

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Kate McKAY

Support person present: No

1. My name is Kathleen McKay however I'm known as Kate. My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1967. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow. My birth certificate says my place of birth was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] so I think I was born at home or at Stobhill Hospital in Glasgow. My parents were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and my mother's maiden name was [REDACTED]. I think my dad worked as a labourer. There were [REDACTED] in the family. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED]

4. [REDACTED] were abused [REDACTED] He got my mother and father drunk and abused [REDACTED] one at a time. This took place just after I was born and I was still sharing a room with my mother. [REDACTED] was sentenced for these offences a couple of years ago and he was only sentenced to eighteen months in

prison after being found guilty of abusing six girls. He died after spending one night in prison. He was called [REDACTED].

5. I think [REDACTED] taken into care due to neglect. My parents left [REDACTED] in the house alone and I think my neighbours may have reported them.

Foster Care, Glasgow

6. The first home that I remember being in was in Lanark but I have been told by [REDACTED], that I was taken away at six weeks or six months old and fostered out to a couple who lived [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] visited me when I was in foster care and she understands that the foster mother either left me screaming for a long time or else she wasn't feeding me. I think my mother reported this and I was removed from their care.

Ridge Park Children's Home, Lanark

7. I went into a home in Lanark at the age of three or four. It was called Ridge Park and it was connected to Smyllum. I'm not sure if I was in Smyllum as well. I have been told that children from Ridge Park were sent to Smyllum and vice versa. I don't know how long I was in Ridge Park. I was returned to my mother when I was seven or eight but I don't know if I was put into other places before that. [REDACTED]

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Ridge Park, Lanark

18. I was returned to my parents in New Mains. We lived in a house in a small row. I remember we had a steel bath and an outside toilet. I remember going to the nuns with my mother and her asking them for bread and for money for food. I remember gulping down potatoes mixed up with beans. On Friday, which was pay day, my dad came home with a packet of Millers lime chocolates as a treat. I remember my dad drinking and a lot of arguing. I remember my dad shouting at my mum.
19. I had my own room. I think [REDACTED] had left home by this time. My mum had a black dog called Rusty which was really vicious. It used to sleep at the bottom of my bed and if I moved my feet it would try to bite me. I remember being in a room by myself and there was a fly there every day. I talked to it and let it crawl over my skin. I remember being scared by thunder and rain in the dark and sitting curled up in a chair.
20. I remember the next door neighbour, [REDACTED] going to the co-operative to collect clothes for my mother. I remember getting a white pair of jeans and I thought I was in heaven.

21. I remember getting stopped by a man in a lorry when I was going to school. This was probably St Theresa's primary school in New Mains. This happened near a garage which was along the road as you went out of New Mains towards Carluke. He stopped, put his window down and asked me if I wanted to come for a shag. I told him that I was sorry but I couldn't as I was going to school. I saw a police car and tried to stop it because my instinct told me this was something bad. I tried to report it in school but nothing happened.
22. I also have a memory of being in bed with a man in a house in New Mains and he was behind me. I can't remember anything else about that.
23. I have a memory of sitting with my legs open and a man interfering with my vagina. This might have taken place in my home.
24. We moved from New Mains to Newarthill and I don't remember any social work visits. I was still attending St Theresa's primary school and I remember making my first holy communion. I remember the rag man coming. I remember running up the hill to a phone box to ring the police when there were arguments between my parents. Nobody was ever charged. I don't know how long I was in Newarthill but it didn't feel like very long and then I was removed from my parents again. I never returned to live with them after that. I was then placed in a children's home in Carluke. There may have been other places too but I can't remember them.


