

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LYM

Support person present: No

1. My name is LYM. My date of birth is 1959. I am 62 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I had two brothers and three sisters. My father was a miner but passed away when I was six years old. My mother basically brought us up by herself. She worked as a bus conductor on the local Fife buses. It was hard financial times.
3. My oldest sister now lives in Australia, my sister still lives in Fife. My brother who was four years older than me also passed away. I had a brother who died when he was just six months old. Then I was born. My mother remarried and my younger sister was born she now lives in New Zealand.

Life before going into care

4. I was born in hospital in Dunfermline and lived and was brought up in Cowdenbeath. I stayed in Cowdenbeath until 2002 when I moved to Crossgates. It was tough times being brought up in Fife as there was very little income about. When my father passed my mother had to feed the whole family on her wage as a clippie on the buses.

5. I attended school at Foulford Primary School and then at Beith Secondary School. I left school at sixteen and that is when I got into trouble with the police. When I was growing up and living at home there was no involvement with Social Work. There were lots of fights among the family usually involving my stepfather. There was also violence and drunkenness but it was always kept within the family.
6. I started going to the local farm every weekend and during school holidays. I had become very friendly with the farmer and his wife. I was driving a tractor from age eleven and I really enjoyed helping out on the farm. The farmer was a farm manager and he moved to another farm when I was about fifteen and this was when I started going down the wrong road.
7. I started drinking when I was about sixteen and I started getting into fights and breaking into shops which I now regret. It was all small petty things which I was involved in. It culminated on one day when we were on the bus to go to the dancing at the ballroom in Dunfermline. A fight started and I ended up being arrested and charged with assault. I appeared from police custody before the courts. I was remanded in custody for three weeks to Saughton Prison and I was taken there by the police straight after my appearance in court. I was sixteen years old.

HMP Saughton, Edinburgh

8. I remember very little about my three week stay at Saughton Prison apart from sharing a cell with a man called [REDACTED] who was a well-known criminal and armed robber. In later years he became one of the best known rioters at Peterhead Prison. He was brand new with me and looked after me when I was in Saughton.
9. I had no issues at Saughton Prison and because I was looked after by [REDACTED] no one bothered me. I remember that you were locked up for 23 hours during the day and only got out for an hours exercise. Nothing happened to me at Saughton and I was not abused while I was there. The routine was just like any prison.

10. After three weeks I again appeared before the courts. This was the first time I learned about social workers as there was a background report from social work along with a report from my school. It was very upsetting as it was the first time that I learned that my father had not passed away in normal circumstances but when I was six years old he had taken his own life.
11. The outcome of my court appearance and the background reports was that I was sentenced to three months detention at Glenochil Young Offenders Institution.

YOI Glenochil near Tullibody

12. There were three wings at Glenochil A, B and C. A wing was upstairs B wing was on the ground floor and C wing was downstairs. There were bars on the windows and all the doors locked. All the boys had their own room and there was no sharing with other boys. I think that I was there for a total of two months and five days.
13. I estimate that there were between forty five and fifty boys in each wing. I think that there were fifteen rooms on each level of C wing and there were three levels. All the boys were aged between sixteen and twenty one. I think that there were three or four officers looking after each wing at any time.
14. When you came out of B wing there was a door that took you on the parade square. You did not mix with the residents of the other wings apart from at recreation time when all the boys would be together. You were not allowed to speak to other boys out with the recreation time which was between seven and nine in the evening.
15. When I arrived at Glenochil the building looked fairly old but I recall that there was building work going on. I think that the work was being done so that Glenochil could be turned into a full prison for all ages and categories of prisoner.

16. There was an astro turf football park in the grounds with a running track on the outside of the pitch. There was a security fence that enclosed the whole area of Glenochil. All the doors were locked and you only got out of the building if you went to the parade ground or the football pitch.

Routine at YOI Glenochil

First day

17. I was taken to Glenochil in a police van directly from the court. I remember being told by the police officers that I needed to keep my head down and I would be okay. They obviously knew what type of place it was. When I first arrived I was put into a "dug box" which was a very small cell where I had to wait to be booked in. The staff that greeted you were in uniform but the staff who looked after you day to day were in plain clothes.
18. I recall arriving at Glenochil and being taken for a shower and then given clothes to wear. I was then sent to my wing which was B wing and I was allocated room number three which was on the ground floor. I recall that the man in charge of B wing was called Mr Bell.

