

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QCI

Support person present: Yes

Background

1. My full name is [REDACTED] QCI [REDACTED]. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1953. I will be 63 on my next birthday. I have been divorced twice and now live alone. I have no children.
2. I am on the autistic spectrum and have Aspergers. I don't keep good health and suffer from osteoporosis, fibromyalgia, obstructive pulmonary disease and arthritis.
3. I was born in Malaysia, my father was in the Malaysian Army and he is Malaysian. I've got a full brother, [REDACTED] who is younger than me. We moved to the UK when I was 6 months old. My father stayed in Malaysia. My dad was Muslim, as am I, and had 5 wives, but not all at once as he divorced them and he married my mum and they never got divorced. I met with my half siblings in 1995 when I first went over to Malaysia.

Institution

4. I was 2 years and 11 months old when I was put into Quarriers Homes. I had been living in a flat in Glasgow with my mum and brother [REDACTED] who was just a baby.

5. My mum had 2 children to bring up and she had to go to work, because she bought her house, so she had to pay the bills. She put us in Quarriers Homes. She said she heard from her friend that there was a place where she could place the children. She paid £2 and 10 shillings a week to have us in there.
6. I went into Quarriers Homes first and [REDACTED] came in after. He was just a baby. I was there until I was about 8, so from 2 year 11 months until 8 years old. I then went to Nazareth House in London and then to the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Edinburgh
7. My brother [REDACTED] went to Nazareth House in Lasswade after Quarriers. and that was awful for him as well and he went to the Christians Brothers place in Fife.
8. At Quarriers I lived in Cottage number 7 the whole time, and Miss [REDACTED] QBI was the house mistress.
9. My wee brother lived in Cottage 7 too. I don't remember them having any boys at the Cottage other than my wee brother. He was just a baby.
10. Quarriers Homes is actually one of the better children's homes, and I liked my freedom there. I liked being able to wander off and climb up trees and look for honey and birds' nests. That's what I used to do in my spare time there. Quarriers wasn't all bad, but when it was bad, it was very bad. It was idyllic and I liked to wander.

Routine

11. Miss [REDACTED] QBI was quite strict, one thing about the place was that there was no affection whatsoever, from anyone. I remember getting a cuddle once from one of the helpers, I was crying for my mum and she took me into her bed and cuddled me and that was the first and only time I ever got any sort of affection
12. There were 3 or 4 helpers in the Cottage, Miss [REDACTED] QBI and her niece who had red hair. I don't remember the helpers' names.
13. I was called "the heathen's child", I remember that, by Miss [REDACTED] QBI and the helpers. I think they must have been talking about me going to church or something. I was also called a "dirty darkie" and I used to scrub myself with carbolic soap.
14. There was a TV in the recreation room and a TV in the lounge. I used to watch TV a lot, I remember the little dots disappearing and you had the BBC. It was only one channel. We used to watch Bronco, Andy Pandy, Mr Ed and Toytown cartoons or something.
15. I never had any personal possessions when I was at Quarriers with the exception of a collection of dolls when I was 6 or 7 years old. You were not allowed any personal possessions, not as far as I was aware. Maybe it was decided I was too young to have any.

Discipline

16. I saw my brother getting beaten. It was in the Cottage. I heard him yelling for me and he was yelling my name. I was upstairs getting dressed in the bedroom and he was downstairs. So I went down the stairs and I only had my liberty bodice, my pants and my skirt on, I wasn't fully dressed. I went down and he was standing in a corner.

