

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LCI

Support person present: No

1. My name is LCI My date of birth is 1946 and my contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. My mum and dad were and but they are both dead now. I was the second born of four sons. was the oldest, I was next and then there were and and are both dead.
3. I don't have a great recollection of family life before I went into care because I was so young. I know that my mother wasn't well and lived with neighbours because my mum couldn't cope with all of us. Me, and lived with my parents. I just remember one Sunday my brother went in to wake my mum to get money for the church collection before we went to church mass but she had died in her sleep.
4. Shortly after that the three of us were taken up to Nazareth House in Aberdeen. I seem to think it was my dad who took us in the train. We didn't know what was going on I would have been five or six years old in 1952 or 1953 when I went there. After about three or four years he came back and took us home but that only lasted a month and we went back in to Nazareth House.

Nazareth House, Claremont Street, Aberdeen

5. Nazareth House was a big imposing building in its own grounds in Claremont Street, Aberdeen in a residential area and was run by the Sisters of Nazareth. It was divided into two sides; the boys' side and the girls' side. There were probably about 100 boys and we were in massive dormitories with single beds. The boys and the girls were kept separate and we only really saw the girls at mealtimes when we ate together.
6. The nun in charge of us was Sister [LDR]. The only other two nuns I remember were Sister [LDQ] and Sister [LJO] but they were not as bad as Sister [LDR]. Sister [LDR] was maybe thirty to forty years old and the other two were a bit younger.
7. There were mainly nuns there but there were some priests as well but we didn't have a lot to do with them. There were other civilian staff there too, presumably employed to work there to do the garden or the coal, things like that. We had some contact with them because we helped them sometimes.

Routine at Nazareth House

8. I had never had any previous dealings with nuns so it was all quite strange to me seeing them all walking about wearing their habits. My first memory is probably getting taken to and shown my bed in the dormitory and I was also given my number. We weren't allowed to use names and we were just known by our numbers. I can't remember what my number was.

Mornings and bedtime

9. The nuns would scream and shout at us to get us up. I think this was usually sometime between six and seven in the morning. We would get up and get washed

and dressed. At night time I think we were probably in our beds by six or seven o'clock.

Washing / bathing

10. We washed in the morning in a communal washroom where there were sinks and toilets. Sunday night was bath night and we all had to wait in a queue. If you were at the front of the queue you got scalded because the bath was so hot, or if you were at the end of the queue you had cold dirty water. That was just the way it was. It was a great big bath like footballers used to use and there were maybe ten to twelve of us in there at any time. The girls bathed in their own bathroom in a different part of the home.

Clothing

11. The clothes we wore were all hand-me-downs but I am not sure where they came from. There was no uniform but I do remember I wore shorts until I was sixteen years old. I don't think our names or numbers were sewn into the clothes. Our shoes were second hand too.

Food

12. The boys and girls ate together in the main refectory. For breakfast we got porridge and occasionally bacon and eggs, or things like that. We didn't get much time to eat it and the nuns used to walk round behind us and were always telling us to hurry up. If you didn't eat your food at meal times they would stand behind you and force you to eat it. If you were sick you would be made to eat your vomit.

School

13. We were shipped to school on the bus which was about a twenty minute journey. I went to St Mary's Primary School and then St Peter's Secondary School. We were treated differently at school and the other children called us the 'home boys' because

we lived in a home, but we stuck together at school. We would get the bus home at lunchtime, have something to eat then returned to school for the afternoon. At the end of the school day the bus would pick us up again.

14. I actually liked school and looked forward to going there probably because it was a break from the home. I got on quite well at school and there were never any issues with the way the teachers treated us. Back in the home the nuns would make us all sit down and get on with our homework although they never really helped us if we were struggling.

Daily tasks

15. When we got home from school we would be given daily tasks to do like collect the coal or do some cleaning. On a Sunday morning we got to polish the refectory floor. We put cloths on our feet and if you weren't going fast enough, by running up and down the floor with these cloths on our feet then the nuns would beat you with their sticks.

