

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister [REDACTED] LRB

Support person present: No

Others present: Denis Moloney, Solicitor, Donnelly & Walls Solicitors and Llewys Howells, Solicitor, Clyde & Co Solicitors

1. My baptismal name is [REDACTED] LRB. My religious name is Sister [REDACTED] LRB. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1942. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

The Sisters of Nazareth

2. I joined the order in 1962. My first role was out 'on the collecting' in Southend. This involves two sisters going round places such as factories, shops and houses collecting donations for the children. I did that for a year in Southend.
3. I then went to Yelverton for three months and was working there with two to five-year-olds. From Yelverton, I went to Birkenhead and was with the babies there.
4. I went from Birkenhead to Newcastle upon Tyne. I looked after all ages of children, from two up to about twelve or thirteen, for nine years in Newcastle.
5. I then went to Aberdeen in around 1978, I think. This is the only time I worked in Scotland. I looked after a group of children there for two and a half years. I have been told that the information provided to the Inquiry by the order is that I was in Aberdeen from [REDACTED] 1976 until [REDACTED] 1979. That could be right. I know I spent

two Christmases there. It was after Christmas that I moved on, maybe in the January.

6. I went back to Newcastle upon Tyne after Aberdeen. I was there for twenty-five years altogether, so I was there another sixteen years after Aberdeen. I was with various groups of children of different ages, and I was also sent out on relief work at times to Manchester, Birkenhead and Middlesbrough. I looked after the elderly in Manchester and in Middlesbrough and Birkenhead, I was with children. Towards the end of my time in Newcastle, I was with people with learning disabilities. At the end of that, I went to Northampton and I was with the elderly there for twenty-one years. I am now semi-retired.

Nazareth House, Aberdeen

7. A sister from Aberdeen, Sister [REDACTED] LFS, took my place in Newcastle, and I moved up to Aberdeen. It was just a change, a swap basically. We were used to getting moved around. We'd usually get about a month's notice of a move. I didn't go up to Aberdeen and have a look around before being going there.
8. The only formal childcare training I did prior to moving to Aberdeen was a day release course once a week when I was in Newcastle. I don't remember the name of the course. I didn't do any further training or courses during my time in Aberdeen.

My role and responsibilities

9. I was a housemother to a group of children in Aberdeen. This was similar to the work I had been doing for nine years in Newcastle. I wasn't given any induction or training as to how they did things in Aberdeen.
10. There were four groups of children in the home. Each group had about fifteen children, boys and girls, in them, so there were around sixty children in total in the home. One group was in the bungalow and the other three were in the main house.

There was also a group of elderly people in the house, but they were separate from the children's groups.

11. I was at the top of the house in the main building with my group. I lived there with the children. All the rooms for my group were on the one floor. I can't remember if the group had a particular name. The age range of the children was from about two or three up to thirteen.
12. There was a group underneath mine in the main building. There was interaction between the two groups. There was another group over by the kitchen. I think they didn't interact so much, although they might have done in the playground. The group in the bungalow were kept separate from the rest.
13. My role involved doing mostly what a person would do with their children in their own home. The staff and I looked after them as if they were in their own family. This involved getting them up in the morning, seeing that they got washed, dressed and had breakfast, and then making sure they went out to school. And, if there was anything wrong, if they needed a doctor or dentist or whatever, getting in touch with those.
14. The staff and I were responsible for washing and ironing the children's clothes and polishing their shoes. We had washing machines and things like that on the premises. My responsibilities were more or less the same throughout my time in Aberdeen.
15. I had great support from the staff and there were no problems in the two and half years I was there. It was a very happy place.

Other sisters and staff

16. There was a change of Sister Superior during my time. At one time it was Sister Thomas of Aquine, and then it was Sister Cecilia Vanheems. I really couldn't say

how long I was there when the change took place. I reported to the Sister Superior. I was in charge of my group and didn't report to anyone other than the Sister Superior.

17. The other sisters were Sister [REDACTED] LRC, who is now Sister [REDACTED] LRC, Sister [REDACTED] LJI and Sister [REDACTED] LDX. I can't think of the name of the sister who was with the elderly. Sister Rosita was in the kitchen.
18. A woman named Margaret used to come in at weekends and help with the children. She was a teacher in one of the schools. The other staff names I remember are Mhairi and Ruth. I would have had about four care staff helping out with my group. I probably had two on at a time. They would have worked shifts. None of the care staff lived in the home. They all came in from outside.

