

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QCF

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is QCF. My date of birth is the 1960. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

BACKGROUND

2. I was born and brought up in the Falkirk area until I was six years old. My father is dead. I am not sure if my mum is alive or not I have two brothers and one sister. I was the oldest of the children.
3. Initially I was with both my parents but my dad left for a while and my mother brought me up. It was after my dad left that the beatings from my mother started. It wasn't a very good life and I started getting in to a bit of bother, stealing. One time I was stealing and my mum heard about it and she put my hand in to the fire for stealing. Another day I went to the shops for my mum and I got the wrong messages and my mum threw an axe and it hit off my head and stuck in the door. My head was split open. I got beaten regularly by my mother because I couldn't spell or write properly or if I didn't do my school work properly. My siblings were treated okay; it was just me who got hit.
4. At school I was too slow to pick things up and I just wasn't grasping anything and I got moved to another school for children who were slow or couldn't catch up or weren't grasping things. At some point I went to stay with my dad because my mum left us but the beatings continued and he beat me.

Redding House, Redding, Polmont

5. When I was nine years old I went to a home called Redding Home, Redding in Polmont. My brothers and sister moved there too. [Secondary Insti
Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I think we were only there between four to six weeks. I can't really remember much about there. When we left we moved back with my dad.

Life back with dad

6. Everything with dad was okay for a while but by that time he had a new woman and she had two children. I didn't get on with one of the woman's daughters. I got beating after beating from my dad until one day, when I was 11 years old, it became too much and I walked up to [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The social work got even more involved but they never really did anything apart from saying that I was out of control.
7. After that my dad had a meeting with the social work department and my dad and step mum said they couldn't handle me anymore and it was decided I was out of control and I was sent to Quarriers at Bridge of Weir.

Life in care, Quarriers Home, Bridge of Weir

8. I was sent to Quarriers on my own and initially I was either in cottage number 31 or 32. In this cottage there were two house parents and everything was fine as far as I remember. I was then moved to cottage number 17 but I can't remember why. The cottage mother in number 17 was Ruth Wallace and she gave me beatings.

Schooling

9. I struggled at school but they didn't identify that I couldn't read or write. I went to the secondary school within the grounds of Quarriers but I couldn't cope. In the records it says something about me going to a specialist but I don't remember that. There were classes for maths, English, woodwork and metalwork but nothing like you get now. It says something in my records about me having a mental health problem but what they meant by that I don't know.

Visits / Inspections

10. If you were lucky the social workers came maybe once or twice a month and we got to speak to them privately. It was decided at some point that I could go to foster parents so I visited them and stayed some weekends. I saw them for about six weeks and I thought things were going okay with our visits but for some reason the visits just stopped.
11. I saw my dad once in the whole time I was there in Quarriers when he came to visit me but he probably didn't come more often because he was busy at work and didn't have a lot of money to get to Quarriers. I never got visited by my brothers or sister.

Christmas / Birthdays

12. We never celebrated Christmas at Quarriers. I think the first Christmas when I was with a house mother and father I got a radio as a present. When we moved to the cottage with Ruth Wallace we never got any presents for Christmas, and birthdays weren't celebrated either.

Holidays /Trips

13. At holiday time I remember going to Turnberry, to an estate owned by a Mr Hodge and the house mother came with us. We got to use his private swimming pool. I remember going there both summers I was at Quarriers. It was a good experience and we got to go into the town of Turnberry itself.

Abuse - Quarriers

14. In cottage 17 the cottage mother Ruth Wallace used to give me beatings. Other kids would go to her and complain about things that I had done and I got beaten by her.
15. I remember two other boys in there [REDACTED] and a boy [REDACTED]. The house mother was really horrible to them too. She would threaten them that they wouldn't get any visits that weekend. They used to get beaten by her as well. I remember them getting called in to her living-room and hear them getting beaten. I could hear them screaming and squealing. Sometimes she would hit you with her hand and sometimes it was with a slipper.
16. One time I came in from school and she scratched my face and gave me a hammering. In the cottage there was a room where you would put your dirty boots and your wet clothes and there were places to put them. She attacked me in there and then she called me in to her personal sitting room and she gave me a thrashing in there. This happened several times that I was called in to her room and she beat me.
17. One day at school I did something but can't remember what but I wouldn't take the belt. The woodwork teacher put my hand in the vice and then gave me the belt.

