

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QDS nee QDS

Support person present: No

1. My name is QDS My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow. I was the eldest of three. I have a younger sister called and a brother called who is the youngest. There is just over two years between the three of us. Both my parents are now dead. They didn't have a stable marriage and maybe that had something to do with the fact that they were both brought up in care.
3. My mother was deaf. Nowadays my mum would probably have been diagnosed as having a personality disorder. They first separated when I was six weeks old. My father left the home taking me with him. We went to stay with an aunt. Obviously I don't recall this but was told about it later.
4. Up until I was about five years old my parents separated several times mainly because of debt my mum would run up. Whenever they split up, me, my sister and my brother would go with my dad. From the age of six I was looking after my brother and sister due to my mother being very neglectful towards us and my father working long hours.

5. On various occasions my father employed carers to look after us. The first one was an Australian girl called [REDACTED] who was very cruel. I don't recall the name of the second one but she simply left after a short while. The third one was called [REDACTED] and she was lovely but she left when my mum came back. This was about 1954 when my brother was in hospital with polio.
6. My mum then left yet again and I went to live with an aunt but when mum returned we went back to being a family. I never had a good relationship with my mother and I think she was jealous of the relationship I had with my father. Although my mother was back, yet again I was looking after my young brother and sister and was the one who put them out to school.
7. Mum eventually left again in May 1957 and I know that at that time there had been talk of the three of us going into care though I'm not sure who was involved in these discussions or what was actually said.
8. On one occasion, in school, questions were asked about the clothes I had put on my brother and sister and I was called into the headmistress's office. She asked me who was looking after us and then the RSPCC got involved. My dad was told that arrangements had to be made for us to be properly looked after.
9. My sister and I went to a place in Maybole which I later learned was in preparation for us going to Quarriers. We were there from late May till [REDACTED] While we were there my brother went to stay with an aunt. The aunt I had previously stayed with was no longer able to look after us due to her husband taking ill.
10. Maybole was a lovely place but after a few weeks me and my sister were told we were to meet my father and brother at Glasgow Central Station. I thought we were going home and was distraught when I realised we were going to Quarriers. It was also very traumatic for my father and I recall an aunt telling me they had to get a doctor to him.
11. The fact that my father had no choice but to put us into care haunted him all his life.

Quarriers, Bridge of Weir

12. On the first day in Quarriers, you went through the admission process in Holmlea, which was the building on the right as you entered. Me and my sister were put into cottage 20 while my brother [REDACTED] went into cottage 31.
13. My dad was there at first but was called to leave and we didn't get a chance to say goodbye to him. I suppose that was part of their way of trying to help us settle in more easily without getting further upset.
14. [REDACTED] was the house-mother in cottage 20. Quite a few of the cottages had single women in charge of them. Although they were called "cottages", each cottage was actually a huge villa. Mr Munro was the overall superintendent of Quarriers.
15. [REDACTED] was quite a distant person and didn't really take a lot to do with the day to day running of the cottage and left it to the older girls. They were aged between twelve and fifteen. The cottage was made up of all girls and there were fourteen or fifteen of us.
16. There were four dorms in cottage 20 and myself and [REDACTED] slept in the same dorm. We didn't do any chores while in that cottage. [REDACTED] wasn't a very warm person and I don't recall much interaction with her.
17. We were only in cottage 20 for three or four months and the only time we would see our brother [REDACTED] would be when he was perhaps walking to school or when our father came to visit.
18. As I said earlier, [REDACTED] was in cottage 31 which was run by Miss [REDACTED] who had trained to be a nurse in Quarriers. She was in her late 50s or early 60s. Cottage 31 was all boys but I'm lead to believe that Miss [REDACTED] asked for me and [REDACTED] to be transferred there, possibly because our brother was in that cottage.

19. The number of children in cottage 31 fluctuated between twelve and sixteen. It was all boys at first aged between four and fifteen. However, not long after me and [REDACTED] arrived other girls also came into the cottage.
20. Me and [REDACTED] slept in one of the smaller rooms with some young boys aged about four or five. Now and again we would have a cottage aunt who would come and look after us when Miss [REDACTED] took the afternoon off which was about once a fortnight.