Mornings and bedtime

19. You were always woken up at quarter to six and you had to be standing outside your door with your clothing. You had to take out your slop pan and empty it every morning. Whilst you were standing outside your door you had to "mark time" until you went to ablutions. You had to shave although I didn't have any facial hair. You would then brush your teeth and return to your room.

20. You changed into your best dress which was known as BD's. You would then have to march to breakfast. If you went anywhere in the building you had to march. When you arrived at the table for breakfast you had to stand by your chair and then we would all be told to sit which had to be done at the same time for everybody.
21. You were only allowed to say "yes sir" or "no sir" to the staff. It was worse than being at basic training in the army. I think that meal times were staggered with different wings eating at different times. There was only one large dining hall which serviced the whole institution.
22. After breakfast you would march back to your room where you would change into your dungarees to start your days' work. You also had an older pair of boots which you put on. The main job I had at Glenochil was to clean the ablutions area which meant I was on my hands and knees a lot of the time scrubbing. I would be there from breakfast until dinner time.
23. Every morning you would do PT. On a Monday you would run a mile and then a hundred yards. On a Tuesday you would run half a half mile and then four hundred yards. It changed every day. You would also race against other boys as a group carrying a telegraph pole between you. It was like army training. This was done in the grounds. After PT you would go into the gym and do circuit training. I must say that I liked and enjoyed the physical training.
24. You would go back to your room just before lunch to get back into your BD's so that you could go for lunch. You would have to march to the dining room at lunchtime. After lunch you would repeat the process and change back into your work clothes. You also did some PT in the afternoon.
25. You would continue with your job until tea time when you again changed into your BD's and went for tea. After that you went back to your room and on route you would get a clean pair of socks to wear. You would stay in your room until recreation time at seven when you could mix with the other wings.

Mealtimes / Food

26. The food was good and you were always starving. We were doing so much exercise that you would always be hungry. I don't recall any punishments for not eating your food.

Washing / bathing

27. You always had a shower after you did your gym session. They were communal showers and there was no privacy. You were all lumped in together.

Schooling

28. I didn't continue with education when I was there and I don't recall anyone having any schooling. It could have happened but not to me.

Weekends

29. On a Saturday or Sunday you would have to leave your room door open and clean your floor. If you were not cleaning you would have to bull your boots. We would have a game of football in a Saturday afternoon and on a Sunday you could go to church or chapel if you wanted.

Religion

30. You went to church on a Sunday but it was only to avoid having to do the cleaning and chores. There was a man there from a Baptist church in Cowdenbeath who used to try and get you interested in religion but to be honest most of the boys were there to avoid doing chores on a Sunday. The church was in the grounds of Glenochil.

Recreation

31. It was always held between seven and nine at night and was the only time when all the wings would meet and you could talk to the other boys. There was nothing much to do at recreation time but I do remember a table tennis table.
32. There were two members of staff who ran the gym. They were different class and would treat you like human beings. They would talk to you about football and they made going to the gym a pleasant experience. They never had to hit you or abused you for any reason.
33. There was a tuck shop which was open twice a week and you could spend an allowance on things like crisps or toothpaste you were not given cash.
34. I do recall that the prison had a change of Governor about two weeks before I left. He organised a game against a team from outside. I was selected for the Glenochil team and I scored a hat trick that day and we won 6 – 5. The whole institution watched the game and it made me feel great to have scored the goals in front of the other boys.

Birthdays and Christmas

35. I was not at Glenochil when it was my birthday and I wasn't there at Christmas time. I don't recall celebrations for any of the other boys.

Visits

36. I think that my mother visited me on three occasions which was all that she was allowed to do. My brother and sister also came to visit on one occasion. The visits were held in a big room and you could sit at a table and speak to your visitors. You could speak openly to your visitors.

37. I don't think that I had any officials visited me at Glenochil although I seem to remember that a social worker may have visited me at Saughton before I went to Glenochil.

Healthcare

38. I do recall on a couple of occasions when I didn't feel well and had to stay in my room. I was put on a milk diet. This involved eating or drinking nothing but milk which was left in a jug in my room. I think that there was a member of staff who was medically trained but also acted as a dentist who would provide healthcare to any of the boys who needed it.

Bed wetting.

39. I did not have a problem with bed wetting but some of the boys did. They would get a rubber mattress given to them. I recall some of the bed wetters were humiliated in front of the other boys when they were given a rubber mattress.

Punishment

40. I don't recall any formal punishment like having privileges withdrawn or being belted or caned. I do recall that you were not allowed to smoke when you were in Glenochil. There was often fights between boys but this was dealt with by the boys out with the sight or hearing of the staff. It was usually a few punches and was over very quickly.

