

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LYF

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is LYF I am known as LYF and my surname when I was born was LYF My date of birth is 1933 and I am presently eighty-five years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

General

2. I was born in Edinburgh and put into care at Nazareth House in Kilmarnock when I was seven years old. I went back to stay with my father when I was about ten, but I was only with him for a short time before I was put into the Home of the Good Shepherd at Colinton in Edinburgh. While I was there, when I was fourteen years old, I was sent as a child migrant to Australia and put into a care home there.

Life before going into care

3. My mother was and my father was LYA I have an older sister and an older brother or as we called him. They're all dead now.
4. My mother left when I was three years old and my father's mother came and looked after us all for a while. Eventually it got too much for her and my father looked after us on his own. I think I became a bit of a street kid. My father was a night-watchman

and used to sleep all day so we just used to roam the streets. He also used to knock me around a bit.

5. A few years later my sister broke her arm and we went to the hospital with her. The hospital staff must have noticed we weren't very well cared for and I think they must have organised for us all to go into care.
6. My sister and I went to Nazareth House at Kilmarnock and my brother went to somewhere in Fife and then somewhere else at Spean Bridge.

Life in care - Scotland

Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

General

7. I have been shown a document which contains information regarding my entry into Nazareth House at Kilmarnock on [REDACTED] 1941, when I was seven years old. The document shows my name and date of birth, that I was born in Edinburgh and that I was baptised at the Sacred Heart Church in Edinburgh. That is correct.
8. According to other details on the document, I left Nazareth House at Kilmarnock on [REDACTED] 1943 when I would have been ten years old. I don't specifically remember that it was [REDACTED]
9. All the children there were girls and some old ladies stayed there as well. Other than my sister [REDACTED] I don't remember any of the other girls' names. I remember the children all wore a uniform, but I can't remember what it was like. The Sisters of Nazareth who ran the home were very strict, however I can't remember any of their names either.

Mornings and bedtime

10. We slept in a big dormitory with at least fifty beds in it. We were woken up about five o'clock in the morning and all went to Mass. After that we went to school.
11. Bedtime was at seven o'clock when we'd kneel at the side of our beds and say prayers. Once we got into bed we weren't allowed to get out during the night at all. Not even to go to the toilet.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

12. There was a big bath at Nazareth House, which was always very hot. We'd all have to sit on the side while one girl got in and washed. She would then get out and a nun would dry her while another girl would get in. I don't think the water was ever changed.

Mealtimes

13. Meals were actually better than I was getting at home. I think I was one of those greedy kids that ate everything. I never had any trouble with the food.

Schooling

14. The school was within Nazareth House, although I can't remember much about it. All I do remember is being in class one time and asking to go to the toilet. I was told I couldn't and had to sit down again. I wet myself of course and left a stain on the floor. Every time we polished the floors after that the nuns would make comment and embarrass me.

Leisure time

15. I don't remember having any toys to play with or any books. We did go on long walks up the hills and slide in the heather. That was great fun.

Healthcare

16. I think I was always pretty healthy and I certainly don't remember going to the doctor or the dentist. I can't remember ever having to brush my teeth either. We did at home, my father used to tell me to put my finger up the lum and use the soot to clean my teeth.

Religious instruction

17. We were at church a lot in Glasgow. As well as Mass in the morning, we'd have the Angelus at twelve o'clock and Benediction at night. In the six weeks leading up to Our Lady of Assumption Day on 15 August, which we called Lent, we weren't allowed to talk.

Work

18. We used to have to scrub and polish all the floors. When the nuns weren't around we'd slide up and down on the big blanket that was used for polishing the floors.

Christmas and Birthdays

19. If it was someone's birthday, we could go up and see the old ladies that stayed in the home and they would give us jam and bread. That was our birthday treat and it was wonderful. It sounds awful now.

20. I was never allowed to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when we weren't allowed to talk. It was only on the day after, on Our Lady of Assumption Day, that I was allowed to go and see the ladies.

Visitors

21. People used to come to the home every so often and look over all the girls to see who they might want to adopt. We would all be made to stand like sheep and smile at them. I was a little ugly thing and I used to think that someone might take me, but of course they never did.

