixteen.

Routine at Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

19. There was between ten and fifteen girls in my dorm and we would get up at about 6am. We would then get washed, dressed and go down to chapel. We would then go for breakfast before walking to school which was nearby. It was called St Columba's.

20. We stayed at school for lunch then, at 4pm, we would walk back to the home. We would then have tea, then play in the recreation room which would sometimes be partitioned either to separate the boys from the girls or to allow some to watch a film.
21. I can't remember supper but I think bed was about 8:00 pm.

Mealtimes / Food

22. The food was terrible. They used to give you bread that had been dipped in fat and I hated it. I told my teacher in school this but she must have told the nuns because later that night Sister LHZ stood up in front of us all and told us all what I had told the teacher.
23. I was sent up to the dorm to kneel in the hallways. I waited there for a few hours until Sister LHZ finished her prayers. She then punished me with a bat. I don't recall how often she hit me but it was a lot. This was done over my clothing.
24. I didn't like the food and, while I can't actually remember what it was, I just recall not liking it. I remember that I used to eat and steal a lot of cornflakes.
25. On several occasions I would refuse to eat what was put down in front of me and they would force it into my mouth. Sometimes I would vomit but I don't recall what happened when I did. Before they did that they would make you sit at the table on your own to see if you would eat it.
26. I remember one occasion when they were forcing food into my mouth. My brother [REDACTED] was very protective of me and got involved but he just ended up getting into trouble.

Washing / bathing

27. On a Friday after school we had what was called a “strip down wash”. It was all boys and girls together and we had to strip naked. Some would be as young as three or four while the oldest was fifteen or sixteen. I could never understand why boys and girls couldn’t eat together yet we had to stand naked together at wash time.
28. We had to stand in a queue and I just remember trying to hide myself and being very embarrassed. We then got washed at the big sinks using carbolic soap. It was Sister **LHZ** who washed all of us, boys and girls.
29. There were baths on the second floor which I think we used at the weekends. I recall the water being very cold but I don’t recall it being dirty. Again, we all lined up to take our turn. Sometimes you were in the bath with another child. I think a home help washed us if Sister **LHZ** wasn’t there.

Clothing

30. We had a uniform for school and clothes for a Sunday which were called our Sunday best though they were all second hand. There was a big box from which they would give us all clothes for the week. This is what you got changed into when you got back from school. I recall we all had our name tabs sewn on to the clothes.

School

31. I liked school because our teacher was a really nice young woman though it was her I told about the bread and who must have told the nuns what I had said. I remember her cuddling me and that was the first time I had ever been cuddled.

Trips / Holidays

32. On a Saturday there was a baker down the road who used to donate cakes at the end of the day. Two of us would get picked to go and collect them and I was one of

those picked now and again. The only other trip I recall was the annual outing with the taxi drivers to Troon which I enjoyed.

Toys/recreation

33. Our own toys were taken off us when we first arrived at the home. There was a play-park out the back that had swings and I think they put hobby-horses out there. They might also have put out some toys but, really, the only thing I remember about toys is seeing ours in the big cupboard and not being allowed to play with them.
34. There was a TV in the recreation room but you could only watch it at certain times. There was no record player or radio and I have no recollection of books or comics.

Birthdays and Christmas

35. On one birthday Gwen Chapman, the social worker, bought me a leather schoolbag but the nuns took it off me as soon as she left. I don't recall which of my birthdays that was but it's the only thing I remember about birthdays in Nazareth House.
36. I have no memories at all of Christmas or whether or not it was celebrated.

Chores

37. The only chores I remember is that, at the weekend, we had to go down on our hands and knees and polish the lino in the big hallways.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

38. I never got any visits from family. Gwen Chapman, the social worker, came to see me maybe twice a year. There was something that stopped me telling her what was happening in the home. I think it might have been because the teacher had told the nuns what I had told her.

39. If there were any official visitors then I was not aware of them.

Healthcare

40. I have no recollection of ever seeing a doctor or a dentist while at Nazareth House.

Running away

41. I didn't ever run away while at the home. My brother [REDACTED] did once but was quickly caught. I didn't see him get beat for doing this but I certainly heard him screaming in agony when they beat him for running away. It broke my heart listening to his screams.