17. The helpers were beating him with a leather strap round the back of his legs and on his buttocks, and they were beating him really hard. They were giving him a good thrashing and he was screaming and yelling my name. I got mad and I tried to stand in front of him to stop them from beating him, and they were just hitting me. I managed to get a hold of one of the helpers. I was struggling with them, because they were trying to get me away from him and I wouldn't get away. I bit a helper's knee. This was all because my brother had wet the bed. I was 4 years old at the time and [REDACTED] was only 3 years old.
18. You got strapped a lot, they use to strap quite freely. In the school they strapped you and in the Cottage they strapped you as well.
19. I got strapped in the Cottage and that was because I refused to eat my peas and I got locked in a cupboard. I hated the peas. They were just rough round my mouth and I couldn't eat them. It was either Miss [REDACTED] QBI or one of the helpers who put me in the cupboard. I was left in there all night. That just happened once as far as I remember. I think I was 5 or 6 years old at the time.
20. When I was in the cupboard I read the magazines that were there. They were the Beano, the Dandy, the Bunty, Judy, Dan Dare. They had all the comics piled up in the cupboard and I read them through a crack in the door. There was no light and just a stone floor. The cupboard was called the "glory hole" and it was in the kitchen and it had a sloping roof. The door was locked from the outside. I don't remember being cold or needing the toilet.
21. [REDACTED] brought me a sandwich of honey, bread and honey and that tided me over. [REDACTED] was a black girl. I was actually quite happy in the cupboard because I had the comics to read because it was all the comics you didn't get time to read.
22. Another incident, I was slapped really badly around the head. It was Easter time and there was a huge, chocolate Easter egg, bigger than me by the front door in the Cottage. I was fascinated by the giant Easter egg. A bit of the silver paper had come off, and you could see the chocolate underneath. I was licking it.

23. The next minute there was a big whack. One of the helpers had crept up behind me and found me trying to lick the Easter egg and I got whacked for it. She boxed my ears, it was really sore.
24. I got strapped at the school at Quarriers as well. One occasion I remember vividly. I had chicken pox and I had a ruler down my back and I was scratching my back as it was itching like mad. Then I got a wee boy next to me to do it for me, because my hands were getting tired. The teacher saw us and called me down. You had to walk down the stairs as the schoolroom had elevated platforms. The teacher took my pants up and whacked me with the strap on my bottom, all because I was scratching my back. I continued scratching my back and she took me down again. She ripped my dress open at the back and undid the buttons and saw that I was covered in spots. She sent me home to the Cottage and I had to go to bed.
25. I also remember getting made to work when I was only little. We had to polish the floors with a Ronick floor polisher. They had big lino floors.. The Ronick is a big heavy polishing thing with a square piece on the bottom and a big wooden pole in the middle. The pole goes back and forward and you put polish on it and polish the floor. We had to get on our hands and knees to polish the floor and then get the Ronick and polish the floor with it. Then we had to get dusters on our feet and skate up and down to polish the floor more. We had to do that every Saturday.
26. Other girls in my Cottage were strapped too. They strapped on the hands, they had to put their hands out. It was always the helpers, and it happened at school too. Miss QBI never got involved in any of it. She gave tacit agreement I think. She must have known what was going on.
27. When I was fifteen and in the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Edinburgh, Miss QBI came to see me. I had been pestering the Convent to get her to come and see me so I could ask her why they hit my brother when he had just wet the bed and why I got locked in a cupboard. I wanted to know why. When Miss

QBI came I didn't manage to say anything to her because she was quite hostile. I wanted to confront her really, but I bottled out. There was no conversation and she just sat there sucking her teeth.

28. I had injuries from getting the belt. You would get red marks on you, weals. I used to get red marks up my wrist, when I got strapped at school

Sleeping Arrangements

29. There were 2 dormitories in Cottage 7, one on the left and one on the right. In the room where the cot was, that was in a dorm as well. There was about 20 girls in each dorm. I slept in the dormitory on the left but when I was a bit older I slept in the one on the right.

Visits

30. My mum visited me, but not very frequently because she couldn't get up there. Quarriers was quite far out from Glasgow. Also the money to get there was an issue, so she didn't visit me very often. Saturdays, I think, were visiting days.

31. My brother [REDACTED] was around. They didn't put us together to play, but I used to play with him sometimes. I used to play jokes on him in the playground, as they had a big playground in the Cottage, but most of the time I played by myself. I used to just run off and play by myself. I would hide in the coal bunker or run off down to the woods.

Food

32. Spam was horrible, I hate spam. Tripe, I will never eat tripe again. I was made to eat a bowl full of tripe when there was a Christmas party and we had American sailors or GIs or something visiting. They used to come visiting at Christmas.

33. I thought the tripe was jelly or blancmange and so I asked for more. I hadn't even finished what was on my plate. I hadn't started it and I was saying 'yes I will have

some more'. And then when I ate it, it was vile. I couldn't eat it and I didn't want it and they said "no you have to eat it" and "eat it all up". I was puking because it was just so horrible. What I did in the end was I slid under the table, took the bowl and put it at somebody's feet at the other end of the table and then came back up. They didn't miss me because I was small. I haven't been able to eat tripe. I can't face tripe. I can't even look at it in the butchers.