22. My father never visited and nobody else ever came to see my sister or me. Officials did come and inspect the place sometimes. I remember because we would all be made to dress up for them. We would only speak to them with a nun supervising.

Trips and holidays

23. My dad used to take [REDACTED] and me home for the holidays when I'd have to work, delivering papers to the tenement houses. I was the only girl doing it, the rest were all boys.

Emotional care/support

24. I was a very timid child in those days. I never spoke to anybody about anything. I don't think I would have known who to speak anyway, even if I'd wanted to.

Air raids

25. I was in Nazareth House during the war and I remember the air raids vividly, they were very scary. We'd wake up with the sirens going off and all the kids would be screaming at once. The nuns would come round and try and hustle us down the stairs to the basement where we'd sit praying for hours sometimes.

Bedwetting

26. I was a bed wetter, I think it was nerves because I'd been knocked around by my father. Bedwetters used to have to stand with a sheet over their heads in front of everybody and wouldn't get any breakfast. It was very embarrassing.
27. They used to make us take our knickers off at night and one of the older girls would smell them. I was always in trouble and would be made to stand in the corner with my pants on my head.
28. If I wet the bed, even if it was freezing outside I regularly used to lie under my bed so my sheets would dry by the morning.

Nature and frequency of abuse

29. The older girls at Nazareth House did all the disciplining, knocking us around with a cane across the legs. That was their job, the nuns never disciplined us so much.
30. I think one of the nuns did knock me around with a cane one time. I got into trouble during Lent in 1943 and I had bruises all over my arms

Reporting of abuse

31. I was used to getting knocked around by my father so I probably didn't think much of it at Nazareth House. After my sister saw the bruises from the nun caning me during Lent, she snuck out a letter to my dad to tell him.

Leaving Nazareth House, Kilmarnock

32. When my father learned I had been knocked around, he came and took my sister [REDACTED] and I away. Even though he had been doing the same he was very angry. I don't think he ever reported it to anybody, I certainly never did.
33. I was only back home with my father for a short time before I was put into the Home of the Good Shepherd in Edinburgh. My sister went to stay with my grandmother so there was only my brother [REDACTED] and I with Dad.
34. Around 1945, a letter came for my uncle [REDACTED] my dad's brother, and [REDACTED] and I opened it. Dad eventually found out and, after he'd knocked us around, he got us put away in the Home of the Good Shepherd at Colinton in Edinburgh. Opening that letter changed my life.

Woodfield Children's Home, Colinton, Edinburgh

General

35. I knew the convent in Edinburgh as the Home of the Good Shepherd, although I believe it was actually called Woodfield Children's Home. I think it was run by the Good Shepherd sisters, however I can't remember any of their names.
36. I loved it there, it wasn't as strict as Nazareth House had been.

Mornings and bedtime

37. The routine was much the same at Colinton as it had been at Nazareth House. We would pray as soon as we got up and then go for breakfast and then go to school. As at Nazareth House, we went to bed early, but I think we were allowed to get up to go to the toilet during the night. I wasn't a bedwetter at Colinton.

Mealtimes

38. We had lunch at school and the rest of our meals were taken in the home. Meals were better there, I enjoyed them. I don't remember what happened to anyone that didn't eat their food, I certainly wasn't one.

Clothing

39. We wore a lovely uniform at Colinton. I had been a pretty raggedy kid and the green skirt with the nice blouses we wore were beautiful.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

40. We had a hot bath once a week. It was much the same as it had been at Nazareth House, we'd all line up and have our baths in turn.

Leisure time

41. For leisure we would amuse ourselves playing ball or skipping. I loved dancing and a whole lot of us would get up on the stage there and act the goat. I don't remember there being any books or toys.
42. We were never allowed to go out. I never went to see my father while I was at the Good Shepherd.

Schooling

43. We older girls went to St Thomas of Aquinas School in Edinburgh and I enjoyed it, I was the teacher's pet. We got there by walking down Woodhall Road and then catching the bus. I don't think the younger girls went out to school.
44. We were given homework to do and the nuns gave us time to do it back at the home, although we never got any help with it. We were never given any instruction on life skills by either the school or the nuns.