18. Apart from the time I got the belt from the woodwork teacher it was only the house mother Ruth Wallace who hit me. In the two years that I was there it probably happened about ten times, but it wasn't just that she hit me; she gave me a real beating.

Reporting Abuse - Quarriers

19. When the social workers came we got to speak to them privately in the main office and we had a blether. I tried to make an official complaint about the beatings I got from the cottage mother in Cottage 17 but the cottage mother denied it. I was said to be lying and that I was unruly. Any marks that I had from the beatings had gone by the time the social worker came. There was no one else I could have told and had to wait until the social workers visited.

20. A far as I know the social worker spoke to the management about my complaint but nothing ever happened. Eventually I was told that the social work couldn't fund my place anymore and I was moved to Bellfield Assessment centre. I moved there when I was eleven or twelve years old.

Bellfield Assessment Centre, Dumbarton

21. Bellfield Assessment Centre was an all boy's school and was in Dumbarton.

School

22. There were no school lessons at Bellfield but they had workshops and had things like mechanics, painting as in art, or gardening, or you could go and play football.

Visits / Inspections

23. At Bellfield I think I saw a social worker maybe once a month if I was lucky. I saw her in the dining room and got to speak to her privately.

Leisure Time

24. If you were good and you behaved yourself you were allowed home at the weekend to spend time with your family but you had to be back by a certain time. I used to go on the train.

Running Away

25. One time after I got out for the weekend I didn't go back and the police picked me up at my friend's house. When I got back to Bellfield I got put in the detention cell where I got beaten up.

Abuse – Bellfield Assessment Centre

26. The staff at Bellfield would sometimes randomly pick out boys, maybe ten boys at a time, and they used to make you smoke a full strength Capstan cigarette in ten seconds then birl you round fifteen times and you would try not to be sick. If you weren't sick you had to smoke another cigarette. Other boys were made to clean up the sick.
27. If you were bad the punishment was to polish the floors. They would make you get on your hands and knees and polish the floors. One time I was fighting and I got a set of keys hit off the top of my head.
28. The time that I told you when I didn't go back after the weekend and the police took me back and I was put in the detention cell, I got beaten up. I got punched and kicked to my side and my back and I was left in there for a couple of days on a concrete bed.

Reporting abuse - Bellfield

29. When the social worker came to Bellfield, which was probably once a month if you were lucky, I would get to speak to her on our own in the dining room. Several times I made complaints about my treatment but no one ever listened and it went unheeded.
30. I don't really know how long I was in Bellfield but it ended up that I was moved because they said I was uncontrollable.

Geilsland House, Ayrshire

31. I went to Geilsland and I remember getting taken there by [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED]. I am not sure what age I was. It was an approved school for boys run by the Church of Scotland. Mr [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] and he was ex-Navy and that was how [REDACTED]. All other members of staff were male apart from one female who helped in the kitchen. I slept in the White House and there were four in each dorm.

Visits

32. My dad never came to see me at Geilsland but he was working seven days a week. I saw him a couple of times when I went home at the weekends.

Schooling

33. There was no schooling at Geilsland, but they gave us training to go and work so that if you were out in the big bad world you would be able to survive by painting and decorating which I did. There were staff who were

tradesmen and they would come in every day and gave us training and I was sent to the paint shop which was in the gym and I was trained to paint and decorate. Others were taught mechanics, gardening, electrician, bricklaying and other stuff

34. Because there was no schooling I have never learned to read or write.

Running Away

35. Geilsland was run like a secure unit and I never ran away from there.

Religious Instruction

36. We went to church every Sunday in Beith, to the church that the boys in Geilsland built.

Leisure Time

37. We got to play football and if you didn't play football you just watched. Some of the boys used to abscond when we were playing football.

Work

38. There used to be a church in Kibble but it burnt down so we got to use the materials to build a church within Geilsland school. The boys in Geilsland built the church and just before we finished we were working until early in the morning to get it finished on time. When it was finished we went there every Sunday. The boys often did a show for the locals in the church. We also used to go to the old folks homes to tidy gardens. We never got pay for the work we did but we might have got some pocket money.

