

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister

LKE

Support person present: No

Others present: Denis Moloney, Solicitor and Clyde and Co

1. My name at birth was LKE I was known as Sister LKE LKE when I worked in Nazareth House, Cardonald in the 60's and 70's but changed my name to Sister LKE in the 80's. My date of birth is 1945. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. When I worked in Cardonald there was another Sister LHE whose second name I don't recall. She was in Sister LFL role when I returned to Cardonald in 1971.

The Sisters of Nazareth

3. I joined The Sisters of Nazareth in Finchley in London as an apostolate in 1961 and was then in Hammersmith in London as a novice for five years before working in various branch houses around the country.
4. I had no qualifications when I started at Nazareth House, Cardonald but gained qualifications at Langside College on Child Development and Psychology. This was organised by Sister Martelle who has since passed away. There was a continuation of courses throughout my time there. Sister LFS and Sister LJD also attended these courses.

Nazareth House, Cardonald – 1967-1969 and 1971 - 1973

5. I was at Cardonald on two separate occasions. I first went there in 1967 as a junior whose main job was to support the more senior nuns and give the children the love and care they needed. I was there until 1969 and returned in 1971 for two years when my job was to run one of the houses at the home.
6. When I first went to Cardonald it was the way of things in those days that, as a junior nun, we were asked what sort of area of work we would like to work in. I said that I would like to work with babies and children and was sent to Cardonald. I was 22 years of age and looked forward to going there.
7. Our Supervisor General made sure I was a proper person to work with children and the Mother Superior for the home, Sister **LGE** also spoke to me to explain what would be required of me. In my first two years or so I was really just learning how to look after children.
8. I'm not aware of any vetting that was done of me but I don't think such things were done in those days. However, I do think they would have made sure I was in a fit state of mind and able to look after children.
9. The home in Cardonald was a big building with bedrooms upstairs and a dining room on the ground floor. There were three separate units with between fifteen and twenty children in each unit. I think they were called the Red, Yellow and Blue units

Staff at Nazareth House, Cardonald

10. There weren't many staff there during my first spell. The Mother Superior was in charge then next in line was Sister **LFL** who was a senior sister and kept the records. She always had her eyes on everything and made sure there were no problems. It was Sister **LFL** who I reported to. She and another senior Sisters were the ones who trained me.

11. There was then another nun who was third in line but I don't now recall her name. There were about twelve other nuns in Cardonald but the only names I recall are those of Sisters **LFP** and **LFS**
12. There was a sister who was an infirmarian and would look after the children when they were ill. Another who worked in the kitchen and another in the laundry.
13. Sisters were moved every two or three years so there was quite a high turnover of staff which is maybe why I don't now recall all the names of the other sisters.
14. There were civilian staff that were assistant house mothers and would help with the general running of each house. When I was in charge of Blue House during my second spell there I had two assistant house mothers. One was called Ann Madden and the other was called Margaret.
15. There were also catering staff and I recall a maintenance man called **LTS** who did the driving, the repairs and maybe the gardening. Members of The Knights of St Columba and men from The Society of St Vincent De Paul were very good at coming in and taking the children out on trips for the day.
16. Civilian staff reported to whichever nun was in charge of the house that they were helping out at or to one of the senior sisters.
17. During my first spell I was very much a junior making sure the children were clean and well fed and would report to one of the senior nuns. During my second spell I was in charge of the Blue House which meant I had the responsibility of ensuring the welfare of the children.
18. During that second spell I was responsible for maintaining records of anything that happened with the children, like medical or welfare issues, and would meet regularly with social workers for reviews about the children's' progress.

19. I think that during that second spell I was tuned in and could handle problems better. I felt more able to recognise when children might need more professional help. During that time I had a room just off the children's dormitory.
20. Circumstances decided how long a child would stay in Nazareth House. Some would go home after just a short while, some would be fostered out and some stayed there long-term.

