

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AJE

Support person present: Yes. [REDACTED]

1. My name is [REDACTED] AJE [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1953. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I lived with my dad and step mum initially in [REDACTED] then [REDACTED] Edinburgh. My dad was [REDACTED]. My step mum was called [REDACTED]. It was only when I was an adult that I learned that she wasn't my actual mum. I thought, and treated her as if she was my mum. My real mum died when I was four years old. I had fourteen brothers and sisters and I was the youngest. I also had other step brothers and step sisters. My brother [REDACTED] was two years older than me. I don't really know the ages of all my other brothers and sisters. When I was living at home in Edinburgh, as far as I can remember, there was only my dad, step mum, [REDACTED] and myself.
3. I don't really remember much about my life at home before I went into care. I know I went to Craigentenny Primary School and I spent a lot of time playing outside my house with my brother [REDACTED].
4. When I was eight, [REDACTED] and I broke into a school and caused malicious damage. The police arrested us and we were put in a cell in the police station. I remember my dad came to the police station. I don't really remember much about what happened after that but we ended up at Redhall Children's Home. From then I had a social worker, Miss Talbot.

Redhall House Children's Home, Edinburgh

5. I think we might have been at Redhall Children's Home for a week. I don't remember much about Redhall. Miss Talbot came and took me and [REDACTED] from Redhall to Aberlour. We went by train. I was sick on the train because it was such a long journey. No one told me where we were going or why.

Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour

6. Aberlour Orphanage was a big detached building and the buildings seem to go on forever. It had its own school, a swimming pool, and a farm. There were five or six houses. I was put into one of the houses called Spey House and I think it was for the younger boys. I was in Spey House all my time at Aberlour. There were probably thirty boys in Spey House. The oldest boy was probably about twelve. There were girls in some of the other houses. We only ever saw the children from the other houses when we were at school or out playing.
7. The house master and house mistress who ran Spey House were Mr Lee and Miss [REDACTED] AJF Mr Lee and Miss [REDACTED] AJF were not on at the same time and they seemed to work alternately a couple of days at a time. They were not related and they slept in the same room at different times. Mr Lee would have been about thirty or forty. There was another man there called Mr Monty. He was an older man and had been a soldier. He told us lots of war time stories. Miss Mitchell came sometimes and I think she filled in if Mr Lee or Miss [REDACTED] AJF weren't there. Another woman Miss Clark was there for a while as well. I think she was a student. The warden, [REDACTED] lived in the cottage right next to Spey House. I assume he was in charge of Mr Lee and Miss [REDACTED] AJF [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
8. As you enter Spey House there was a porch and on either side were pigeon holes. We put our everyday shoes on one side and on the other was our Sunday best shoes and sandals. Further into the house there was a long corridor with a granite floor. On

the left, just off the corridor, was the day room. In there was the dining room and television. Just opposite that was the bathroom. In the bathroom were two baths and through from that were the toilets. Next was the main dormitory where we all slept. There were beds on both sides of the dorm and it had a wooden floor. Mr Lee and Miss **AJF**'s bedroom was opposite the dormitory.

Routine at Aberlour

First day

9. I don't remember actually arriving at Aberlour Orphanage on our first day. I seem to recall we were taken to the infirmary which is within Aberlour. That first day and I ran away. We didn't get very far. We ran past the house of a woman I now know to be Mrs Gray, a cleaner in Aberlour. She saw us and she must have phoned somebody. I can't remember who caught us but we were taken back. Nothing happened to us for running away.

Mornings and bedtime

10. The house master or the house mistress would wake us up, usually about seven o'clock. I would get up, grab my towel, go through and get washed in cold water then brush my teeth. I would then get dressed and go for breakfast.
11. It was usually about nine o'clock at night that we would be told it was time for bed. We got a cup of cocoa and a rock cake. We put our pyjama's on and went to bed. Sometimes Miss **AJF** would read a story to us or a couple of chapters from a book.

Mealtimes/Food

12. Breakfast was usually things like porridge, eggs, bacon, toast and a glass of milk or cup of tea. At school lunchtime we would go back to the house for our dinner. We would eat all our meals in the dining room. There were tables of four set out. We could

sit where we wanted. Sometimes I would sit with my brother but we both had our own friends. Hot meals were cooked elsewhere and we had to go and collect it in big steel containers in a trolley. The house master or house mistress would dish up the food. I had a real dislike for fish. It was either rolled up or battered. It was bony and I just couldn't eat it.