Carluke Children's Home

25. Secondary Institutions - to be published later


Foster Care

26. I remember being fostered out from Carluke. I can't remember the names of the parents but I remember the daughters were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were slightly older than me. The family surname might have been [EZI-EZJ]. I remember getting treated differently. I didn't feel loved or that I was part of the family. It was an unhappy experience. I have no happy memories at all.
27. I remember rhubarb out the back and I was introduced to that for the first time. I also remember going to school.
28. I remember the mother hitting me and hurting me. The physical abuse must have affected me and it was the mental trauma that stuck. I remember coming home from school one night and [REDACTED] tried to strangle myself [REDACTED] because I was so unhappy. I was aged seven or eight at the time. There were obviously things happening which were making me unhappy. I reported to a teacher in school that they weren't treating me well and I got taken away. I think I was with them for a period of months and then I was moved to Arran View.

Arran View, Airdrie

29. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

The next home I remember being in was Bellshill.

Bellshill Children's Home, Lanarkshire

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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HMP Corton Vale

74. I was imprisoned in HMP Corton Vale for ten days. I was searched when I first went in. It was horrible and scary.

75. I was in a shared cell with my friend initially, then I was in a cell by myself and then I was put in with a girl from Posselpark called [REDACTED]. She was a drug addict. She used to sit in the cell naked until they called her to go for her methadone. There was a toilet in the cell and there were bars on the window. We were let out for exercise.
76. I was going to be put in a cell with a lesbian and I was terrified because it was something that wasn't spoken about back then. This didn't happen and another girl took me under her wing and gave me a few cigarettes until I was able to get my tobacco.
77. I watched a video of The Sound of Music in the day room. We were allowed out for an hour to watch this. My friend who I ran away with was sent to Calder House. This was a secure unit. A social worker, Mary Hamilton, came in to see me when I was in prison and a female prison officer pushed me when I was on my way to see her. I almost fell but I managed to save myself.
78. I don't remember seeing a lawyer before I went in but when I was getting out I saw a lawyer in a small ante-room and he told me that I should never have been in prison.

Bellshill Children's Home

79. I went back to Bellshill.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Calder House/Blantyre Assessment Centre

81. They were meant to assess me over a twelve week period but I ended up being there for eight months. I shared a room with three other girls.
82. It was mixed sex. The units were named after Scottish islands. I think I was in Iona. The boys were upstairs in Tiree unit. We weren't allowed to mix with the boys.
83. There was a big metal barn where we played netball. We played football on an ash park. I remember playing football against teams from other children's homes. There was some bullying and I was scared sometimes.
84. I had schooling within the unit although I can't remember doing any academic work but I remember we did pottery. Secondary Institutions - to be published later recently gave me a small dish that I had made in Blantyre and gave to her. I also did woodwork and I made [REDACTED] a fruit bowl and I also made a stool. I enjoyed the pottery and the woodwork. I also worked in a nursery school for work experience. I had stopped self-harming at this time. As far as I can remember the staff were okay.
85. We had to keep our rooms tidy and sometimes helped in the kitchen with the dishes. We didn't go on any trips.
86. It was scary but I managed to escape through the kitchen window. All the windows had bars but a member of staff had left the hall door open so my friend and I were able to get into the kitchen and escape. We got all the way to Cambuslang and then we were caught by Mrs ^{HLP}[REDACTED] who was a staff member. She took us to the police. I was chewing gum in front of the police and she told me off.

87. I went back to Blantyre and the male member of night staff who was on duty pinned me up against the wall and told me that if I ever ran away again he would really punish me. He had dark hair but I can't remember his name. Our punishment was that we had to scrub all the halls with a toothbrush and go for a three mile jog. I accidentally cut my leg on a can at the beginning of the jog so I didn't have to do it. I still have a scar.
88. I had reviews when I was in Blantyre and they let me know that they were keeping me for longer. I think I spoke at those. I didn't like being locked up so I was upset that I was kept there for so long. There was a visiting room and [REDACTED] visited. She also took me out. Before I went into Blantyre I knew there was a cell where they put you if you had behaved badly. I know about this because [REDACTED] was in it. I probably had a review and was told I was going back to Bellshill.