Discipline

39. You had to lay out all your clothes for inspection like you were in the military and you were given a score. Clothes had to be laid out in a template. To be allowed home for the weekend you had to get a score of at least 90. Your Sunday clothes which you wore to the church had to be spot on. This was a reward to get home.

Abuse at Geilsland

40. I was in the home about four months when I got into a fight with another boy and I beat him up. Later on there was a shout over the Tannoy that I was to go to Mr ^{EZD} [REDACTED]. When I got there Mr ^{EZD} [REDACTED] hit me with a belt that was split at the end. He must have had a nail through the end because he hit me over the backside with it and it made me bleed. I had my pyjamas on when he hit me. There was a door in and a door out of his office and when I went in he told me to bend over then he hit me on the backside with the belt. I then walked out the other door then went round and back in the other door and he would hit me again. I kept walking round and he made me do this six times. This was the first time I ever got the belt at Geilsland.
41. Another time one of the boys had hidden a razor in a bar of soap and one of the other boys slashed himself when he was washing. Instead of the staff dealing with it they allowed the boys to deal with it. It was called the gauntlet where Mr ^{EZD} [REDACTED] lined the boys up opposite each other and they beat the backside of the boy who had hidden the razor.
42. One time after the inspection of our clothes I refused to do my washing again. The creases had to be right on your clothes, your boots had to be bulled properly and your Sunday best clothes had to be spot on. If something wasn't right with your clothes ^{EZD} [REDACTED] would throw them out the window into the mud. Because I refused I was made to shift about 20 tonnes of soil on my own.

43. We were made to get up in the morning, maybe once a month, and forced to run about seven miles even in the winter then when we got back we had to have a cold shower. You had to sing to be allowed to come out of the shower. If you didn't sing, you didn't get out. Another thing they did regularly was to make us parade first thing in the morning then we did an assault course where we were climbing nets and going under pipes.
44. One time Mr ^{EZD} [REDACTED], ^{SNR} [REDACTED], as punishment for something I had done, read out my file in front of all the other children and staff, all about my parents and my upbringing and everything I had done. I think he was trying to make an example out of me and embarrass me.
45. After ^{EZD} [REDACTED] had done this he had a piece of wood which was like a fascia board and there was tape like insulating tape wrapped all the way round it. He would hold one end then hit you with it. He hit me with it over my jeans on my backside. I saw other boys getting hit as well with this bit of wood at other times. Other members of staff were there and saw what was going on.
46. We were all sitting outside one day in the summer and all the boys were congregated outside at lunch time. One boy must have done something bad in the workshop because ^{EZD} [REDACTED] came out and read his file out which included why he was in the home then gave him a beating with the piece of wood.
47. I left Geilsland at the age of 16. Basically the social workers came and told me that I was 16 and that was me finished at school and I left.

Reporting abuse at Geilsland

48. I made complaints to the social work when I was in Geilsland just like I did when I was at Quarriers and when I was at Bellfield but it didn't matter how many times you complained nobody listened, nobody ever listened.

Reporting to the Police

49. I have never spoken to the police about any of the abuse I suffered at any of the homes.

Life after care

50. When I left Geilsland I moved back in with my dad. The social work helped me get a job in the Falkirk area building a place for the disabled and learned different skills then worked with a trust and did various jobs. For the last ten years I have been working for a [REDACTED] company but just recently took voluntary redundancy.

51. I married my wife 29 years ago and we have five children together. She brought one child from a previous relationship. We have six grandchildren. My children know that I was in care but they don't know about my problems with education, that I can't read and write.

Impact

52. Because I was never given a proper education I can't read and write. If ever I have to fill in any kind of form I have to get my wife to do it for me. Before I got married my step mum used to write my letters for me then after I got married my wife did it for me.

