

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QEK

Support person present: QEA, spouse.

1. My name is QEK. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1938. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Personal background and qualifications

2. I left school at fifteen with no qualifications. I worked for the Gas Board as a plumber, but after a while, I realised that they didn't provide sick pay, or holiday pay, which other people got, so I took a job with BT, or the Post Office, as it would have been at the time. That job did have sick pay and holiday pay. I got the choice of working at Taunton, Hastings, or Kidderminster, I chose to work at Hastings, and I met QEA while working there. We met when she was working at a boarding school in Heywood Heath. After marrying QEA, we had a daughter in 1963, and that meant QEA couldn't go out to work. We wanted to buy a house, but the properties in our area were out of our price range. We went to visit QEA's parents in Scotland, and saw a cottage in [REDACTED] that we could afford and we decided to buy it. After that, I worked as a plumber for a building firm in Stirling, but we needed more money than just my wages. We saw an advert for staff required at Quarriers and applied to become house parents at Quarriers, as QEA had worked with children before.

Quarriers' staff

Recruitment procedures

3. We started work at Quarriers, in either late 1964 or early 1965. We went for an interview with Mr Banner, I think that was his name. I can't remember what questions we were asked, they just asked about our experience to do the job. The expectation was that the man would be qualified in some trade that was necessary for the village, and the woman would be responsible for childcare and managing the house. I worked as a plumber at Quarriers. There were other house fathers with trades such as electrician, painter, and carpenter, although the chief electrician wasn't a house parent. I hadn't worked as a care provider for children before I went to Quarriers.
4. As far as training was concerned, we were taken round the place and shown everything about the village set-up but there were no formal training courses. I don't know if there were any background checks done. There was a policy book in the main office, but I can't recall any staff handbook being issued to us.

Structure at Quarriers

5. When you went in the front gate, the offices were on the left hand side, and then you went up a road to the cottages. There was a church, laundry, and at the top a big hall and a school. Further down there was a park or playground area, a grocer's shop and a store. We had meat, eggs and vegetables delivered to us.
6. We had one child assistant in our cottage and a domestic helper, Mrs McFeeley. We called her Mrs Mack. She lived nearby Quarriers village. We kept in touch with her after we left, but she died last year. The child assistants changed over the years we were there. First, there was Nancy Douglas, then a girl called Joan from the Isle of Skye and finally a girl called Else, from Holland.

7. There were other staff who worked at Quarriers who had specialist trades, like the plumber Ernie Bental. We felt supported by Quarriers. We felt we were provided for adequately to allow us to look after children.

Personal role and duties

8. We were the house parents for cottage number 3, we were always at number 3. We had five very happy years working at Quarriers, from about 1965 to 1970. We ran it like our own home. I was out doing plumbing work, and QEA did most of the cooking and housekeeping.

Life at Quarriers

General

9. QEA dealt with reporting to the head of the village, Mr Holman, in the main office. I don't know how often she spoke to him, it was just from time to time. We spoke to him more socially than about management. After Mr Banner left, the head was Mr Coleman and then Mr Mortimer, who QEA knew from when they worked at [REDACTED]
10. We just spoke to the other house parents socially. There was a Mr and Mrs Young and a Mr and Mrs Willis, they bought a house at Quarriers and fostered children. I can't remember the names of the other couples. The house parents did socialise, but not much, as we were just too busy.
11. There were ten or twelve houses at Quarriers, I think that Quarriers was good to begin with, but I saw a lot of changes in the five years we were there, and as it grew it might have become too big for the children to feel at home in. There must have been between four and five hundred children in Quarriers during the time we were there. We had fourteen children in our house in the time we were there, as well as our own daughter [REDACTED]. The children in our cottage called us, "Uncle QEK" and, "Aunty

QEA

There was roughly an even split of boys and girls. When children came to us, we would be told a little bit about them, then they just brought them in and introduced us and we introduced the new child to the other children. I don't know if there was a process for deciding which children went into which cottage, or if there was a personal care plan for individual children. I don't think people realise how much Quarriers did for children.