Children coming in to Nazareth House

21. When a child was brought in to Nazareth House it might have been by the police, a health visitor or perhaps their own family. In my second spell it was usually a social worker who brought them in. Some were from very disturbed backgrounds.
22. We would talk to the social worker and to the child and explain that they might be there for a while then we would gradually introduce them to the other children and show them about the home. It could be quite traumatic for the children and it would take time to help settle them in.
23. Sometimes the incoming children would require a bath because of the condition they were in. I would gently ask them if they would like a nice hot bath which would then be done in private to ensure that the child wasn't embarrassed.
24. I have no recollection of disinfectant being used in these baths but I do recall that head-lice was a constant problem and had to be dealt with. It was all part of the care for the children and sometimes this meant that the child's hair required to be cut.

Routine

25. There were about sixteen or seventeen children in our group. The boys would be in a wee dorm of their own while the girls, aged four to fifteen, would be in a bigger dorm. There were maybe partitions between the children of different ages.
26. The children would get up at 7am with perhaps the older children assisting the younger ones. At the weekend, if staff was available, they might lie in a bit longer. Sometimes they would then go to mass then they would make their bed and go for breakfast before doing their chores.
27. They would then go to school, come home for lunch then go back to school for the afternoon when they would have a juice or a glass of milk. When they came home they would do their homework, have their tea and then have playtime.
28. After playtime the children would get washed, cleaned and get ready for bed.

Washing and bathing

29. The children were bathed once or twice a week though would wash at the sink and brush their teeth every morning. They all had their own towels and tooth brushes. There was no set order for them getting a bath. The younger were ones were maybe bathed earlier as they went to bed first.
30. The water was always fresh and hot and they bathed individually. I would help the very young ones at bath time. Sometimes there were siblings in the house and the older ones would help their younger siblings at bath time.

Food

31. The food was always plentiful and of good quality. For breakfast the children would get porridge or cereal and sometimes fried bread or a fried egg. For lunch they would

have vegetables and meat. They wouldn't necessarily have a choice of food but it was nourishing. The children were never hungry.

32. If a child didn't like something and didn't eat it then it would sometimes be left aside to see if they would eat it later. No child was ever forced fed. I'm certainly not aware of any child being sick and then forced to eat that.

Clothes

33. The children wore a uniform to school but would change into play clothes when they got back from school. I think Nazareth House bought the uniforms and places like C & A donated a lot of clothes. The children had lovely clothes. The children were allowed to keep the clothes that they arrived in though they wouldn't have a lot.
34. The children all had their own clothes which they would keep in a chest of drawers or a wardrobe next to their beds. I don't think anybody wore "hand me down" clothes though I'm sure some of the girls would swap clothes but that is typical of young girls.
35. There was a lady in the laundry called [REDACTED] L J X [REDACTED] who looked after the washing of the clothes. She was a great launderer. The children wouldn't help out in that. The children polished their own shoes.

Chores

36. The children used to help polish the floors and some would help out in the kitchen. The chores weren't mandatory and I think some of the children sometimes got a wee reward for as a thank you for helping.

Leisure time

37. The children did have time to themselves. There were lovely grounds and there was a big hall used in the evenings for music and dancing. The children also did concerts with singing and dancing.
38. The boys played a lot of football and the girls did things like skipping. Some of them learned to play musical instruments which Mr LKN and Sister LFS taught. There was a TV, record player and a radio in each of the sitting rooms for each house that the children watched and listened to.
39. There were also loads of books, comics and magazines many of which the children bought themselves with pocket money or sometimes they would be given them by visitors. I always encouraged the children to read.
40. Although there was a good playground and lots of grass, I don't recall there being any organised sports with the children like football matches or races.

Possessions and pocket money

41. The children did get pocket money each week though I can't recall exactly how much. They would spend this on comics or sweets or things like that. They always got to keep what they bought. They also went to the swimming baths and the pictures now and again.

Trips

42. Every year the taxi drivers would take all the children to Troon for the day. That was a wonderful time and the children always loved it. Some weekends the children would go out to families for the day. Sometimes it was their own family and for others it might be foster parents.