Bellshill and Foster Care, Govan

89. After I returned to Bellshill I was fostered to a family in Govan. I remember going there for visits and the father who had curly hair took me to a cafe. His friend owned a café which sold ice cream. He introduced me to the people who worked there as his new foster child. They had a son who was older than me. He had blonde hair and he worked in a big clothes store in Glasgow.
90. They lived in an old brown building. I remember having a room of my own and painting a set of drawers. I went to Govan High School. I found it difficult because I felt stupid. The school was quite big and it had a gym and a big outdoor bit. It had a swimming pool which I thought was amazing.
91. I got caught stealing from the shop and the foster mother took me into the shop to apologise. She wasn't very nice and I didn't feel loved. The foster father seemed alright. He bought me a nice pair of trainers.

92. I asked them if my mother could visit and I told them that she wouldn't cause any trouble. The foster mother said that 'she wouldn't fucking need to or else she would kick her down the stairs'. That really upset me and I told my social worker. I didn't want to be there after she had said that and I was taken away. I think I stayed with them for less than a year.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after being in care

102. I went to stay in the Dorchester Hotel in the west end of Glasgow but I had to be out of it all day. [REDACTED] was married and living in the west end so I met up with her a couple of times. I had no contact with my social worker at that point because I had left care. I was glue sniffing and I ended up in hospital with stomach pains. The ambulance came to the hotel and took me to hospital. When I got out I managed to get to Motherwell and I phoned Bellshill from a phone box. I spoke to Betty McGregor and told her that I wasn't coping on my own. She invited me back to Bellshill and I stayed there for a short period of time. I left for good after that.
103. As a teenager I was convicted of breach of the peace and of being drunk and disorderly.
104. I attempted to live with my mother in Easterhouse but it didn't work out. I went to stay with [REDACTED] and before that I stayed with my friend, [REDACTED] for a few months. I lived in a bed and breakfast in Hamilton. It was a big guest house with shared bedrooms. I ended up pregnant when I was 21 but that relationship didn't last as he was verbally abusive. [REDACTED] moved to Dumfries to get away from her partner and I went with her when I was seven months pregnant. They reconciled and I ended up homeless.

105. I moved into The Innocence in Bothwell near Motherwell which was run by nuns. They looked after me and I had to do chores every day. They helped me to get my first house in New Stevenson and my son [REDACTED] was born. As soon as I became a mum I stopped drinking.
106. I was raped after [REDACTED] was born. I was at a disco in Bellshill and I brought a guy home and he raped me. I couldn't remember his name so I didn't report it.
107. After that I met my husband. We ended up having four more children together. The relationship was on and off because my first baby wasn't his and I felt he treated him differently. He drank as well and I hated that because of my father and his drinking.
108. I had no relationship at all with my parents. [REDACTED] all had their own lives so I didn't get any support from them. I had no relationship with my extended family. As a parent I struggled to get my children into a routine because I had no consistent routine as a child.
109. I didn't work at all when the children were small. Having the children was difficult. We moved about a lot because I was terrified when people came to my door. I wet myself once when somebody came shouting to my door. I was a nervous wreck my whole life. I was scared of my own shadow. That caused a lot of stress because I was moving around bed and breakfasts with the children. I was living in one room with all the children. We also stayed in homeless units. I hate that I had to put the children through that but I was trying to protect them.
110. I had no contact with my parents until I was older and I would call to see my mum in Easterhouse but she just sat and drank.