12. We had the children from the QNT family. Before that, if there were children under school age, they went to a separate home, but we took all the QNT children despite two of them being below school age. We were very happy about that, as we thought it was a shame for siblings to be split up, especially after being separated from their parents. Before that, I don't know if children were able to keep in touch with younger siblings in separate care, as the QNT children were the first we had with siblings below school age. I think they placed them with us, as they could see we had [REDACTED] who was eighteen months old when we went to Quarriers. The QNT were QNT [REDACTED] QNT [REDACTED] who were two and three years old when they arrived. QNU [REDACTED] is now a music teacher.
13. We had a boy called [REDACTED] who was about fourteen. He came to us from another cottage at Quarriers. I don't know if he asked to be moved or the house parents did. We didn't get any information on why he was moved.
14. Another of the children placed with us was [REDACTED]. He came to us from an approved school in Aberdeen, although he took to our household routine without any problems.
15. There were QDR and QNS [REDACTED] who came to us early on, but I just can't remember the names of the other children. None of the children that we took in left us when we were there, they were all still in our cottage by the time we left, after five years.

Mornings and bedtime

16. We had a bedroom for the boys, and a bedroom for the girls. These were like dormitories. The boys' bedroom was about fourteen feet by twelve feet. Each child had a bed and a cabinet beside the bed to put their own things in but there were no bedside lights. I think there was also a chest of drawers with a drawer each for the children but there wasn't much room for more furniture. There was another room upstairs, at the back of the house, which I think the older girls had. We had our bedroom on the other side of the building. Our daughter had her own little bedroom above the front door of the house. I can't remember what time we got the children up in the morning but they would have breakfast and then off to school.
17. The little children went to bed earlier than the older ones and it worked its way up depending on age. We read bedtime stories to them, and then lights out. We always had the door to our bedroom open a little bit, in case any of the children needed us during the night.

Mealtimes

18. We got all of our food delivered to us by Quarriers and we just had to use what they gave us, but there was a good variety of food, eggs, good quality meat and vegetables. We always got fish on Fridays, and I would batter the fish and make chips. QEA made soups and puddings like cakes, tarts, apple crumble and rice pudding. She was trained in large scale catering, so it wasn't a problem. We ate the same food as the children, and we ate with them.
19. Breakfast was usually toast and porridge, cornflakes, or something cooked. I can't remember if QEA let the children choose from all of these options or if we just did certain things on different days.
20. Dinner was in the dining room. We had two big tables for everyone to sit at. I don't think we had set places for the children to sit at. If any of the children didn't like what they were given, we never forced them to eat it. If they didn't like the meat, we would

just give them gravy and some vegetables. We never forced food into their mouths, that would be dangerous, they could have choked.

Washing and bathing

21. QEA would wash and bathe the youngest children, QNU and QNV. I can't remember if it was every night or two to three times per week. The older ones would go in for a bath and bathe themselves, but we would keep an eye on them to make sure everything was alright. We had two baths in the bathroom and they would go in two at a time, two boys or two girls. We changed the water after each child had bathed. It wasn't a regimented time for baths, like seven o'clock or anything, it was just as and when they needed a bath.

Bed-wetting

22. We had no problems with that, maybe some of the little ones did, but we had a laundry so the sheets just got sent out. The laundry ironed clothes too.

Clothing

23. There was a clothing store and QEA went down and got whatever she needed for the children. It was a combination of new and used clothing, which had been donated.

Leisure time

24. We had a big playroom downstairs in our cottage and a little lounge but the dining room was used more like a living room when we weren't eating. We had a television in the living room and there was a tannoy system from the main office to all the cottages. We would get daily announcements or updates at 11.00 am. There was a swimming pool, a football pitch, which they used to play rugby on too, but I think rugby is a dangerous game. They used to lay on many activities for the children to do in the village, they had Guides, Scouts and Boys Brigade.

25. We had books and comics for the children. We got the Beano and Dandy and I think there was a Quarriers library. We had toys, many of which were donated. The children were really encouraged, particularly to read, by us and by the whole Quarriers village in general.
26. The children did tend to just socialise with other children in the village. We gave the children pocket money, with the older ones getting more. They just got to spend them in the sweet shop or on comics.