Leisure time

16. At Nazareth House we were never taught how to cook or budget our money. Anything we learnt like that was only at school. I learned more when I was in the army.
17. There were toys to play with but I don't actually remember playing with them. I don't remember there being any books, comics, or anything to read. There wasn't a television or radio. At the weekend, once we had done all our chores we may be allowed to go outside to play in the grounds.
18. I didn't have any personal possessions, absolutely none. We never got any pocket money. The home may have been given money for me by my father but I never saw it.

Religious Instruction

19. We had to go to mass all the time and we were totally indoctrinated into the Catholic religion. You had to go to church whether you wanted to or not. I became an altar boy just to get away from sitting in the main chapel. I didn't have much interaction with the priests at Nazareth House and I can't remember any of their names. The only real dealings we had with them was when we had done something wrong and the nuns sent for them and they came and beat us up.

Bed wetting

20. I never wet the bed but one of the symptoms of my brother's illness was wetting the bed. Every morning the nuns would parade the bed wetters wrapped in their wet sheets then beat them with their sticks. I think there were maybe ten to fifteen boys some mornings. I saw the nuns doing this to other boys.

Birthdays and Christmas

21. Birthdays and Christmases were depressing. I don't remember anything special happening on birthdays and it was just another day. Some other boys got presents on their birthday and their families came in to visit them, but on my birthday no one came to visit me. Christmas was depressing and the only present I remember getting from my dad was a pocket watch which he sent to share between all four of us. The only other present I remember getting at Nazareth House was an orange.

Trips / excursions

22. I don't remember ever going on any holidays when I was there or even going on any sort of day trips.

Visits / Inspections

23. During the first spell that I was at Nazareth House I had no contact with anyone in my family. I never saw any of my aunties, uncles or grandparents: nobody. I wasn't encouraged to write to my father and he never wrote to me. I remember that my older brother [REDACTED] came back to visit us some time after he had left during our second stay there. My brothers thought that he had come to take them home. They were both really upset and distraught when he didn't and he went away. He was the only visitor I ever got.
24. I am not aware of any health visitor, doctor, council staff or anyone else coming in to do any kind of inspection. I am not saying there wasn't but I don't remember that happening.

Sibling contact

25. I slept in the same dormitory as my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but we were not allowed to talk to each other. In fact I wasn't allowed to speak to any of the other boys but if we were out of sight of the nuns we did. If they caught you chatting they would come and break you up and give you a skelp with a cricket stump. The nuns enforced this no talking quite vigorously. I got quite a few beatings for talking to my brother. We could chat in the dorms or if we were somewhere where there were no nuns.

Medical care

26. I don't remember ever going to the dentist and I don't remember ever seeing a doctor when I was in Nazareth House. I don't recall ever getting any kind of medical inspection or health check at any time.
27. I never had any broken bones when I was beaten and only had bruising really. I never got any medical attention after any of the beatings but probably should have.

Leaving Nazareth House - first time

28. It would have been in 1957 when I was about eleven that the nuns came and told me that I was going home. I had a sense of elation and was looking forward to getting out of Nazareth House. [REDACTED] had joined us at Nazareth House by that time so all four of us went home. We stayed with my dad for about a month but it was apparent that my step mother didn't want anything to do with us. We were getting in the way of their socialising. My dad was a foreman in a steel foundry but he was involved in a lot of scams there. He was a bit of a fly-by-night and moved in quite illustrious circles and he was a heavy drinker as well. It was obvious we were not wanted so my dad took me, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] back to Nazareth House in the car. When we arrived back at Nazareth House my dad just dumped us and left. There were no big goodbyes or anything.
29. When we got back Sister [REDACTED] LDR greeted us and told us that obviously nobody wanted us. I don't remember if I was in the same bed as before but I was in the same dorm and I was with the same group of boys.