Routine at Quarriers

21. Downstairs there was a kitchen with a scullery, dining room, a play area with lockers, a bathroom and an anti-room leading to the shed. There was also a parlour which was Miss [REDACTED]'s personal place and you didn't go in there unless you were invited. The whole place was quite spacious.
22. Upstairs there were five bedrooms, two of which were single rooms and the other was Miss [REDACTED]'s room. The other two were larger dorms with boys in one and girls in the other. When I was about eleven I got a single room as I had become the kitchen girl.
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23. This meant getting up at 5:30am and start the fire, get the coal in and prep the breakfast, starting the porridge for example. I would help set up the tables and the other children would get up at 6:30am. This was no problem for me as I had been doing chores at home before I went into Quarriers.
24. I would help getting the very young ones up. Everyone would make their beds, get dressed then go down for breakfast. We would clean up around the cottage before going to school.
25. If a child had wet the bed then it had to be stripped and then you had to report it. The child who had wet the bed would get a smack from Miss [REDACTED] I seem to recall that

chronic bed-wetters would sometimes be woken by Miss **QEH** in the middle of the night.

26. Before going to school you were lined up in age order in the shed before walking to school. Miss **QEH** always waited until the first bell had rung which always made us worry about being late.
27. After school you went back to your cottage for lunch then it would be back to school for the afternoon session. When you finished school for the day you changed into your work clothes to do your chores.
28. We didn't get out to play as often as children from other cottages. It all depended on what sort of mood Miss **QEH** was in and her moods were fairly unpredictable. As often as not we would just sit around reading or sometimes Miss **QEH** would let us play board games.
29. As I recall we would have a bath at about 6:30pm as we went to bed quite early. I think even the oldest children would be in bed by 8:00pm. Before we went to bed we all had to line up in Miss **QEH**'s sitting room and say "goodnight mum". She always insisted we call her "mum" which I really resented.

Food

30. The food, in general, was lovely. We helped out by peeling the potatoes and prepping the food. We all helped but I would say Miss **QEH** did the majority of the cooking. I was never a good eater but the food was good. However, if you didn't finish a meal, it was put back in front of you at the next meal and then again at the next until you did eat it.

School

31. I enjoyed school and think it was of a high standard. The teachers were external and I recall that I seemed to have a good relationship with them. The one thing that did

affect me later was that I didn't know that there were both Junior and Senior schools until I left Quarriers.

Religion

32. Quarriers was a very religious place and we went to church three times a week. It was very much Church of Scotland and I recall two brothers arriving who were Catholic. Their crucifixes were taken off them and they weren't allowed to practice their own religion.

Birthdays and Christmas

33. Birthdays weren't celebrated in our cottage though I know that they were in other cottages.
34. At Christmas you were given a list from which you could pick something as a present but Miss **QEH** only allowed us to pick certain things like a bible, wellingtons, gloves or a briefcase. We weren't allowed to pick other things like games etc.
35. My father would come to visit at Christmas and bring us presents. In fact the other children thought we were well off because we had a father who visited us and brought us things.
36. Quarriers, as a whole, did attempt to make things special at Christmas and at other festival times. At Christmas there were two huge Christmas trees and the locals would come for Christmas Carols. There was also a big false chimney that Santa would come down.
37. Christmas dinner was always good. There were also fireworks on Guy Fawkes's night and we were always encouraged to dress up at Halloween.

Visits/Inspections

38. Our father used to visit us on the last Saturday of every month. This was the only time of the month that he was allowed to visit us. It was always between 2 and 4pm and he would spend the first fifteen minutes talking to Miss **QEH**. He would be there for two hours and we were always begging him to take us home.
39. During his annual holidays my dad would also take us home for the full fortnight during which he spent his whole time with us and took us on trips to places like Stirling, Saltcoats, London and others.
40. My mother came to see us two or three times. She did send us letters that we never got but I understand that as she would be promising to come and see us but didn't.
41. I don't recall seeing any official visitors during my five years there other than the occasion I got an assessment by a female psychiatrist. I don't recall her name at present but it's included in the records I received about my time in Quarriers. It's possible that there were such visitors but I wasn't aware of them.