43. Depending on the situation, the children might go for a couple of weeks to a family to see how things would work out for them.
44. At Christmas time the children would go to special concerts or pantomimes and sometimes some of the big companies in Glasgow would organise a party for them.

Birthdays and Christmas

45. At Christmas time there were various carol services and on Christmas Eve there was a special midnight mass. I remember that the children were always impatient to get back home after that because they were so excited about Santa coming. It was a magical time for them. A lot of big companies donated presents for the children.
46. On Christmas morning they would open their presents which they, of course, got to keep. Later that day some of the parents would come to visit or take the children out for a few hours.
47. The men from The Knights of St Columba or The Society of St Vincent De Paul would also come along and bring the children presents. Children who didn't go out would get a nice Christmas dinner.
48. Birthdays were celebrated for each child. They would get a present and we would maybe make them a cake. Some families would send presents and cards which, of course, the children got to keep.

Bed-wetting

49. There would be the odd child that wet the bed. We would be understanding of this. We would try and get such children to the toilet just before we ourselves went to bed or first thing in the morning. Sometimes we caught them in time and sometimes we didn't.

50. If a child did wet the bed we would put the sheets in the basket and change the child's pyjamas. Staff would then make up the bed with clean sheets.
51. If a child wanted to go to the toilet in the middle of the night then this was not a problem. Sometimes they would shout on me to go with them or sometimes would take another child if they were maybe scared.

Schooling

52. The children went to schools that were close to the home. I think the primary school was called The Holy Rosary School and the secondary was called Lourdes. Some of the children went to special schools if they had particular educational problems.
53. We always encouraged the children to do their homework when they got home and would sometimes help them out if they were having particular difficulties. We would often speak to the teachers who would make us aware of any problems there were with any of the children.
54. Some of the children would go into the kitchen and maybe learn how to cook or prepare vegetables. They were also taught how to handle money to prepare them for leaving the home.

Healthcare

55. Sister Anne was the nurse for the home and a doctor would come in at least once a week and see any child that required to be looked at. If a child had to go to the hospital it would have been the Southern General that we used but no child required to go to hospital in my care during either of my spells there.
56. Sister Ann also checked the children's teeth and, if necessary the children would be taken to a dentist or a dentist would come in. When medical attention was required we always noted this in the files for the child concerned.

Deaths

57. No child ever died during my time in Nazareth House.

Religious instruction

58. The children said morning and night prayers. They went to mass on a Sunday as well as sometimes during the week. Going to mass wasn't mandatory and sometimes we took the children to mass in the morning simply because there was nobody to keep an eye on them and it was the only way we could watch them.
59. Some of the children that came in to the home weren't Catholics and this had to be respected.

Visitors*Visits from friends and family*

60. Visitors came on a Saturday or Sunday. Sometimes they wouldn't show up which could be quite traumatic for the children who were left disappointed. Social workers had an input as to who could and who couldn't visit their children depending on what issues there were in the family life.
61. Quite often men from The Society of St Vincent De Paul or The Knights of St Columba would take children who had no relatives out for the day. There was a book we kept and therein we would note who had visited which children. We would also speak to the children and would make a brief note of what they had done that day.

Visits from social workers and reviews

62. In my first spell welfare officers would come to the home and in the second spell it was social workers. We would meet with these people and discuss the progress of each child concerned.
63. I would be asked about certain children just to make sure all was okay with them. I am sure that short records of such visits were noted. There were reviews about a child's placement twice a year which decided whether or not a child should stay in care.
64. My recollection is that, if the children were there and in from school, the social workers would sometimes speak to them individually. I don't recollect the names of those who visited.
65. As well as this, people from our HQ visited on a regular basis to make sure all was okay. They would stay for a few days or maybe a week. If they saw anything they didn't like they would bring it to our Superiors attention. This would be things like if a child looked unhappy or wasn't engaging with people.