Leaving Nazareth House - last time

30. I remember my brother [REDACTED] who was the oldest was the first to leave. It was quite traumatic knowing that I was going to be left there to look after my two brothers. I was the next to leave about a year later and I went back to my father's in East Kilbride. I was sixteen years of age and this was in 1962.

Abuse

31. We were never made to feel welcome at Nazareth House and part of that I am sure was because we were from Glasgow. The nuns always wore their habits and used to walk around holding a cricket stump up their sleeves.

32. I was given a number when I arrived at Nazareth House and we were always referred to by our numbers. We were not allowed to use each other's names. It was only when we were at school that we used names because there were no nuns there.
33. I got several beatings for trying to talk to my brother [REDACTED]. My brother had [REDACTED] at the time and he was very ill and in fact nearly died. Several times I went to try and see him but I was dragged out by the nuns and they sent for the priests who came and gave me a hiding. They would tell me it was nothing to do with me, I was to go away and they would look after him. The nuns intentionally split me and my brothers up. They didn't like any boys sitting talking but they definitely split us up to stop us from being a family.
34. The nuns would generally deal with the discipline in the day-to-day running of the house and if you did something they would give you a quick skelp. If you did something more serious and were showing dissent against their regime or something like that they would send for the priests who would come and beat you. The priests only hit me with their hands or fists. Sister [REDACTED] LDQ and [REDACTED] LJO were usually quite pleasant when I was on my own with them and they were quite chatty but when Sister [REDACTED] LDR was there they had to do what they were told and they were quite different.
35. My brother [REDACTED] got beaten by Sister [REDACTED] LDR and I remember once she was beating him with a stick because he had wet the bed. I grabbed the stick to stop her but a priest came in and slapped me about with his hands. I was about eleven or twelve at this time. I think it was more of a beating than any mother or father would have administered to their own child. Every morning the nuns would parade the bed wetters wrapped in their wet sheets in the dormitory then beat them with their sticks. It was humiliating and embarrassing for them.
36. The nuns were quite devious and sometimes if I had bruises they would send me to school with a note saying that I was not well and couldn't do PT. This was so that the

teachers wouldn't see the bruises. As far as I am aware the teachers never saw my bruises or at least they never said anything.

37. When we were in our beds at night we weren't allowed to sleep with our hands under the sheets or the nuns would batter us and accuse us of touching or interfering with ourselves and say that we were filthy.
38. We were forced to eat food that we didn't like. I hated Brussels sprouts and was forced to eat them. Sometimes the nuns would put the food on the fork and actually force feed you. If you were sick at the table they would make you eat your vomit. That happened to me.
39. I would have been about eight or nine when a nun died and she was laid out in the chapel. We were all forced to kiss her. That was horrible and it was a really daunting thing for a child to be made to do.
40. The nuns used to come round and cut our nails but they were brutal and they would cut your nails so short your fingers would be bleeding. The blood would be pouring out your fingers.
41. When we went back into Nazareth House for the second time I remember the nuns kept telling us that we were worthless and that nobody wanted us.

Life after care

42. When I left Nazareth House I went back to live with my father and step mother and her daughter. I got myself a job at a supermarket and I loved the job but hated going back home at night. I couldn't stand it because of my step mother. Sometimes she was waiting outside the supermarket for me to finish on a Friday and she took my pay packet off me. I was there for about six months but I was in contact with my brother [REDACTED] and he got me a job in Edinburgh as a commis chef and I went and lived with him. I had a proper life after that.