Healthcare

45. I don't remember much about healthcare. I would never speak up about any health issues I might have had. At one time I had chilblains and went to bed with my boots on. I never reported it. On another occasion I think I had tonsillitis and it was only after I collapsed that I was taken to go to hospital where I had to stay a while.

Religious instruction

46. Just as at Nazareth House, religion was a big part of the routine. There were prayers in the morning and before bed, as well as Mass in the morning, Benediction at night and church on Sunday.

Work

47. We had chores to do, including working in the laundry, scrubbing and polishing the floors. Everybody had jobs to do.

Christmas and birthdays

48. I don't remember anything about Christmas or birthdays so there can't have been any celebrations. We had no personal possessions and so would never have got any presents.

Visitors

49. Nobody visited me. I think my family thought of me as a bad girl, which was why my dad had put me away in the home. I don't remember there being any inspections either.

Emotional care/support

50. Although the nuns were much nicer in Colinton, I would never have spoken to them if I had any worries or concerns. We all just kept to ourselves really.

Discipline

51. The nuns were pretty strict, we did as we were told, but I never got knocked around at Colinton. I don't think any other girls were knocked around either. The punishment if any of us didn't do what we were told was that we would get extra chores to do.

Migration

Selection/information

52. While I was at school, all the girls from Colinton were interviewed by some people and asked if we wanted to go to Australia. I don't know who those people were. I didn't know where Australia was and I just thought why not?

53. When my school teacher found out I was going she gave me books on Australia so I had some idea before it came time for me to leave.

Migration papers

54. I have a been shown copies of two migration forms that appear to relate to me. One is dated [REDACTED] 1947, the other is dated [REDACTED] 1947.
55. My father couldn't read or write, but both forms have a signature on them giving permission for me to go over. Someone else must have signed them for him. The signatures are slightly different:
56. Dad thought I was going to Perth in Scotland, not in Australia. Apparently he was very upset when he found out how far away it was.
57. I don't remember getting any health tests or assessments carried out before migration.

Leaving Scotland

58. My teacher at school used to tell everybody I was going to Australia and all the girls came to see me off at Waverley train station in Edinburgh. My dad came to see me off as well, along with my uncle [REDACTED] and my sister [REDACTED]. My schoolfriends and my family had all brought me beautiful presents, my grandmother had given me a nice pair of fluffy red slippers.
59. We were well dressed, they gave us lovely clothes to travel in as well as a big suitcase. I had all my clothes and all the presents I had been given inside the suitcase but I never saw any of them again when I got to Australia.
60. We travelled by train from Edinburgh to Southampton and I remember seeing all the bomb damage in London.

Journey on the RMS 'Ormonde'

61. The ship we were on was called the Ormonde and it left Southampton in [REDACTED] 1947, when I would have been fourteen years old.
62. It was fun on board the ship. The lady that was supposed to be looking after us was going over to Australia to get married, but she was carrying on with one of the stewards. She'd put us to bed and then left us. As soon as she'd gone we'd get up and run round the ship. There was no discipline and I was a proper menace.
63. We were never allowed off the ship because there were cholera outbreaks at the different ports we stopped in.

Arrival in Australia

64. I have been shown a copy of the passenger list for the Ormonde. The list records me as 'Miss [REDACTED] LYF [REDACTED] going to Fremantle, West Australia (WA). That is correct.
65. I remember arriving at Fremantle, it was so hot we couldn't believe it. As soon as we arrived we saw the wool sheds with all their broken windows. I was shocked and thought 'is this Australia'?
66. All the kids that had come on the ship were separated. Some went to Castledare, some went to Clontarf and some went to St Joseph's at Subiaco. Some children were from the same families so it was very upsetting for them getting separated.
67. I have also been shown a copy of a file about this sailing. It lists all the other girls from the Good Shepherd, including [REDACTED] and her sister [REDACTED] MDK [REDACTED] had been my friend in Colinton and we remained friends until she died just a few years ago. The file correctly records that I was sent to St Joseph's in Subiaco when I arrived.
68. We met the sister superior of St Joseph's, [REDACTED] LYB [REDACTED] in Fremantle. She was a big woman with a red face and was very strict. We were put right off. After that we were all put in a bus and taken to Subiaco.