34. I was hungry all the time. That's why I used to go eating brambles and eating grass. I used to get the drying stems and you could open them up and you could eat the white bits inside. So I used to eat that. I would go wandering and find my own food.

School

35. The school building at Quarriers was in the grounds. You had to go down the big long road as if you were going towards the church and then turn right and through some woods. There were woods all around the place.

36. At school I had my hands tied behind my back, because I was left handed, to try and make me write right handed. It was the teacher who did it. They used to tie my hands with string or slap me if I was trying to write with my left hand. It happened frequently, whenever they saw me writing with my left hand. It was quite difficult trying to write as I got frustrated trying to write with my right hand. Then I would write from right to left across the page, backwards. I used to get slapped for that

Birthdays and Christmas

37. During the Christmas holidays, we would generally have the American sailors there and Christmas Day itself. I don't remember getting any presents but we must have. I think we might have got stockings with sweeties in them.

38. We never celebrated our birthdays.

39. We went to the US Marines place. That was a taxi ride. We went to the base and they had a party for us. I remember this black sailor picked me up and put me on his knee. I looked at him and he was black like my daddy. I was touching him and I was thinking of my daddy. I was only tiny then. I sat there, greeting for my daddy and he put me down quickly as he thought I was greeting because I was sitting on his lap. It wasn't that, I was greeting for my daddy because he reminded me of my dad.

Abuse

40. I told my mum that Quarriers Home was a terrible place. She said she didn't realise and she felt Mrs [REDACTED] QBI [REDACTED] was nice.

41. I don't think I could have told anybody about what happened in Quarriers at the time, as nobody would believe me. You just didn't say anything.

42. In children's homes, there is abuse but it's not always sexual abuse. Like being locked in a cupboard, as far as I am concerned that is abuse. I can't go into dark cupboards anymore. I have to put the light on.

43. It was just accepted that that was what you did. The strap and things like that were quite normal in those days. It was normal to strap children hell for leather.

Life after institution

44. My mum was very obsessed with me, and it wasn't just mother-daughter relationship. She used to follow me everywhere. She would write letters to see where I was and what I was doing. By the time I was 9 I didn't want to see my mum anymore. That was when I was in Nazareth House in London. I had had enough of her. I got transferred to the Good Shepherd Convent in Edinburgh, because I wanted to be near my brother as he was in the Nazareth House in Lasswade.

45. My mum used to tell them at the Nazareth House that I didn't have a brother. She used to tell them that it was an imaginary brother. But one of the nuns at Nazareth House in London had been at Lasswade and knew that I had a brother. So she knew [REDACTED]. They arranged for me to go to stay at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Edinburgh. The Good Shepherd was a nice place.
46. My time in Quarriers did affect me, and contributed to who I am, I think it contributed in that I turned the negative into positive. I worked in children's homes myself and I made sure the children had affection and got cuddles and got hugs and were paid attention to and were listened to.
47. After leaving care I spent many years trying to trace my father and sort out my passport. By the time I found my father he had died. I feel more could have been done in my teenage years, especially when I was asking questions about my dad

Impact

48. Being brought up in care does affect you. You find it hard to show your feelings and it affects your trust in human beings It's more difficult when you are mixed race, and no recognition was made of the fact that I was of Malaysian nationality. My mum didn't help the situation.
49. When I was staying at Convent of the Good Shepherd, and at pupil at St Thomas of Aquinas, Edinburgh I was unable to go on any foreign trips with the school due to not having a passport and I think it should have been addressed by the institutions I stayed in.
50. It was assumed I was happy to be brought up a Christian when in actual fact I was Muslim.

51. My brother and I drifted apart, he joined the Army and the Army took over his life. He is still alive, but I have not spoken to him for 15 years. He lives in Northern Ireland.

52. My mum is still alive. She lives in Edinburgh and I go and see her twice a week, and she has just been up to stay with me at my house. We don't have a very good relationship though.

53. The main thing is that I will always remember the abuse that my brother got. That was really painful for me at the time, and I was crying and very upset that they were beating my brother. I still think about it. It has really stuck with me, beating my brother up when he was only a tiny little boy and he couldn't help wetting the bed.

54. I am writing a book, an autobiography written about a third party, a girl who was brought up in care and lived in London and who was on the autistic spectrum.

55. 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.

QCI

Signed.

Dated. 2nd September 2016