13. Sometimes the food was alright. My favourite food was the buttery rolls which we got. At the weekends, sometimes we didn't get a hot meal. We just got sandwiches. Occasionally, in the summer, they made up a picnic for us and we would take it out to the woods.

Washing/bathing

14. The two baths were almost joined together and we used to queue up waiting for our turn. We sat on the benches, in our dressing gowns. Two would have a bath then when they got out two got in. After six or so had bathed they changed the water for the next lot.

Clothing / uniform

15. For school we wore shoes, stockings, grey shorts and a belt with a snake type fastener, grey shirt and tie, pullover and a jacket. We had kilts which we wore on special occasions or for church on a Sunday. We got other clothes in the summer. The orphanage provided all of these clothes. They were all kept in a store like an army store where all the equipment was kept in compartments. It was a uniform we wore. We always got new clothes. We were well provided for.
16. We were all given numbers when we started at Aberlour. I was number [REDACTED] All my clothes had a number sewn into them so I knew what was mine. Later on when someone left I became number [REDACTED]

Personal possessions

17. Beside my bed was a locker where I could keep my personal stuff. I didn't really have anything to put in the locker.

School

18. The school I went to was within the grounds and was only a couple of minutes walk away from Spey House. Miss Beattie was my teacher. I was great at English but was terrible at maths. Once I got a bag of sweets for getting all my questions correct. The headmaster was Mr Tommy Robertson. He was also in charge of the farm. We got home from school about three o'clock.
19. This school was only for primary aged children. After primary school I went to Aberlour High School. I wasn't there for very long because I was moved to live at the Neuk at Hopeman. I would have been about thirteen. When I lived there I went to Lossiemouth High School. The headmaster, Mr Campbell, who was nicknamed Biff was very handy at giving the belt. That school was brilliant because they taught me lots of practical skills. They were building a chimney so I learned how to lay bricks. There were other workshops with mechanics where a car was taken to bits. There were other things like navigation and making electronic circuit boards. I was never treated any differently at school because I lived in the orphanage.

Religion

20. We used to go to church twice on a Sunday, the morning service and then the evening service. We went to St Margaret's which was just outside the grounds. We didn't have a choice. We had to wear our kilts. I didn't go to church before I went to Aberlour. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. It was an Episcopalian church. We did get some other religious instruction at Aberlour.

Chores

21. We used to put newsletters into envelopes that got sent out. I think part of that was looking for donations. After breakfast we were given jobs to do like cleaning the floors. There was a tin of orange polish which was put down and then we had to go in rows and buff it up. I got lots of splinters in my knees. There was a big heavy thing called a buffer which had to get pushed back and forward. It was hard work but the worst job was being on your hands and knees polishing the floor with the cloth. There were probably other jobs but I am not sure what they were. Mine was polishing the floors and we did that once a week. I can't remember doing any other chores. If somebody ran away we would be told to do our chores until the runaway came back. We were all punished because they had run away.
22. I used to volunteer to help Mr Robertson, the farm manager, pick potatoes in the fields. I loved doing that because I got out of school and I got some extra pocket money.

Leisure time

23. There was a big football field outside where we could play. Sometimes we would play rounders. There was nothing like a swing park. When we got home from school we just did our own thing. We would go out and play, read a book or watch the television. Miss AJF or Mr Lee were always there or thereabouts watching us. If you misbehaved you would get sent to your bed.
24. Occasionally they would have cinema nights and show movies in the big hall. I remember once being scared when they showed the black and white version of the 'Phantom of the Opera'. I couldn't watch it and I went to my bed. Most nights I would just watch the television.
25. We were allowed to go down to the village usually on a Saturday. We had to go in a group. Other times a whole lot of us got on a bus to go to the cinema in Elgin. There was a swimming pool at Aberlour which we got to use. It was supposed to be heated but it was always freezing. I learned to swim there.

26. Miss **AJF** took us once to a farm. **[REDACTED]** It was near Craigellachie and was called Danderleith farm. We saw the cows getting milked. It was very interesting.

Trips / holidays

27. On a Sunday we used to go for walks. When I was very young we used to go in groups and would walk to Craigellachie. It was only about a mile away. We would then cross over and walk back on the other side so we did a sort of loop. As we got older you were allowed to pick a friend and you could go out for a walk together.
28. We were taken to the Neuk at Hopeman when it was a holiday home. Hopeman is a small village up north somewhere. We went there for a holiday. It was near a harbour and a beach. We went there once a year. We also went by ferry from Wemyss bay to the island of Rothesay. We stayed in a guest house. I enjoyed it. They always threatened us that if we misbehaved they wouldn't let us go on holiday but I am not aware of anyone ever getting left behind. Rothesay was great. I really enjoyed it. Mr Lee or Miss **AJF** came with us.
29. We got taken to the Royal Navy Air base at Lossiemouth on their open day. The planes used to fly over and drop wee bags of sweets on a parachute. It was great fun.
30. Some of the boys had what were called 'Timex aunties'. These women came from the Timex watch factory in Dundee once a year. They visited the boys and took them out for the day and would buy them sweets and things like that. I never had a Timex auntie. I was jealous at the time but I just used to play football in the park.