Healthcare

42. We got regular dental check-ups and vaccinations.

Abuse at Quarriers

43. The cottage had a constant sense of fear about it and it was well known amongst the children in the wider village that Miss **QEH** could be cruel and was not a nice house mother. She could be very violent.
44. On a day to day basis there were on going acts of physical aggression by Miss **QEH** towards the children in her care. These could range from lashing out and

hitting us at meal times as she patrolled the dining-room to whacking our heads with the brushes as we brushed our hair. It was just a random thing for her to lash out and kick and punch us.

45. There were times when we would be forced to stand on the one spot for hours with our hands on our head which could be for the slightest thing and was, as often as not, simply because Miss **QEH** was in a bad mood.
46. She once tried to drown me in a cold bath by holding my head under the water after putting carbolic soap in my mouth. My sister **████████** was so upset on seeing this that she threw a shoe at Miss **QEH** but missed and broke a window. She later got belted for that.
47. This distracted Miss **QEH** and gave me the chance to escape. I ran out of the cottage pulling on my pants as I ran. I can't recall what lead to Miss **QEH** trying to drown me but when she was in a bad mood she would fill up the bath with cold water and we would have to line up and stand in it naked.
48. She would then use one of the old scrubbing brushes on us which was really painful and was done until it drew blood. This was a common occurrence as was the washing our mouths out with soap.

49. After I ran out of the cottage, I ran off to tell the matron what had happened but rang the wrong door. A couple of the older boys from cottage 31 had come after me and took me back to the cottage. I was terrified and, probably because of my age, I thought she was going to kill me.
50. My recollection is that Miss **QEH** got a fright about what had happened and there were no repercussions for me.
51. I was always anxious about being late for school. Miss **QEH** used to line us up at the cottage but would only let us go once the first bell had sounded. This bell was to tell the children to assemble in front of the school while the second one told them to

go into their classes. There was only a couple of minutes between each bell so it was a mad rush for us to make it in time for the second bell.

52. One morning I was in the line waiting for permission to go to school when Miss **QEH** suddenly pulled me from the line-up and kicked me in the stomach. She picked on me because I was so anxious I would be late for school that I was crying.
53. I went flying, hit my head off the sink at the back of the shed and fell unconscious. I was recently talking to my brother about this incident. He says he remembers it clearly and recalls thinking I was dead at the time.
54. When I came to I was hysterical and the rest of the children were sent off to school while Miss **QEH** tried to calm me down. She took me up to my bed and Miss **QEH** again seemed to have got a fright by what had happened. Suddenly she was being very nice to me. I don't recall getting any sort of medical check-up after this incident.
55. On an almost weekly occurrence Miss **QEH** would call some of us out of our bed after she returned from her day off and we would see that she had pulled everything from our lockers. She would shout at us to clear everything up and tidy it away.
56. As we did so she would lash out at us with a tawse hitting us wherever she could. It was mainly the older children she did this to, those aged nine and older and there were five of us that it happened to on a regular basis. It tended to happen when she came back from her day off. I just remember the screaming and the marks the belt left on our faces, backs and necks.
57. She also had a wooden spoon which she used to hit us on the back of our hands with. This was a regular occurrence and used with some force causing swelling and bruising on our knuckles.
58. Miss **QEH** rarely let us out to play as often as the children from the other cottages. This was why, on the days that she was off, we would make the most of it and get out in the open air and play in the park where there was always lots to do.