Life in care – Australia

St Joseph's, Subiaco

General

69. St Joseph's was run by the Sisters of Mercy and was out of town, in a lot of grounds.
70. The nuns called us by our first names. I couldn't get used to being called LYF in Scotland I'd always been known as LYF

First day at institution

71. I was upset because I didn't know I was going to another home, especially one that was an orphanage. I thought I was going somewhere for a better life. The impression I had been given before we left was that people were maybe going to be taking us into their homes and caring for us.

Mornings and bedtime

72. As soon as I arrived I was told I was going to be working in the kitchen and not going to school. I used to have to get up at five o'clock in the morning to start work. The other kids got up later before they went to school. Bedtime was early and we all had to wash first.
73. I was aware that some other girls were wetting their beds, however by that time I had stopped wetting mine. The same punishment happened in Australia as had happened in Scotland. Bedwetters used to have to stand with a sheet over their heads in front of everybody and wouldn't get any breakfast.

Mealtimes

74. The nuns and priests had different meals from the children and ate separately. They had good meals, we children did not. They would have steak while the children had bread and dripping.
75. Dinner was about five or six in the evening and after that we had some leisure time.
76. One time I went into the fridge to get some meat for the stray cats and I gave them the priest's rump steak. I got a belting for that.

Clothing

77. We weren't allowed to wear shoes and the girls that went to school wore uniforms. I never went to school, I was put straight to work in the kitchen.
78. When my dad found out we didn't have shoes he sent me a pair of fur-lined boots. I never saw them again until I left, by which time they were too small for me.

Washing and bathing/Hygiene

79. St Joseph's was getting renovated when we arrived and there was only one big bath in a room with sand on the floor. We could only have a bath once a week and we each had to share with another girl. We all had to put a calico gown on and wash ourselves under the gown. I don't remember ever cleaning my teeth at St Joseph's either.
80. After the place had been done up there were more baths so we could all have a bath before bed every night if we wanted.

Leisure time

81. I'd finish work about half-past one in the afternoon and would go and have a wash. After that I'd go down and play with the other girls. Like the other places I'd been, we had to make our own fun. There were no books or toys.

82. There was a swing that we used to all play on and some of us would go on the stage, while others played hopscotch. Most of our leisure time was spent outside where there was also a pool. Even though the water was always green we'd still jump in.

Schooling

83. It was devastating for me not to have gone to the school. My report card from St Thomas of Aquinas came over with me and it was good so I'd hoped to be continuing my education.
84. I was told I wasn't getting to go to school because I was fourteen and yet there were other girls at school who were older than me.
85. The nuns taught me to sew and I became pretty good. As well as sewing, the nuns taught me cake decorating and teachers were brought in to give us elocution and swimming lessons.

Healthcare

86. There was an infirmary at St Joseph's and while I was there a lot of the kids got diphtheria. Some children died I think, although I don't know who they were. I think my friend [REDACTED] was a carrier and she was admitted to hospital in Perth.
87. Another child died while I was at St Joseph's. She was about nine and had been bitten by a mosquito. Again, I don't remember her name, but I don't think any of the children that died were child migrants.
88. There was no sex education at all, we were never even told about our periods. We used to steal the sheets, tear them up and use them when we had our periods. It was horrible.

Religious instruction

89. Like the other homes I'd been in, religion was a big part of daily life. We prayed all the time and had church every day.

Work

90. In the morning, as soon as I got up, I'd have to chop wood for the kitchen stoves. Once I'd got the stoves on I'd get the porridge on for breakfast and then prepare the veggies for lunch. I had to learn to cook because I hadn't done any before and I had to cook for all the nuns, the priests and all the kids.
91. I was never paid for any of the work that I did.