Discipline

42. The use of a bat to hit us was the main form of discipline used on us. I seem to recall a small cricket bat and a tennis racquet being used. I've no idea how often I was punished but I just recall kneeling in the corridor waiting to be punished a lot.

Bed Wetting

43. I was a bed-wetter nearly every other night. If they discovered that you had wet the bed then at tea-time that evening your name would be read out and you would have to go upstairs and kneel in the hallway and wait until Sister [LHZ] came along to beat you. Of course, this meant you spent the whole day knowing you were going to get a beating.

44. When they discovered you had wet the bed you had to take a cold bath. I remember smelling of urine because the cold water wouldn't take away the smell. They would strip the bed but I don't recall what happened to your pyjamas. You weren't punished at that point.

45. I used to try and hide the fact that I had wet the bed but, when I did, it meant my sheets and pyjamas would still be wet when I went to bed that night.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

46. You were never called by your first name. There was a permanent sense of fear, especially a fear of God. I had a picture of Jesus by my bed and always believed He could see everything I did because the nuns said so. It was terrifying.
47. My brother [REDACTED] told me years later that a priest raped him at Nazareth House but he didn't tell me the priest's name.
48. There was one time in the middle of the night when Sister [LHZ] was at my bed. She said I had something wrong in my private parts and told me to lift up my nightie. She then put cream on my private parts.
49. I don't recall having anything wrong with my private parts and wonder if this was a sexual assault. Why would she do that in the middle of the night? Surely that sort of thing would be done during the day.
50. Other than the fearful atmosphere there was, as I've said, the continual beatings, often for nothing. Probably the worst thing about that was the fact you had to kneel in the hallway for what seemed like ages knowing that when the wait was over you were going to get a beating.

Leaving Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

51. I think I was in Nazareth House for about four years. I think it was not long after [REDACTED] had run away that mine and his pictures were put in the Kilmarnock Standard advertising for foster parents.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after care

93. I stayed with my mum from then onwards. I still had dealings with the social workers until I was sixteen but I was always staying with my mum though life there was chaotic.
94. My life after care and growing up was a nightmare. I've been under psychiatrists on and off since I was a teenager. I've been on anti-depressants and sleeping tablets since I was young.
95. I used to go to an out-patient clinic and had a psychiatrist who was brilliant. However, she was quite elderly and retired and once she did she was never replaced.
96. After she left I ended up seeing a variety of doctors and there was no continuity and it became a waste of time. I actually got accused of manipulating the system. I've suffered from agoraphobia and still do to a point.
97. I've been called a nutter, a psycho and every name in that sense. I've been called that all my days. Because of this I tend to get angry very quickly.

Impact

98. I feel that the first twelve years of my life, all those years in care, have ruined my life. It has never left me. There's not been a day in my life that I haven't thought about it. I've been ridiculed about it and told none of it ever happened.
99. I've always felt sorry for myself and have a chip on my shoulder. I've never had anybody that stuck up for me other than when I was in one relationship. He stuck up for me but when he was good he was good but when he was bad he was bad.
100. I seemed to move from one volatile relationship to another and I think I was just simply looking for somebody to love and who would love me in return. I've never fitted in anywhere and have moved all over Dundee all my life.
101. I've always felt I was never a good mum as both my children became heroin addicts and my son has died through it. I sometimes feel if I hadn't gone through the care system at a young age I would have made a better mum and my children wouldn't have taken to drugs.
102. Sister LHZ has stayed in my nightmares all my life and was one of the reasons I ended up seeing a psychiatrist.

Reporting of Abuse

103. In the 90's there was an article in The News Of The World and it was about a woman called [REDACTED] who was the first person who came forward to talk about her time in Nazareth House.
104. When I saw the article I realised that I hadn't been imagining what had happened to me and that it had happened to others. I contacted [REDACTED] and we got talking. [REDACTED] and I gave a statement to the police about my time in Nazareth House, Kilmarnock.

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Records

106. I hadn't tried to get hold of my records but Future Pathways are supposed to be helping me get them.

Lessons to be Learned

107. I really think that social workers should be giving more care as to where they are putting children. They should be doing more checks because that never happened to us.

108. In fairness to Gwen Chapman I was always too scared to tell her what was happening to me so maybe she couldn't act on it but surely [redacted] behaviour must have given cause for alarm.

109. 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.

LWA
[Redacted signature]

Signed.....

Dated..... 21.5.18.....