Running away

41. In Glenochil you were locked in most of the time and there was also a large fence that enclosed the whole campus so it was almost impossible to run away or escape.

Abuse at YOI Glenochil

42. You had to toe the line and if you didn't you would get a punch to the face or a slap to the back of the head. You could hear other boys being slapped about the head when they were in their cells.
43. The worst offender for hitting was a member of staff called Mr HRA. On one occasion I recall that I was standing in a line when one of the boys farted. I swore at him and the next thing I knew I was lying on the floor having been hit round the head by Mr HRA.
44. There were two other men called Mr GSM and Mr HRC who were also into inflicting physical punishment. I recall that Mr HRC came from Cowdenbeath and his mother ran a shop in Cowdenbeath. I recall thinking to myself that when I got out of Glenochil I would go and take revenge on Mr HRC because I knew where his family lived. Thanks goodness that I never did anything more than think about it.
45. Mr HRA was stocky built with gingery hair. The man called GSM was ex-army and had brown hair and the guy called HRC also had gingery coloured hair. HRC was more into the mental abuse. He would tell you to go back to your room and then he would come in and push you against the wall and threaten you and hit you. I think that HRA was between forty and fifty years old. GSM would be about the same while HRC was in his late 30's.
46. When you were in a line up waiting to go to dinner or coming back from somewhere you would be asked to stand at ease. HRA would walk up and down the line like he was inspecting it. You would hear one of the boys being slapped for no real reason. You could not react because you had to keep your eyes looking forward.

47. The first three or four weeks were the worst and then it eased off. It was as if they had broken you into their way of thinking. You would always see the new boys being subjected to what you had received. It was mainly punches and slaps that we received. We were usually hit on the side of the head.
48. I did get a lump on the side of my head on one occasion but I never needed hospital or medical treatment although some of the boys would be knocked to the ground. My lump was visible because of the very short haircut you were given when you first arrive.
49. The most common punishment was if you were caught talking and you would be slapped or punched on the side of your head. I recall some boys having their "slop out pot" poured over them. They would also pass you when you were on your knees cleaning and they would kick over your bucket. You just had to do what you were told.
50. I recall one guy who went bezerk but I can't recall his name. I think that he had mental health problems. He was taken back to his cell and you could hear him screaming as he was being slapped and punched by the staff.
51. On one occasion [HRC] put me up against a wall and punched me in the stomach in front of the other staff. The rest of the staff just turned a blind eye to what he did. Most of the staff did not use physical violence towards you but they didn't try to stop it happening.

Reporting of abuse at YOI Glenochil

52. You could not tell anyone what was happening you just had to accept it. I never told my mother or other family members about what was happening to me in care.

Leaving YOI Glenochil

53. I spent two months and five days at Glenochil. I was originally due to spend three months there but was released early. There was always a lot of coming and going of boys so I presume they needed my place for someone else and they felt that I had served my term.

Life after being in care

54. When I came out of Glenochil I continued to live at home. I did get into trouble with the police on occasions through drinking and fighting. I started work as a miner and calmed down. It was the way of miners to work hard and play hard. I was down the pits for nearly three and a half years.
55. I worked at Mossmorran and also drove HGV's for different companies. I have done a lot of different jobs.

Impact

56. I think that my experiences in Glenochil made me man up but also I became more violent. Without the violence and brutality from the staff Glenochil would have been a good place. I suppose it was like being in the army. It was a good place for boys that were going the wrong way and needed to be corrected.
57. I learned manners when I was at Glenochil and so when I got out I started to say please and thankyou which I was not good at before. If there had been no abusive behaviour from the staff it would have been a good place and I would have had a positive experience as I loved the physical training aspect of my time there.

- 58. I don't think that my experiences have held me back in any way. I just have to deal with it and move on. I don't think that it has had any effect on me. I have not needed any counselling or support and I don't think I would ever have applied to get support.

Records

- 59. I have never tried to get my records and I don't have any interest in doing that.

Lessons to be learned

- 60. There should be someone monitoring the staff to detect any abuse that is going on. I am sure it would not have happened if there was more control over the abusers. Some of the staff were very good with us but it is the abusers you tend to remember.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 61. When there are young people involved do the right thing for them. Do not assume that when they are locked up in places like Glenochil that the children are safe in the hands of staff members and it is the best place for them. The bottom line is that most boys are only off the rails and what they need is a guiding hand to get them back on.
- 62. 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..... 18 February 2022