Birthdays and Christmas

31. Christmas was special. There was a real Christmas tree which was decorated. On Christmas Eve we would go to the big hall and Santa would give us our present. On Christmas morning we would get a selection box and a Christmas stocking with an orange, and some other stuff. We had a Christmas dinner and then there would be a

dance at night in the big hall. Miss Talbot gave me an Air-fix plane to build. I got a present from the orphanage as well. On Boxing Day we got other presents. We got to keep our presents although I am not sure what happened to them all.

32. Next door to Spey House was another building called 'Room 19'. It was an Aladdin's cave of toys. On my birthday [REDACTED] took me in there and told me to pick something. She didn't give you very long to choose and she rushed you into choosing something. On my birthday I think I got a birthday cake.

Pocket money

33. We got pocket money every Saturday. We got two shillings. We were allowed to keep one shilling and the other one we had to save to spend when we went to Rothesay on holiday. We used to go to the shops in the village and buy comics. My brother suggested that we all buy different comics and swap them once we had read them. That was a better idea than us all having our own copy of the Hotspur.

Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention

34. I never saw my mum or dad all the time that I was in Aberlour. I never had any contact with them. My brother [REDACTED] after he left, wrote a letter to me saying he was going to come and visit me along with my other brothers. I never got that letter. Mr [REDACTED] BGF replied by letter to [REDACTED] saying that he wasn't allowed to come.

35. I saw Miss Talbot, my social worker, occasionally. Usually if it was if I had got into trouble. I think the only time I saw her was when she took me to the Neuk at Hopeman when I was leaving Aberlour.

Healthcare

36. If you weren't well at any time you would just tell the house master or mistress and they would deal with it. When I was at Aberlour I got double pneumonia. I was taken to a local village hospital and I was there for a few days. There was a school dentist

and I saw him quite regularly. We were well cared for medically and we got regular check-ups. We were checked for nits.

Running away

37. I remember finding a Swan Vesta match box and in it was a £5 note. Me and [REDACTED] dressed up in Scout gear and ran away. We ended up in Tomintoul and stayed in a hotel that night using the £5. I was maybe ten or eleven years old. The following morning we bought cigarettes in a shop and when we came out the police were waiting for us. We got taken back.

Bed wetting

38. There were a few who had problems with wetting the bed. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] regularly wet the bed. I think they had rubber sheets on their beds. In the morning they inspected our sheets. If you had wet your bed you had to tell them. The sheets were just taken away to the laundry and they got clean sheets. I am not aware of anyone getting punished.

Discipline

39. Mr Lee and Miss [REDACTED] AJF would deal with minor misbehaviour. They knew that I wanted to watch the television so if I misbehaved they would send me to my bed. On a school day the earliest I was ever sent to bed was probably five o'clock. At the weekend it could have been two o'clock. I was still allowed to get up and have my meals but then I would get sent back to my bed again. If it was something serious I would get sent to see Mr [REDACTED] BGF. He used the belt. If you ran away, or were caught smoking or swearing you would get sent to him. He would belt my bare backside.
40. No one ever gave me any sort of progress report or advice about how I should behave or that I should improve my behaviour.

Abuse at Aberlour

41. Mr Lee woke me and got me out my bed a few times and took me out into the corridor. He would make me take my pyjamas off, put my hands on my head and tell me to stand there. The porch doors were wide open, and this was in the winter. With the granite or marble floor and the cold air blowing through I was freezing and he made me stand there naked for hours. I don't know why he made me do that. He was running a risk that someone else would go the toilet and see me standing there.
42. Another thing he did was he woke me up and took me into his room. He made me strip, then forced my head between his legs. He put his willy in my mouth. I was gagging and was nearly sick. He then tried to put his penis up my bum. It was really sore but he never actually penetrated me. I was wriggling about too much and was screaming and he gave up. He tried this on several other occasions but never penetrated me. I think I was nine or ten the first time that he tried to do this to me.
43. The abuse from Mr Lee wasn't every night. It was always at night and it probably went on for around a year. I am not aware of any other boys getting taken out the dorm. I assumed that it was only happening to me.
44. If I was bad I would get sent to see Mr **BGF** Mr **BGF** would strap me with a belt. He would tell me "trousers down" then grab me and push my head between his legs. He would then hit me with a leather belt on my bare backside. He hit me six or seven times.
45. I remember one time I had a sty on my eye and Miss **AJF** slapped me on the face and my sty burst. I reacted and I hit her with the back of my hand. I got sent to Mr **BGF** and he gave me the belt on my backside.
46. One evening when we were watching the television I got into trouble for talking. Miss **AJF** told me to stop talking but I didn't. She then made me stand in the corner facing the wall. I got into more trouble for trying to turn round and see the television.