59. I remember when I was eleven that me and [REDACTED] who was the oldest boy in the cottage, got sent to Holmlea, the building where the admissions were dealt with, after another house-mother made a complaint about the treatment we were getting from Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] We were stripped and examined for bruises.
60. Mr Munro, the Superintendent, was there at the start but left as we started to get examined. I always thought it was a doctor who examined us but I can't say for certain.
61. We were asked if Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had hit us with a stick but we both denied it and denied anything had happened to us. Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had spoken to us before we had gone there and warned us that we weren't to say anything. I recall actually being pleased when we went back and told her we hadn't said anything and her being so pleased with us. I don't recall anybody else ever asking us about bruises on our face or legs.
62. One of the worst things I recall happened to a young girl called [REDACTED]. She was in the home with her sister [REDACTED]. Their mum had been murdered and apparently their dad had done it.
63. [REDACTED] was quite highly strung and one day she had done something to annoy Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was made to lie out on the floor and thereafter we were all told to stand on her and all I recall is her screaming in pain. We all felt so guilty about doing that. [REDACTED] was only about four years old at the time. My brother also remembers this incident.
64. There was another occasion when my brother had tonsillitis and had difficulty in swallowing. He was trying to eat something and vomited up on to his plate. Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] thereafter made him eat the lot, vomit and all.
65. My sister [REDACTED] was once caught eating paper and Miss [REDACTED] [REDACTED] cut up lots of paper and put it on a plate. She then made [REDACTED] eat it until she was sick. On another occasion [REDACTED] was made to scrub the stone floor of the shed and when she was

finished she was made to stand there and had buckets of cold water thrown over her.

66. This was in winter, late in the evening and the shed was freezing and scary to a child of [REDACTED]'s age. The beetles and spiders that were crawling around the place terrified her as did the whole experience.
67. In Quarriers they normally gave out sweets to the children on a Saturday but this was usually withheld from us in our cottage. I remember I once stole a Mars Bar and got belted when I got caught.
68. On another occasion I was going to a dance once and took a bracelet to go with the dress I was wearing. I got caught and Miss [REDACTED] QEH battered me with the belt. She then referred me to the superintendent who in turn referred me for petty pilfering and to have a psychiatric assessment.
69. The conclusion of the report was highly critical of Miss [REDACTED] QEH's day to day management of the children in her care and me specifically. The report said that, rather than me being a child embarking on a criminal career, it was clear I was simply trying to adjust to what was a harsh regime.
70. Miss [REDACTED] QEH always made a distinction between orphans and those of us that came from broken homes. She was very derogatory to those of us from broken homes. The exception to this was in the days leading up to our father visiting us when she would suddenly be very nice to us.
71. We ran away from Quarriers on three times and on each occasion I got the belt.
72. A few months after I left the home I was in my dad's house when my brother [REDACTED] showed up at the door with a cut on his head. He had run away from Quarriers and had walked all the way from there to my dad's house in the East End of Glasgow which was a walk of about fifteen miles.

73. It transpired that what had happened was that Miss QEH had struck him with a metal tray for no apparent reason. My dad kept him there overnight then, the next day, took the day off work and went to Quarriers with [REDACTED].
74. I don't know what was said but I know my dad had been extremely angry and as a result of whatever he said to them [REDACTED] was moved to Cottage 42 and my sister [REDACTED] was moved to Cottage 12.

Leaving Quarriers

75. Before my thirteenth birthday, my dad made an application for me to leave and come home and live with him in the East End of Glasgow. This was to help me to learn how to look after my siblings when they came home.
76. Bill Dunbar, a social worker, appraised my dad's home and eventually approval was given for me to go home. The home gave me clothes for leaving and it was a big thing among the other children that I was leaving.
77. I was somewhat apprehensive about leaving as it had been so long since I had lived with my father.

Reporting of abuse at Quarriers

78. I didn't report the abuse to anybody at the time. I don't suppose anybody would have listened and it was probably a sign of the times we lived in. I did talk to Bill Dunbar many years later when we attended Miss QEH's funeral. From what he said at the time, it was clear that he knew what Miss QEH had been like.