Children's routine and life in Nazareth House

Admissions

19. As far as I can remember, it was the Sister Superior's responsibility to see to any children when they first came into the home. I think they were put into whichever group was available at the time. Families were definitely kept together in the one group.
20. If new children were coming into my group, I would help to settle them in by showing them around, showing them their bedroom, letting them put out their personal belongings and taking them around to see the other children, all those kind of things.

Morning and bedtime

21. As far as I remember, there were three or four children in a bedroom. The boys and girls were in separate rooms. They had a wardrobe and dressing table in their rooms. They were encouraged to keep their personal belongings in their bedrooms.

22. They would be called to get up in the morning between seven and half past seven. The staff would be with them at that time because I would probably be down in church. The Sisters would get up at six o'clock and go down to church.
23. The morning routine for the children was the same as in any family. They got up and got washed, brushed their teeth and then had breakfast. The breakfasts probably would have been started by the staff by the time I came up from church.
24. The youngest ones would have gone to bed at a different time from the older ones. Bedtime varied depending on what the children were doing. For example, if there was something special that they wanted to see on the television, they would be allowed to stay up and watch that, or they'd maybe be out at the scouts or brownies and would be up a little later then.
25. I would be the only one there for the children during the night. I would go around checking on them before I went to bed and would be there during the night if needed, if somebody wasn't well or whatever. I would be on call more or less. The children didn't need to seek permission to get up during the night to go to the toilet. They would just make their own way there and back, unless they were too young to do so.

Bedwetting

26. I'm sure there would have been children who had issues with bedwetting, but I can't remember any now. If it did happen, the staff would give them a bath in the morning before they went out to school and the sheets would be left to soak until after the children had gone, and then they would be washed.

Washing/bathing

27. I think the children had a bath most nights. There were two or three baths available for them. They never shared baths and there was fresh water for each child.

Mealtimes/food

28. They had a choice for breakfast. They could have a cooked breakfast, if they wanted it, or cereal. The food was very good. Sister Rosita cooked for the whole house.
29. If they didn't like the food or didn't want to eat anything that was put in front of them, you would offer them something else. You would ask them what they would like, especially if they had just come into the home. When they first came into the home, you would ask them what their likes and dislikes were and what they could and couldn't eat.

Clothing/uniform

30. I can't be certain, but I think the children wore a school uniform in those days. They all had their own clothes to wear when not in their school uniform. They were all bought their own clothes. They didn't share their clothes with others. That's something I would do with them, take them out shopping for clothes.

Leisure time

31. The children would go outside to play, just like they would do at home. There was a playground outside for them, and they'd play football or skipping. They could watch television and listen to the radio. There were books for them and probably some children also had their own books in their bedrooms. Some of them might have been taken to the public library by staff.
32. We probably had games like tiddly winks for communal use. As I said, some children attended the brownies and scouts. Some of them probably enjoyed going swimming and would have been taken there by the staff. They might have gone to the pictures as well. I can't really remember if they did.
33. The children were given pocket money. I don't remember how much they got. They would have gone out shopping, supervised by staff, and maybe met up with friends. I

think they might also have gone to friends' houses for birthday parties. Again, staff would go with them.

Trips/holidays

34. We went to the beach during the children's school holidays and took sandwiches with us.
35. We went on holiday as a group to Tombay during the summer months. There was a house there. It was way out in the countryside, but there was a village where the children could go and do shopping if they wanted to. We did all our own cooking there and the children helped.

Christmas and birthdays

36. People sometimes sent in toys, new ones, for the children at Christmas. They would all be given a present for Christmas, which they would keep in their bedrooms.
37. They would be given a present and a card on their birthday, and there would be a party for them. They would maybe share a party if a few of them had a birthday in the same week, but they would all get an individual present and card.

Schooling

38. The children went out to the local schools. We took children of all denominations, so they didn't all go to Roman Catholic schools.
39. I would attend parents' evenings for the children in my group. As far as I remember, I was happy with the level of communication I had with the schools.
40. They would do their homework in the evening after they had their tea. They would be encouraged to do that, and we would help them. I think there was more than one sitting room, maybe a quiet room that they would do it in.

41. I have been asked whether the children were taught any other skills. They would enjoy doing basic cooking with the staff, like baking cakes. The staff would encourage one or two of them to help out when they were doing that.

Chores

42. The children helped with little odd jobs around the house, like the washing-up and clearing and setting the tables.

Religious instruction

43. The children would say grace before and after meals, say their morning prayers and there would be mass on Sunday. They had the choice to not attend mass.