47. I couldn't eat the fish we got at mealtimes because I didn't like it. It was bony. They would stand over me and tell me that I had to eat it. As soon as they turned their back I would put it in my pocket and later flush it down the toilet. They knew I couldn't eat it. There was some meat I couldn't eat either.
48. Although I got sexually abused at Aberlour I actually enjoyed the rest of my time there. They were very fair to us. I suppose Miss [AJF] was sometimes quite warm and nice. Mr Lee however was cold and I could never relate to him. He was very aloof. He definitely was not a father figure to me. He was a bully and I was terrified of him.
49. My dad died in 1967, not long before I left Aberlour. I didn't get to go to his funeral because it was in Edinburgh which was too far away. I would have liked to have gone but it didn't happen.

Reporting of abuse at Aberlour

50. I had a friend at Aberlour called [BCS]. He lived in the same house as me. One day when we were doing one of our Sunday walks to Craigellachie he realised that there was something wrong with me. He asked what was wrong and I told him what Mr Lee had done to me. He must have told Miss [AJF] because she later asked me about it. She sent me through to see Mr [BGF] and the police were there. I told them what had happened with Mr Lee. I thought I had done something wrong and was going to be in trouble.
51. I got sent up to Aberdeen with another boy to go and see a doctor. We were examined but I knew he hadn't penetrated me so I wasn't injured. No one ever mentioned it after we came back to Aberlour. No one told me what the police did. I was never offered any counselling or anything like that. Looking back I probably didn't see Mr Lee again at Aberlour and I probably just thought he had done a runner or something.
52. There was no-one else at Aberlour who I could have told about what Mr Lee was doing to me. There was no-one else in there that I could trust. I did not want to tell my brother.

53. It was only recently my brother [REDACTED] told me the police arrested Mr Lee after I gave my statement. He apparently went to court and was sent to prison for seven to ten years. I wasn't aware of this at the time when I was at Aberlour.

Leaving Aberlour

54. I remember leaving Aberlour and I went to a place called 'The Neuk' in Hopeman. I think the orphanage was closing down because they were sending children to smaller homes. I didn't really know much about it. I was just told to get my stuff together and I was taken to Hopeman. This was in 1967 so I would have been fourteen.

Life after Aberlour Orphanage

55. The Neuk in Hopeman was near Elgin. It was a couple who ran it. I didn't make any real friends there. I didn't really like anyone there and no-one liked me. I wasn't there very long. I am not sure how long but it was only for a very short time.
56. I went back to Redhall Children's Home but only for a few weeks. I had to go to Firrhill High School when I was there. My brother [REDACTED] must have been in touch with the social work department and they must have said they were prepared to take me. I then went to live with my brother and when I was with him I went to Craigroyston High School. I left school at fifteen without any qualifications. After I left there I went to a working boy's hostel in Haymarket in Edinburgh. I got a job as an apprentice baker. I left and got a job working at a dairy.
57. When I was living with my brother I got support and help from the social work department. They helped me when I needed clothes. I can't remember if they gave me vouchers or cash to buy clothes. It was a male social worker and he worked from the Rothesay Place social work office. He helped me for around a year. After that I was on my own and I was probably sixteen by then.

Life after care

58. I worked on the fishing trawler boats for three years. I ended up in Ayr where I met a girl and I missed the boat when it left. I got friendly with the crew of another boat and ended up as a cook on that boat. We went up and down the west coast. I have done loads of jobs over the years. I have delivered coal, worked as a seaman, spray painter, bus driver, fork lift driver and many more.
59. I spent three months at Glenochil detention centre because I stole a motorbike in Edinburgh when I was sixteen or seventeen. I then ended up in borstal at Castle Huntly in Dundee. I had got into the wrong company and was breaking into shops. I was a tearaway when I was younger. It was probably when I got married to my first wife when I was 22 that I settled down. That marriage only lasted five years because she started mucking about with another man. I subsequently met [REDACTED] and we have been married for 32 years. We have two children and two grandchildren.