Impact

111. [REDACTED]

112. There has been an impact on me as a mother. I was overwhelmed by the children. Because I didn't have a family I didn't have a clue how to be a mother. I have done a lot of shouting in my life and I hate that my past had that impact on me. The children have all grown up with that. I did alright considering what I went through but it made me a really unhappy person. There were a lot of good times with the children but there were also a lot of bad times. I had a fear of being an alcoholic like my parents.
113. I don't have a great relationship with my children now. I love them and they love me but we all have our own stuff going on. There used to be a lot of fighting in the house and that has just carried on. Being in care has robbed me of showing my emotions to my children.
114. I self-referred to a psychologist in Motherwell and she encouraged me to speak out so I made a report to the police. I have also seen a psychologist in the Moira Anderson clinic in Airdrie. They deal a lot with children who were abused. I met up with strange men and went to their houses and put myself in so much danger and that was because of my past. I was desperate for love so I put myself in a lot of vulnerable situations. I put myself out there too much. It was really important to me to have a successful relationship and sometimes this took priority over everything else. This has continued up to this year but it has now stopped.
115. When I am in a sexual relationship with a man, it does not feel like making love. It feels like I am being raped. Being intimate is difficult. I could cuddle the children until they were a certain age and then I felt embarrassed. I can't cuddle them now and they can't cuddle me because I made them feel embarrassed.
116. I had friends in the homes but I didn't maintain these when I left. I have been on my own quite a lot of the time since I left care. There are things I would like to say to people but I am scared to. I don't like standing out.
117. I don't feel comfortable when I am being intimate and that was even with my husband. I feel like a man because I am flat chested. I hate anybody touching my

chest if I am in a relationship. I can't have a partner because of this so I am thinking of having breast augmentation.

118. Being in care has robbed me of knowing what I looked like when I was young. I only have one photograph of my childhood and that was when I was ten years old and in Bellshill.

119. I know I am a good person but being in care has just had such an impact on my whole life. It affects how I see things and the decisions that I make. I don't feel normal and I feel unhappy most days. I have nightmares about a tree attacking me sexually. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later. I have dreamt about my grandchildren falling down stairs. Singing is the only thing that cheers me up.

120. There has been a huge impact on my mental health. I could cope when I was working because I was distracted but after I stopped work following my car accident in 2014 it all started because I had more time to think. I worked as a carer because I have always wanted to look after people. Before that I worked in McDonalds but I was bullied there.


121. Being in care affected my education. I thought I was stupid for a long time so I never thought I could get a good job.


122. I suffer from fibromyalgia and I think this is a result of being in care. The psychologist says my complex PTSD is because of the multiple abuse and the multiple neglect as a child and a teenager. My physical and mental health is really bad. I haven't had luck since the day I was born. I am trying to get help with my musical career but it is not happening.


123. Since reporting and having psychological help the impact has been much greater. I don't feel normal and I am having flashbacks through looking at my grandchildren.

Reporting of Abuse

124. I reported my abuse to the police in Motherwell police station a year ago and that was the first time I had thought about my past. I was watching television and I saw Smyllum and it looked very similar to the home I was in in Lanark so I read up about it.

125.  Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Records

128. My friend [REDACTED] has spoken to the Inquiry and she advised me to see a lawyer to make sure I got my records. I attempted to get my records from Motherwell Social Work Department and they came back to me weeks later and told me that they could not find any. I have recently instructed Digby Brown in Edinburgh and they are trying to recover them. The lawyer has mentioned to me about criminal injuries.

129. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED]

Lessons to be Learned

130. There should be a lot more interaction between staff members and children in care. It should be done outwith the home. Staff backgrounds should be thoroughly checked [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Staff should not be left alone with children at night and there should be more staff.

131. I was removed from the family home and put into a worse situation. I should have been placed somewhere safe.


132. There should be more support for children leaving care, particularly when they have been institutionalised for a long period of time. I needed support when I had my own children due to lack of parental role models.

133. Being in care has not changed in the last fifty years and abuse is still happening. My son's friend who is physically handicapped was abused by one of the night staff in St

Philips Residential School in Clarkson near Airdrie. That was about two years ago. This has been reported and has gone to court. Sentences for paedophiles are too short so I hope there will be tougher sentences.

Other information

134. 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.....16-9-21.....