Healthcare

44. There were no sisters or staff that had a particular role in relation to the children's health. The children would be seen by the local GP if they were poorly. We had a family of four that came in from Glasgow. The little girl, who was only two, brought scabies and they had dysentery. We were all isolated and the health people came in to check the toilets and things like that. The doctor was going to open a ward in the hospital, but he didn't need to do that because we had them all isolated from the rest of the house. We were sending off samples from the children for testing during that time. I remember one little boy had to go to hospital when he had dysentery. The health nurse came when they had scabies and we had to bath them and put cream on them.
45. The children would be registered with the GP when first admitted, and I presume they had routine health checks every now and then.
46. There were no deaths among the children during my time in Aberdeen.

Family Visitors

47. The families mostly came at the weekend, but they were encouraged to come at other times as well. They would spend time with the children, maybe have a cup of tea with them. Most of them spent time in the home rather than taking the children out. That's all they seemed to want to do. As far as I remember, some of them didn't get many visitors.
48. I don't remember whether the children were encouraged to keep in touch with their wider family.

Social work visits

49. The social workers would pop in from time to time for meetings with the children. I am not able to recall how often social work staff visited the children.

Other visitors

50. Sometimes the priests from Blairs College would come in for mass and spend a little time with the children, maybe playing football with the boys on the premises.
51. The only other person I remember coming into the home is Margaret, the teacher who came in to help at weekends.

Discipline and punishment

52. I can't remember much about discipline or punishment. If, for example, children weren't getting on, if they were having a bit of a squabble like they do, they would be kind of separated and spoken to. I would find out what was wrong and try and solve the problem. I don't remember any specific incidents when I had to discipline children. They were just a nice bunch of children.

53. I don't remember whether there were any written or unwritten rules of behaviour. There is just one incident that I remember where a boy kind of flared up, and he punched me on the face. I can't remember what it was about or how he reacted to me after that. I went down to the superior and told her what happened. As far as I remember, it just kind of fizzled out. I don't remember how the superior dealt with it. She probably spoke to him. As I say, I don't remember what his reaction was to me afterwards. To me, there seemed to be no problem after that.
54. I have been asked whether any of the staff had authority to discipline children or whether they would bring any issues to me. I think they would have brought it to my attention, as I was the person in charge of the group. However, the staff probably had to speak to them and tell them off at times if I wasn't there.
55. To my knowledge, there was never any corporal punishment in the home.

Review of care/placement

56. I'm sure there were reviews. The social worker would come in and there would be a meeting to see how the children were progressing, to find out whether there were any problems. In those days the social worker would chair the meeting and I would sit in on it. The children themselves would also take part. I don't remember how often the reviews took place.

Discharge procedures

57. We did have a discharge book, but I don't remember anybody leaving my group. As far as I remember, they all stayed there. I don't remember what the discharge procedures were, or whether any support was offered to children when they left.

Inspections

58. There used to be a visitation from the Mother General, and I'm sure the social services or local authority visited as well. Whoever was visiting would come round and speak to the children as a group, just a kind of friendly visit. They spoke to me too. I have been asked whether I received feedback in the way of a report or anything that would point out, for example, things that needed to be changed. There was a report and that was kept in the superior's office. That was from the visitation. I don't remember seeing any report or feedback from the local authority visits.
59. I have been asked if I recall whether there were any concerns flagged up from any visits that indicated that action needed to be taken to improve matters. I don't remember, but if there was anything, the superior would kind of handle that and talk to the sisters about it.

Abuse

60. I never saw any behaviour taking place in the home that I considered to be abusive, and none of the children ever reported to me any concerns about the way they were being treated by other children or anyone else in the home.
61. I never heard discussed any behaviour towards children that gave me cause for concern.
62. I have been asked whether, with the benefit of hindsight, there is anything that occurred in Aberdeen in the way of discipline or treatment of the children that would give me cause for concern if I saw it now. No, I had no cause for concern there.
63. I have been informed that allegations of abuse against some sisters have been made by some children who were in Aberdeen, and that no allegations have been made against me.

Sister [LFB] Sister [FAF] & Sister [LTX]

64. I have been asked whether I remember children named [LBA] and [AAK] I have been told that they have given statements to the Inquiry about their time in Nazareth House in Aberdeen and that these contain allegations of abuse. These are not names that ring any bells.

65. Sister [LFB] Sister [LTX] and Sister [FAF] were not in Aberdeen in my time. I have heard of Sister [FAF] but I do not know her.

Sister [LGR]

66. I am told that [AAK] speaks about Sister [LGR] being involved in running the choir. I wouldn't have thought so. She was out 'on the collecting' all day. That was her job. She had been doing it for years. She was an older sister. She wasn't involved with the children during my time in Aberdeen.