Trips and holidays

27. I think they laid on organised trips to the cinema and other places. During the summer holidays, we went to Mr Hodge's cottage at Turnberry, next to the golf course. We would take walks across the beach with the children, which was lovely. We had a house in Girvan too, and took the children there.

Schooling

28. I can't remember if there was a school uniform but I think there must have been as I remember QDR brother QNS refused to wear a green blazer, because that was the colour for Celtic football club. I think the older children got a bus to a school outside the village. I think they had a school uniform that we must have got from the clothing store. We would help the children with their homework, although sometimes they knew more than I did.
29. I think it would have been better if all the children had gone to an outside school because I think the village became a bit insular.

Healthcare

30. There was a permanent nurse at Quarriers hospital and the doctor would come if necessary. There were routine immunisations, the doctor would come in to do that and gave the children a check over, and so did the dentist. If there was any accident or

emergency, we would go to A and E at Paisley but nothing ever happened with our children. We knew that the hospital was there if we needed it and one of us would take the children up there.

Religious instruction

31. On Sundays, we all went to church in the village. It wasn't so much that it was mandatory, it's just that everybody went, as if it was a foregone conclusion. QEA stayed at home in the morning and cooked while I took the children to church. QEA went to evensong. It was a lovely old church and we saw it recently on television. They were talking about Quarriers trying to sell the building off and it was QNU who was talking about it.

Work

32. The children did little bits and bobs. They might tidy their bedroom, set the table or dry dishes but not peeling potatoes. You didn't have the children round the stove, or anything hot. I think we were told not to do that for health and safety reasons, although this was before the health and safety board. We tried to run it as close as possible to a family home.

Running away

33. There was one time that QNS went missing, when he was fourteen. It was on New Year's Eve and he was not in his bed, he had gone missing. We phoned the office to report that he was missing and stayed up in the living room. We were very worried. Then [REDACTED] came down and opened the front door and QNS walked in. He said he had gone to Glasgow to bring in the New Year. QEA made him a hot drink, something to eat and got him to bed. The next day we asked him how he got to Glasgow and he said that he had thumbed a lift. QEA told him not to do that again and explained that it was dangerous. We didn't punish him for that. There were never any problems with QNS apart from that New Year.

Christmas and Birthdays

34. At Christmas, at church, we would deliver toys to be given out by Father Christmas. Every year, Bob Buchanan the chief electrician would dress up as Father Christmas and gave each child a bag of stuff. There was a Panto and a party for the children and QEA made turkey with all the trimmings. We tried to make just like a family Christmas.
35. On the children's birthdays, QEA would make a sponge cake, give them a little present, which you could get down in the store, and sing "Happy Birthday" to the younger ones. I can't remember what we did for the older children's birthdays.

Visitors / Inspections

36. People did come in to check on the house, but they would just come in and then go when they had checked whatever they wanted to check. They weren't pre-arranged inspections. They must have had a visitor's book at the main office, before people came down to the cottage. There was very little by way of social work inspections. I can't recall any specific visits from the social work department.
37. I think there were checks to make sure we were doing ok. I just can't remember the form they took. If we had a problem, we could go to Mr Mortimer. I think there were probably other government checks, but we didn't know about that.
38. There were few visits from the families of the children. The QNT's father visited, but I don't know what happened to the mum.
39. I don't know what happened with QDR and QNS when they went back to their dad's house. That may have been after we were there. The kids didn't go to visit their parents when we were there.

40. We didn't get any negative feedback or complaint when we were at Quarriers. Until we were contacted by the Inquiry. I never knew anything about QDR making these allegations. We were lucky, we had nice staff, and we never had any problems.

Discipline and Punishment

41. We didn't ever hit the children in our care. There was no corporal punishment. I never hit my own child and I wouldn't do that to any of the children placed with us, we wouldn't put our jobs on the line. If there was any bad behaviour, the child would be sent to bed early, but we never had anything serious happen. I think the children got the belt at school, but I am not aware of any of the children we had being belted.
42. The allegation of hitting the children with a wooden spoon is just not true. There was no corporal punishment in our cottage.