Christmas and Birthdays

92. Christmas was much the same as it had been in Scotland, we never got any presents. On Christmas Eve we used to have to get up and go to midnight Mass. When we got back to our dormitories there were all these lovely clothes at the end of our beds. I'd never known anything for Christmas anyway so I thought that was a real treat. The next morning all the clothes were gone and we never saw them again. We were never allowed to have any personal possessions.
93. One year I was so thrilled because I thought I was going to get something for being first in diving and second in swimming. I got an Easter egg. I suppose it was something.
94. Birthdays weren't celebrated either. Some of the kids used to have people come and see them who would bring them presents, but I never got anything.

Visitors

95. Nobody ever visited me while I was at St Joseph's.
96. There were inspections every so often and we had to work for weeks to get the place spruced up for them. When the inspectors came the nuns would put beautiful dolls on

our beds and we would get dressed up in shoes and socks. I don't know what happened to the dolls afterwards, we never saw them. None of the inspectors ever spoke to any of the girls.

Family

97. I got some letters from my family while I was at St Joseph's. My brother [REDACTED] had joined the army and he used to write from India. He was very shocked to find out I was in Australia. It was only when he went home on leave one time that he found out. I'd get letters from my father as well that someone had written for him and I'd write back. It was in one of those letters that I told him I had no shoes.

Emotional care/support

98. I had made friends with some of the other girls, but there was nobody I could turn to if I had any worries or concerns. By that time I was used to the lifestyle, I'd never had much else. I was upset to come over to Australia and find it was much the same, but there was nobody to turn to and speak to about that.

Nature and frequency of abuse

99. It wasn't as bad at St Joseph's Subiaco as it had been at Nazareth House although we were physically punished all the time.
100. [REDACTED] LYB [REDACTED] was very strict, we were really scared of her. I was always in trouble, I was always getting slapped by her. One of the girls has since told me that she saw me getting slapped across the face one time when I nearly fell on the floor. She said it was very upsetting.
101. I remember another day a girl had bought some lipstick and we all put some on. I was summoned up to see [REDACTED] LYB [REDACTED] who slapped me again and told me, "Get that war paint off your face".

102. Another time when I was about fifteen I took a jug of tea down to some carpenters who were working there. For a laugh they closed the door of the shed they were in when I was inside. The nuns couldn't find me and someone must have said I was still with the men. [REDACTED] LYB [REDACTED] found out and she slapped me across both sides of my face.
103. One of the nuns there, Sister [REDACTED] LYC [REDACTED] was very cruel. One of the girls didn't have a palate in her mouth and couldn't speak properly. Sister [REDACTED] LYC [REDACTED] used to tell her off and the girl would answer her back. One time I saw Sister [REDACTED] LYC [REDACTED] actually knock her down the stairs.
104. There was an older lady at St Joseph's who had been there from birth and who was disabled and fell over all the time. We kids just used to laugh at her and leave her until someone picked her up. She could be there for quite a while sometimes before any of the nuns noticed, it was awful really.
105. I never got hit with a stick or a cane at St Joseph's, it was always a slap across the face from the nuns. I think punishments were much the same for all the girls, I don't remember seeing anyone getting hit with a cane.

Reporting of abuse

106. I wouldn't have dared report any of the abuse. Even if I'd wanted to, there was nobody to speak to.

Life after St Joseph's, Subiaco

107. I went out to work when I was seventeen and it was only then that I started getting paid. Even so, I had to give the envelope with my pay to the nuns and they took the money. I was only allowed a certain amount, right up until I left. I never got any of that money back, I presume it had been kept for my keep.

108. I left St Joseph's when I was eighteen. I had to go to confession before I left and the priest told me whatever I did, never let a man put his hands under my clothes. That was all the education in life skills I got. I knew nothing about how to look after myself, budget or even how to use the telephone. I was on my own, there was no support whatsoever from St Joseph's after I left.
109. As I'd had no education and had become pretty good at sewing the nuns put me in a factory that made belts. We were shut in a small room and the smell of the glue used to really get to me. Eventually I was put on a machine and was a machinist for about a year. Every day I had to do ten more belts to be able to stay on that machine. I got tired of it so I left and got a job as a telephonist in the public works in East Perth.
110. I met a girl at the factory so I left the orphanage and went to stay with her. Her sister objected to my being there so I went to stay with the girl's uncle instead. He had four kids and he was very strict with them, which broke my heart. He used to come into my bedroom every morning to wake me up and one morning he exposed himself to me. I got out of there after that and moved into a bedsit.
111. Through my job at the public works, I met my husband [REDACTED]. We were married in 1956 and had four children together. I stopped working when I became pregnant. [REDACTED] died in 1993.