Sister [LDX] or Sister [LDX]

67. I have been told that Christopher Daly has given an account of his time in Nazareth House, Aberdeen and that he has made allegations of abuse against Sister [LDX] [LDX] The name Christopher Daly rings a bell. I think he might have been there throughout the time I was there. I think the sister's name was actually Sister [LDX]. Christopher Daly was in her group.

68. Sister [LDX] group was separate from the others. They were in the bungalow. They didn't interact with the other groups. Her group was very kind of together, and we didn't know what was going on in there, if there was anything going on.

69. I have been told that Christopher said Sister [REDACTED] LDX would punish him by putting him *"in isolation in the laundry area of the new unit"*. I wouldn't have thought so. I never heard anything about that.
70. I have been told that he talks about Sister [REDACTED] LDX in relation to a difficulty with children hiding food, and he said that when she found out they hid food, *"she went mental and all of us got it. We were slapped about. We had to eat the food, and if we refused, Sister [REDACTED] LDX would hit you about the head."* I wouldn't have thought so. That's not something I ever heard anything about.
71. In relation to children wetting the bed, I have been told that Christopher said, *"Sister [REDACTED] LDX would put the wet sheet on the kid's head and they were made to walk about with it."* I can't really answer that, but I wouldn't say it was true. I never witnessed that, nor did I hear anything of that nature.
72. I have been told that he said, *"If you were bad, you were isolated to darkened rooms."* I can't answer that. And that he also said Sister [REDACTED] LDX locked him in a small mortuary room once or twice and he was locked in that room *"when there were two closed coffins in it. I didn't know if there dead bodies in them or not"*. As far as I know, there was no mortuary room there, and children certainly wouldn't have been locked in like that.
73. I have been told that he said, *"When Sister [REDACTED] LDX went into a rage she would punch and kick. It would happen when I was physically sick. One morning I was sick after breakfast in the toilet. She went crazy. She grabbed me and pulled me about and put me outside in the freezing cold and just left me there. I was just wearing my shirt, tie, socks and underpants."* That is not something that I ever heard.
74. I have been told that he said he was put outside in the snow for forty-five minutes with just his underpants on. I can't answer that.
75. I have been told that he said Sister [REDACTED] LDX would *"punch and kick us for silly trivial things. It was constant when we moved to the new group"*, and that she was

"particularly nasty with the girls". That group was kept quite away from the other groups, really. It was completely separate.

76. I have been asked whether there was a reason for that group being kept separate from the others. That's just how sister had her group. They didn't seem to mix with the other children. They were always kept together. The bungalow was kind of attached to the main building. You would go past the laundry and into that group, but nobody ever did, as far as I know. Having said that, in those days we weren't allowed to go into another sister's employment without permission.

Reporting of abuse

77. My relationship with the children in my group was very friendly, and I felt that they could come to me if they wanted to have a talk about something or if they had a problem. It was a family group, and we tried to be as much like their mother as we could. They also had the staff to relate to, which they did do. As far as I remember, there was nobody else, other than the visitors already mentioned, that the children could speak to about any concerns or worries they had.

Prior statements

78. I have never given any statements in relation to my time in Aberdeen, nor have I ever been interviewed or had occasion to speak to the police .

Records


79. There may have been a log book in which the children's daily activities were recorded, but I can't remember. If there was any such book, it would have been left at the home when I moved on.

80. The only record I can recall filling in is the menu book. The menu book was an ordinary hardback exercise book. We kept a daily record of the meals. The purpose of that was to show that the children were getting a balanced diet. If the Mother General on her visitation, or anybody else doing an inspection visit, asked what kind of meals the children were getting, you were able to show them the menu book.
81. I can't remember if I had any involvement in keeping records in relation to the children's health. And I don't remember if we kept a visitors' book.
82. There might have been a discipline or punishment book in the superior's office, but I can't remember.

Other information

83. I have been asked whether I am able to assist the Inquiry in relation to why allegations of abuse or mistreatment in Nazareth House, Aberdeen have been made when my position is that I wasn't aware of anything of that nature during my time there. No, I don't know. Similarly, I am not able to offer any assistance to the Inquiry to help explain why some people have told the Inquiry that they continue to suffer now due to their experiences in care.
84. The only thing I would say is that maybe if a sister had been there for a number of years and the children had got used to her, when she got changed, the children maybe resented another sister taking her place and might have rebelled against that.
85. Also, I think a lot of them are jumping on the bandwagon and looking for compensation, because I don't think all of it was true. As I say, they might have resented the sister coming in and have been able to hang onto that name, and it's been one way of getting what they want, which I think is money.

86. 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.....*Sinter*..........

Dated.....*24/4/2018*.....