Abuse

43. We were not aware of any abuse at Quarriers. If there had been a concern on the part of any of our children, they could have come and talked to us about it. QDR was free to speak to us, but she didn't say anything about abuse or anything. Mr Mortimer didn't ever discuss QDR making a complaint. QDR has given a statement to the Inquiry and has claimed that QEA forced her to peel potatoes and was angry if she made the peelings too thick. I deny that, I have no memory of having any of the children peeling potatoes, unless perhaps QEA was trying to show them how to cook something. I was the one who peeled the potatoes when I made chips for fish and chips on Fridays.
44. QDR has also complained about shoe polishing, but it was the staff in the cottage who would put the shoe polish on the shoes and polish them. The children might help to finish off the polishing, but we didn't let the children put the polish on because there would be too much mess. We didn't have QDR or any of the others, polishing big boots.

45. We didn't force [QDR] to eat liver, it would be dangerous to try to force food into a child's mouth as they could choke. If any of the children didn't like what we gave them, we would try to encourage them to try it, or give them longer to eat to see if they changed their mind but if they still didn't eat it we would take it away and get them something else.
46. In her statement to the Inquiry, [QDR] made mention of her teddy bear, but I have no recollection of this. I think [QDR] must have got her teddy at a time before we were there, because she was the youngest child to begin with and then others arrived. I think she may have been jealous of the younger ones because we necessarily had to spend more time caring for them. What I can say, is that anything a child had was theirs. If any of the older ones had something that we thought one of the younger ones might like, it was usually [QEA] would ask the older child if she could give it to the younger, but if they said, "no" that would be it, we wouldn't take it from them.
47. I am not aware of [QDR] going to Overbridge, I have never heard of a place called that, nor can I recall Mr and Mrs [QAX/QCN]
48. [QDR] has said that she was raped, and that [QEA] made her go to the hospital alone. I do not believe this. If [QDR] had said something like that to [QEA], I am sure she would have taken her and supported her. [QDR] has said that she was thirteen when this happened, but I am sure she was only ten or eleven when we left, so it must have been after our time.
49. [QDR] has also alleged that we were sacked from Quarriers. That is not true. We left after five years due to family reasons and [QEA] worked in a school for children with special needs and a care home after Quarriers.
50. I don't know whom [QDR] is referring to as, "the [QHK]." I can't recall there being a [REDACTED]. We would just have got new [REDACTED] from the clothing store. I can't understand why [QDR] is saying these things.

51. I was not aware of any abuse at any of the other cottages in Quarriers, if I had been aware of anything like that, I would have reported it. You just don't know what goes on behind closed doors. When we saw other house parents, it was just to chat to them outside. We didn't go into each other's houses for a coffee or anything. The people who came to pick up the laundry and other visitors of that type didn't have access to the children. I suppose the tradesmen working in Quarriers would have had access to the children. The electrician was based next to our cottage, and the children were in and out of there all the time. There was no specific system for protecting the children, it was just as if we were living in a normal street.
52. The police have never contacted me regarding anything at Quarriers. The first mention of anything was the letter we received from the Inquiry. We were never contacted by Quarriers about any allegations of abuse.
53. QDR was never difficult, she wasn't cheeky, she never ran away, and the relationship between her and her brother QNS was good. I never noticed any major change in QDR behaviour.

Leaving Quarriers

54. It was very difficult leaving the children but we had to think about our own family needs. My mother was getting older and it was getting difficult for her to make the journey from Heywood Heath to see us. It was becoming too long a journey to see her granddaughter and there was also the fact that our daughter was coming up to school age. We moved half way between my parents and QEA's parents. I worked as a plumber at a building firm in Newcastle and QEA worked in a school for children with special needs. I became unwell and the doctor said it was from dampness coming up from the river near us, so we moved away. Also, by that time my mother was becoming unwell so we decided to move nearer her and QEA got in touch with [REDACTED] where she worked before. They offered her a flat so she could cover sick leave or holidays. Then a job came up at Cobham and she worked there for ten years.

- 55. We still keep in touch with [REDACTED] QNU and [REDACTED] QNV exchanging Christmas cards etc. They kept in touch with Mrs Mack, and got in touch with us through her.

- 56. My memories of our time at Quarriers are all very positive, and I am proud of the work that we did there.

- 57. 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..... [REDACTED] QEK

Dated. 12-10-2018