Access to the children

66. The Sisters and staff had access to the children and sometimes priests would drop in but never unsupervised. Some of the children also went to outside groups like the scouts, cubs or guides.
67. I didn't have any visitors myself while at Cardonald except the one occasion when my brother dropped in one afternoon.
68. The doctor and dentist who visited the home obviously had access to the children. Father Hay would sometimes pop in after saying mass to say hello.

69. I am unaware of any checks being done in those days on the people who had access to the children. If you got the impression a child wasn't comfortable with a person then you would remove the child from the situation.

Children leaving Nazareth House

70. There would be a review where we would meet around the table with the people concerned. If the children were leaving to go to a job we would meet with the company concerned to make sure all was well.
71. I think the Mother Superior would supply the child leaving with some money to help them start out until they started earning money for themselves.
72. If it was a younger child leaving there would also be a review and we would discuss what was best for the child and we would always try and involve the child in this.

Records and record keeping

73. We had a filing cabinet with files on the children therein. I believe that diaries were kept as well as log books that official visitors could refer to. The records that I kept were fairly basic, like if there had been trouble at school or if a child had been disruptive, and I would note anything at the time it happened.
74. I think there was a punishment book but it would have been kept by a senior sister.
75. In the files would be things like the admission form with the child's details, birth and baptismal certificates, medical records, school reports and anything we should know about a child's parents and family.
76. Only I had access to these files. Things had to be kept private and confidentiality had to be respected. When a child left the files were kept in the Senior Sister's office. I am not aware of any records being lost.

Families

77. Siblings were encouraged to keep contact with each other though boys, when they reached a certain age were sent to Nazareth House in Aberdeen. This sometimes meant that they were separated from sisters or younger brothers.
78. Sometimes siblings were in different houses because of lack of space in the home but they were always encouraged to keep contact with each other. I didn't like siblings being separated.
79. Parents were always encouraged to visit the children as often as possible. The children also wrote and received letters which were not checked or edited by us.
80. Sometimes a sibling might get out of control or get in trouble with the police which meant we had no choice but to separate them from their siblings.

Discipline and punishment

81. Children would be disciplined for things like fighting or slapping a younger child. They might also be punished for using bad language, refusing to go to school or perhaps vandalism.
82. I would say that there were no set rules but the children were taught to respect each other and not to bully the younger children.
83. If the children were disciplined it would be things like being sent to their rooms, writing lines or doing some chores. Sometimes they wouldn't get their pocket money or wouldn't be allowed to the baths or picture. Corporal punishment was never used as a method of punishment.

84. In neither of my two spells at the home did I see any child being hit by a member of staff or one of the nuns. I believe that any sanctions carried out were recorded somewhere.

Abuse in Nazareth House, Cardonald.

85. I have no recollection of ever seeing abuse or hearing of such behaviour during either of my spells at Nazareth House, Cardonald. I was always very protective of the children I had in the Blue Group and wouldn't necessarily know what was happening in the Red and Yellow groups.

86. I never saw a child having to stand in a corridor as a punishment or being punished with a cold bath. Maybe sometimes the water wasn't as hot as it could be but that would be down to heating problems, not a punishment. Certainly I never saw a child being smacked for wetting the bed or having the wet sheets put on their heads.

87. Things are different today and it's difficult to say if those sanctions we did carry out at the time, like polishing floors, would now be considered as abusive but, what I saw, didn't constitute abuse.

88. There was another Sister [redacted] LHA who was in the home during my time. I recall that she had a [redacted] but I have no recollection of ever seeing her using it to hit somebody.

89. When I returned to the home in 1971 Sister [redacted] LHA was in Sister [redacted] LFL's role. She was the senior house mother in her unit. I knew her reasonably well. She was friendly and always seemed okay with the children and was a pleasant and friendly lady.