Life after being in care

79. I went to Dennistoun Secondary but spent a lot of time on my own as my father was working long hours. It was difficult for me as I was so different from the other kids at the school. I started school at the start of the last term of first year.
80. I realised that my education was above the others but it was only then that I discovered I was at a Junior Secondary School whereas I had passed exams that would have allowed me to go to a Senior Secondary School. However, I simply didn't want to move to yet another school so I stayed. I think this was down to a lack of confidence on my part.
81. I left school at fifteen and went into a C&A factory. I had been good at gym and had wanted to be a gym teacher but, again, that would have meant going to a Senior Secondary School and I just didn't have the self-confidence to do so.
82. I was diagnosed as having anxiety attacks at seventeen and social phobias began to materialize so they put me onto diazepam. They then put me into a rehabilitation centre and while there I went through college. One day I was standing waiting to get another prescription but decided that was not where I wanted to be in my life.
83. I didn't fill in the prescription that time and that was it, I was off diazepam. It wasn't easy but I was determined to do it.
84. I got married when I was twenty and had two children, a boy and a girl. It was only when my children were born that I felt I could put my past behind me. Having my children changed my life and though my son died of a heart condition a year ago, his children stay with me regularly.
85. When I was thirty I went to college and got five Highers. I then went to university and got a degree. I went into social work and worked in South Lanarkshire for thirty years before retiring in July 2017 though that was due to back problems. I've been asked to go back on a part-time basis when that is cured.

Impact

86. I think being in Quarriers affected me specifically in my work as a social worker. My experiences probably led me to taking a higher interest level in children I deal with. I feel I find it easier to recognise a hidden fear within children. Because of it I feel it perhaps made me better able to have a better insight to children who came from an abusive background.
87. It did impact on my early education as I was left without the confidence that was necessary for me to go to a Senior Secondary . The anxiety and social phobias I had in my late teens were certainly linked to my time in Quarriers and had a big impact on how I was able or unable to interact with social groups. The fact that there was no preparation for me leaving Quarriers was certainly something that impacted on me.

Records

88. I got some records back in the 80's or 90's . Not long ago I went back and this time they released more records which included letters from my mum and an assessment I received when I was ten.

Other information

89. There were good things in Quarriers and it does annoy me that Quarriers has been completely blackened. For instance [REDACTED] QCY/QCZ in Cottage 12 and the parents in Cottage 42, the cottages my brother and sister moved to, were lovely.
90. I don't think Miss [REDACTED] QEH was fit to look after children. I think Quarriers knew this but didn't know how to go about removing her from the post. Even the cottage aunts, who looked after us when she had a day off, knew what she was like and I'm sure would have passed this on to those in charge.

91. I know how difficult it is for a child to report an abuser, especially when they have to live with the abuser. I recall how pleased I was with myself that I didn't report Miss [REDACTED] when I was assessed. I was pleased simply because of how nice she was to me afterwards.
92. I think a therapeutic intervention would be better. It would have been better if I had been spoken to rather than examined. The examination process is maybe too traumatic an experience for a young child and it was not an environment to encourage a child to speak.

Views on foster care

93. I feel there is insufficient monitoring of foster carers and of the children going into foster care. I feel councils were lax in maintaining contact with the foster carers. There should be more vetting done and, when complaints are made, they should be properly investigated and where it's warranted action should be taken.
94. Children should be listened to. I think it really comes down to more supervision and monitoring. The biggest problem is the lack of staff which meant people were carrying too big a case-load. Some were carrying thirty to forty cases. To build up a proper rapport the case-load should be no more than ten or fifteen to allow staff the time to build up the necessary face to face contact.

Views on children being sent abroad

95. Children at Quarriers at the age of twelve were selected to go to Australia or Canada. Some families were even split up. It was put over as a great opportunity and a big thing was made of it. I remember [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were two boys selected.

96. The children weren't really given a choice about whether to go or not, they were just sent. I don't ever recall Quarriers making any attempt to reunite children with their families rather than sending them abroad.

Lessons to be learned

97. I would like to see child care improve, to see people take responsibility for the past. We should learn from the past, acknowledge it and learn from it.

98. 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.

QDS


Signed.....

Dated..... 5/6/18.....