Impact

60. When I was at Aberlour I couldn't eat when Mr Lee was in the dining room. He would be standing there and I was terrified of him. I ended up going to see the doctor and he suggested I eat my meals in the infirmary which was within Aberlour. I can't remember if the doctor asked me if there was a reason why I wasn't eating. I ate fine when I was at the infirmary because Mr Lee wasn't there.
61. I don't think my life has been badly affected by my time in care. I still have the philosophy that if someone is nice to me then I am nice to them. I trust people and until they let me down I treat them as a friend. I know that I was a rebel when I was at Aberlour but I am sure my bad behaviour was because of what Mr Lee was doing to me.
62. My first marriage failed and I had a bad time with that. My wife, when we split up, started going with another guy. He came to my house, even though he took an interdict

out to stop me from approaching him. My wife had bruises on her face and I knew he had beaten her up. I started arguing with him and I hit him. He fell over a fence into a basement and I thought I had killed him. I was arrested and went to court. I was charged with attempted murder but by the time it went to court the judge saw my side of the story and it was thrown out.

63. What has happened to me hasn't had an effect on my sex life. I think that is normal. I don't go to church. I think I got enough of that when I was at Aberlour. My education could have been better but I suppose I get by. I don't really think I would be a different person if I hadn't gone into care.
64. I don't know if my relationship with my brothers and sisters would have been any different because [REDACTED] and I were the youngest and the rest were all older. They never really stayed with us at the family home when we were there. What did have a massive effect on me was when [REDACTED] left Aberlour orphanage two years before me. He had always been there for me. He was there every day and I saw him all the time. I didn't get any warning that he was leaving. I came home from school one day and he was gone. I think it was after he left that I started to rebel and became disruptive.

Treatment / support

65. I have never felt the need to seek any support or counselling. I have put everything that happened to me in care behind me and I just look forward now. I have tried my best to forget all about it.

Reporting of Abuse

66. I have never reported anything that happened to me to the police since I left Aberlour.

Records

67. I went on to Aberlour Orphanage website probably in 2006 and I saw photographs of people I recognised. It said that if you wanted your records you could contact them. I phoned the number that was given and asked for them. I got a letter back some time later from Anne Black, one of the governors of the Aberlour Trust. She said that she was responsible for searching for the information and apologised for the delay but I got my records. Some of the entries in my records are not true. I still have this letter.
68. In my records it says that I wouldn't eat food at meal times. The reason I wasn't eating was because when Mr Lee was there I was scared and frightened of him and it put me off my food. It was Mr Lee who had written this and he was the reason I couldn't eat. It says that I had an eating disorder. I never had any problems with food before Mr Lee started sexually abusing me.
69. It also says in my records that I was frequently tired. There is no wonder that I was tired when I look back. Mr Lee had me standing naked for hours in that freezing cold corridor and even when I got back to my bed I couldn't sleep.
70. In my records it mentions a social worker called Mr Miller but I don't remember him. It also says that I was a chronic bed-wetter but that was not true. In another part it says that when I was at the Neuk I was uncontrollable and they took offensive weapons from me. This was not true. I have never had an offensive weapon.
71. My brother [REDACTED] after he left, wrote a letter to me telling me that he was going to bring my brothers to visit me. I never got that letter until I applied for my records. The letter was dated 13 August 1967. There was a reply from M [REDACTED] BGF telling my brother he wasn't allowed to visit. He said that set procedures must be followed to be allowed to visit. I still have these letters and I can give them to the Inquiry if they want them.
72. In my records was a letter from the warden at Aberlour Orphanage dated the 3 October 1963. It was addressed to Mr Miller the children's officer based in Castle Terrace, Edinburgh. It says that me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had been indecently interfered

with by our former house father. It further stated that the police had been informed, we had been medically examined and that the house father had been prosecuted and sent to prison.

Lessons to be learned

- 73. Children should regularly get told about their progress and where they are failing. I didn't get any guidance. I should have been taken aside and told where I was going wrong and that I should behave. I think it would be good for children in care to be able to speak to someone who has been through the system and they could give advice. Someone who would sit down and spend a bit of time and give a bit direction, telling them where they are going wrong and what to expect if their behaviour continued.
- 74. I believe there are safeguards now in place and Disclosure has made a big difference in protecting children in care. People must continue to be carefully vetted before they get to work in these places.

Other information

- 75. 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 15/10/18