90. I was never the subject of a complaint of any sort while I was in Cardonald.

91. Sister [LFP] has since passed away. I am not aware of her ever being known by any other name. She was there when I was there between 1967 and 1969. I would say she was somewhere between fifty and sixty years of age.
92. She was a house-mother and senior to me. I recall she had a strong English accent. She had her own group who kept to themselves. We might have met at meal times but I didn't have many dealings with her.
93. Sister [LFL] was there when I was there between 1967 and 1969 and was also between fifty and sixty years of age. I'm not aware of her having any other name. She was a very calm woman, understanding and would listen to you. She was a very capable person. At no time did I ever see her discipline anybody. I had a great deal of respect for her.
94. Sister [LFS] was also there between 1967 and 1969. We were great friends and were roughly the same age. She wasn't known by any other name. She died very young. She was a very bubbly and friendly person. I think she was in the Yellow Group and I didn't see how she interacted with those in her group.
95. Sister [LFR] was there between when I was there between 1971 and 1973. She was very interested in those children that were in her care and would have gone to the end of the world for any of them. I had so much respect for her. She was a very noble lady.
96. Sister [LFH] had left Nazareth House by the time I got there and I had left by the time Sister [LGS] started there.
97. I do not recognise the names of Sister [LDX] Sister [LHW] Sister [LSO] Sister [LHW] Sister [LVA] or Sister Elizabeth. Nor did I know Father [LSO] or civilian staff named [LFQ], Miss [LJG] Joseph Duffy or [LHM] [LHM]

98. I do recall a civilian member of staff called [REDACTED] LKB She worked with Sister [REDACTED] LHA and was good with the children.
99. Dr [REDACTED] LKQ and the dentist Mr [REDACTED] LGG would regularly come into the home but I am not aware of any reports being made against them. The name [REDACTED] LGG rings a bell but I don't recall Dr [REDACTED] LKQ
100. With regards to the children, I did not know [REDACTED] LDI, [REDACTED] LMP, [REDACTED] LCS, [REDACTED] LBR, [REDACTED] LCT, [REDACTED] LBC, [REDACTED] LCG or [REDACTED] LCY. There was a family of [REDACTED] but they were in a different unit.
101. I do recall [REDACTED] LBI who was in one of the other units and was a lovely girl. She was one of the older girls and was very responsible. [REDACTED] LBS is another girl I remember. Again, she was in another group and was such a nice girl. I think [REDACTED] LCC was away by the time I started in the home.

Final thoughts on Nazareth House, Cardonald in light of allegations

102. I know the Inquiry has received a number of complaints. I can only say that maybe I was young and naïve and I would not have expected to see such things. I also think that if these things had gone on then surely at least one of the children would have said something to somebody.
103. My views were that, as a young Sister, my first Mother Superior was very vigilant and kept a close eye on the children. She would always make sure that I was on top of things and she was always available. She was a very honourable lady.
104. If the Mother Superior ever had any concerns about how any of the nuns dealt with any of the children I think she would have moved them on though I never heard of this actually happening.

105. I never at any time saw any child force fed or punished for bed-wetting. If such things did happen then I would have considered it abuse. I could not have stood by and watch a child force fed.

Reporting of abuse at Nazareth House, Cardonald

106. If a child had wanted to report anything they would have gone to a member of staff, myself, a social worker or perhaps say something to their own family. Children came to me with the typical things that children got up to but they never came to me with what you would term complaints of abuse.

107. My main concern was to make sure that those under my care were happy.

Prior statements

108. I have never given any prior statements to anybody unless you include talking to my solicitor.

Closing thoughts

109. I was in Nazareth House, Cardonald on two separate occasions between 1967 and 1969 and then again between 1971 and 1973. I think the main difference I found when I went back the second time was that the place seemed less institutionalised. It felt more homely and comfortable.
110. Things were very different and times had changed. Social workers were more involved and there were more reviews and more staff. Relatives and family were more encouraged to visit and get involved.

111. I felt that children were shown more respect and the whole place became more child focused. I would say there was more interaction with the children and a greater effort was made to get to the root of any problems whether it was in the home or at school.

112. 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... *Sister*
LKE

Dated... *27.04.2018*

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