Other action taken

112. I participated in the Redress WA scheme which was a scheme to provide redress to those who had been abused or neglected in the care of the State of Western Australia. Dr Philippa White of the organisation Tuart Place prepared a statement on my behalf. The statement was submitted in January 2009 and I have provided a copy of this statement to the Inquiry. I confirm that the facts stated in it are true.
113. I got twenty-eight thousand Australian dollars from the Redress WA scheme. It was very handy, I bought myself a new car and gave some money to the kids.

114. I've never sought any other compensation.
115. I went to Parliament House during the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to listen to some of the evidence. Some of the stories from the boys mainly were very shocking.

Treatment/support

116. I used to go to Tuart Place quite regularly and would speak to Dr Philippa White there, but I've never had any support or counselling in relation to my time in care.
117. I have spoken to my doctor and have had some counselling, though that was more in relation to the problems I have had with my family. I think I would probably benefit from some additional counselling.

Records and family tracing

118. I have never applied to get copies of any of my records of when I was in care. I do have a copy of my personal history from the Personal History Index, which has been provided to the Inquiry.
119. I've been back over to Scotland a few times, although not for a while now. The first time I went was in 1976 after my husband organised it. I was looking forward to seeing my family, but there was no bond there. I think my dad did try, but I never felt any attachment.
120. I saw my mother at that time as well and I have a photo of both of us together, but we never formed a relationship. Even so, she was apparently very upset when I left.
121. I went back again in 1997 and stayed with my sister [REDACTED] but it wasn't my scene. They all drank and smoked and had parties for me, but I was the odd man out. It was

a little bit sad for me. My brother [REDACTED] was there as well and I was there for a few weeks.

122. The last time I went over was in 2010, by which time my sister [REDACTED] was in a home because she had Alzheimer's disease. I went over for her eightieth birthday and stayed with her daughter. I'm no longer in touch with any of my family in Scotland and I won't be going back.

Other matters for relating to migration

123. I am aware that there were apologies to the child migrants from the U.K. and Australian governments. That was good.
124. Two of my trips home were paid for me. I think one was funded by the British Government as a reunification scheme and the other by both the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Nazareth. We called that trip 'The Sentimental Journey'.
125. The Sentimental Journey was fabulous. All the former child migrants met at the airport after having not seen each other for years. For the whole flight we were singing, laughing and carrying on about the nuns.
126. We went to various events that had been organised and then we had some time to ourselves. That's when I went to stay with [REDACTED]
127. While I was there I went to see the Sisters of Nazareth in Edinburgh somewhere and they were so lovely. We had afternoon tea and they said I was a breath of fresh air. I never asked for any information.

Nationality

128. In 1993, the day before my husband died, he told me he wanted me to become an Australian citizen. Previously I only had a British passport. I applied and my husband

paid for it and there were no problems. I have never applied for any social security or anything like that.

Biography

129. In 2005 [REDACTED] who worked with my husband, wrote my biography. I had spoken with [REDACTED] about what happened to me and he told me he wanted me to write a book. I was eventually persuaded and wrote it all out in longhand before I gave it to him and he made it into a book. He called it [REDACTED] and I think he did very well. It's never been published.
130. Most of the words in the book are mine and [REDACTED] also put a lot of information in about the war and other research he'd carried out. I have provided a copy of my biography to the Inquiry. I confirm that the facts stated in it are true.

Impact

131. I think my time in care and being a child migrant had lot of effect on my family. I describe the impact my time in care has had on me in my Redress statement.
132. I also make mention of my education being stopped when I arrived in Australia, even though I'd been a good student in Scotland. I feel that has been a source of frustration and sadness throughout my adult life.
133. I come across as very well organised but it's all a front, deep down I'm very depressed.

Final thoughts

134. I think it's all now too late for a lot of the child migrants. What can be done now?

135. 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.

LYF

Signed.....

Dated..... 6-12-18