53. Falkirk Social Work Department have always been responsible for me and despite the fact I complained regularly to them at the three places I had been I never ever heard anything back from them because nobody ever listened. I hate the social work department because they just didn't listen to me. I don't know the names of anyone I spoke to.
54. My dad doesn't know that I can't read or write. So far I have managed to hide it from everyone, but my wife knows. I have worked for the last ten years in a [REDACTED] company and they have just recently introduced some written tests. I know that I couldn't sit the tests so I took voluntary redundancy from the company. My son worked for the company and there is no confidentiality in the company so he would have found out. I was also worried that my boss who is a neighbour of ours that he too would find out that I can't read or write. I had two choices really. Either to take voluntary redundancy or for them to find out I couldn't read and write. I know that because of Health and Safety I would have got the sack anyway.
55. My mum didn't protect me, the people who put me in care didn't protect me so who was supposed to protect me. Nobody believed me, saying I was a bad person, a thief and that's how I've lived all my life, really not knowing who to turn to. Because of what happened to me I can't show my kids any love that a parent should because I've never had it myself. I have always found it difficult to show them what love is. I have a good relationship with my brothers and sisters.
56. I gave up smoking about 20 years ago and I don't drink alcohol. I spend a lot of time with my grandchildren and part of that is probably to make up for what I missed with my own children.
57. Because of what happened to me with the house mother at Quarriers I think this has affected my relationship with women and children. If the kids are crying I always wonder why they are crying and who has done something to make them cry.

58. There have had a couple of occasions when I have thought about ending my life but not recently.

Other action

59. I contacted a local solicitor when I was in my thirties and tried to prosecute Quarriers, Bellfield and Geilsland for the punishment and beatings I received. Basically I was told that there was no corroboration because no one else had come forward. I wanted them prosecuted for what I had been put through.
60. I saw this child abuse inquiry on the television last year so that's why I came forward. I definitely want to remain anonymous throughout this procedure as I do not want my family to find out.
61. I have visited Quarriers and Geilsland with my daughter who we have since found out has autism and ADHD. That was about sixteen or seventeen years ago when she was twelve and she was getting excluded from school. I showed her the two places to try and show her that these are the places she really didn't want to go to.
62. I have been back to Geilsland and Quarriers several times and I keep going back but I really don't know why. When I am there I just think to myself 'Why do people get away with what they did to us in respect of education and the beatings?' I get quite emotional when I leave there.
63. It is my intention to look for work again but it isn't easy now because of the application forms and written tests which you have to do for every job now. I have no exam certificates or qualifications and I am just so embarrassed at the fact that I cannot read and write.

Treatment

64. When I went to the lawyer to try and take court action against the Social Work Department I think the lawyer sent me to see a psychologist. I think it was thought that the abuse I had suffered at the hands of my mum was worse than the abuse at the homes. To be honest I am not sure which one was worse.
65. I went to my GP about seven to eight years ago because I was getting frustrated and angry towards my wife but not violent. I was referred to a psychiatrist but it didn't really help. We just went over old ground. I tend to just hide things now using my own strategies.
66. I am still seeing my GP because I am having problems with my back. I am also under a lot of stress and need some help.

Records

67. I went off my own back to get my records but the Local Authority in Falkirk said they had no records for me. They said they had all been destroyed in the 1980s because of the Children's Act. They said they had no paperwork for me. I went through my local councillor but he hasn't got anywhere so far. He is still trying. I contacted Quarriers and they invited me down to see them. I got my records from Quarriers and my wife and I have had a look through and we think there are some sections missing but they just said they didn't keep records all the time. There is nothing in the records about me being punished or anything about the complaints I made to the social workers about them. There doesn't seem to be much in my records considering I was there for two years.
68. The lady at Quarriers who gave me my records told me that I probably wouldn't get any other records because she had heard that a lot of the

local authorities had destroyed their paperwork because they heard this inquiry was starting.

69. I contacted the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh for my Geilsland records and completed a Freedom of Information request but they said they couldn't find anything but were going to keep looking. I have never heard anything back from them.
70. I have never kept in touch with anybody from Bellfield. I tried to contact someone in Bellfield Home about my records but I think it must be closed. I am not sure who actually ran that home.
71. I don't know who else I can contact to help me getting any records for me.

Hopes for the Inquiry

72. I hope that by me telling you this today people are actually going to listen and believe what I have to say and stop this from happening again because I don't want anybody to go through what I have gone through. I have not done this and don't expect any compensation I just want to prevent it from happening to other people.
73. I would like to find out why Falkirk Social Work who were responsible for me the whole time from Quarriers to Bellfield to Geilsland allowed it to happen, and why they didn't do anything about my complaints to them about the abuse I suffered.
74. I definitely do not want my name to be released publicly although I realise that certain people may get told my name and what happened to me, but I don't want my family to hear or read anything about me.

75. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed QCF

Dated 8/12/16