43. I didn't really know what happened to my other brothers but I found out that my brother [REDACTED] died in an accident. He had been visiting friends and slept in a car in a garage overnight. He had the engine on to keep warm and never woke up. My brother had to force my dad to go down to Gravesend to identify him.
44. I joined the army when I was 21 years old and served for 22 years as a soldier with the Scots Guards. I found the army life so easy because I was institutionalised and I was used to the discipline, in that I was used to doing what I was told when I was told. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the army.
45. I met my first wife when I was in the army; she was the sister in law of another soldier. We were married for 24 years and had two children but subsequently divorced. I never really discussed my past life with my first wife. When I told her for the first time, because two CID officers were coming to see me, she didn't believe me and told me I was making it all up. That was the probably start of the slippery slope for our marriage. I married my second wife in 2003. My second wife had two children from her previous marriage. We now have seven grandchildren.
46. I lost touch with my brother [REDACTED] about fifty years ago but my wife made it her mission to find him. Through an organisation called 'family finders' we all met about eighteen months ago. Unfortunately it was then that I learned he had cancer and he died about a year ago.

Reporting of abuse

47. There was no one in Nazareth House that I felt I could talk to or tell what was happening to us. The impression I got at the time was that the nuns were in charge and they did what they wanted. I was young and didn't know any different. You just take it as a fact that they knew what they were doing was right because I didn't know if it was normal or not. I couldn't have told any of the teachers at school.

48. Around 2000 I contacted Cameron Fyfe and through him I got in contact with the police. Two female CID officers from Aberdeen came and took a statement from me. They were in tears when I was telling them about my experiences in Nazareth House. I never heard any more about it after they left. At the time the Catholic Church were saying that we were all in collusion and making it up. The police told me that they had spoken to two or three hundred people and they were all telling them the same story.
49. There was no one at Nazareth House who I could have told about the abuse. To be honest I didn't even think it was wrong, I just thought it was the way it should be and was normal.

Impact

50. After I left the home and when I joined the army I pushed everything that happened to me as a child out of my mind and I really thought very little about it. It was only when I was in contact with Cameron Fyfe that things started coming back to me. I started getting flash backs and when I went to the psychologist I remembered more and more.
51. The time that the nun died and was laid out in the chapel has always stuck in my mind. Ever since then I have had a real aversion to visiting any relatives that have died and are in the chapel of rest. I have a vivid memory of parading in front of and kissing the dead nun.
52. Because the nuns used to be so brutal when they cut your nails I started biting my nails so that they didn't have to cut them. My nail biting continued after I left care probably until I joined the army. I also have a thing about shoes and clothes now. Because we never had our own stuff and only got second hand clothes I now have loads of pairs of shoes and loads of clothes.

53. We used to get battered if we slept with our arms under the sheets when we were in our bed and accused of touching ourselves. I still sleep with my arms out of the covers. My wife has often said to me that it was cold and to put my arms under the covers but I can't, I just can't stop it.
54. I never had a proper childhood and I was never allowed to be a proper child and I was never happy. I was wearing horrible and different clothes and being the butt of jokes. I am now very anti-church because of what happened to me and I don't want anything to do with them. I think it is an institution that has festered and until they admit it, the abuse will carry on.
55. For a while my daughter said that she wanted to go to boarding school because one of her friends was going. I point blank refused because of what happened to me and I didn't want her to experience what I did. It broke her heart that I wouldn't send her but within a month she found out that her friend wasn't happy at boarding school so that made me feel better, and I was vindicated.

Records

56. I have never tried to get my records. My brother apparently has a copy of my records and he is arranging for me to get a copy of them. To be honest I don't really want them. My brother has had a look at the records and he said they don't even have our dates of birth recorded correctly.

Other action

57. Around 2000 I contacted Cameron Fyfe because he was dealing with 'no win, no fee' abuse compensation claims. He referred me to a psychologist for examination but the psychologist didn't take any money from me. It all kind of petered out after that and I have never received any compensation.

58. I went to Glasgow to take part in a BBC programme about abuse in care. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] There were a lot of other people there and some of them were in a terrible state. It was obvious that some people who had been abused had turned to drink and drugs as a result of their abuse. My brother recognised a lot of them from Nazareth House but I didn't. The programme director spoke to us later and told us that we were the only sane ones there.

Treatment / support

59. I have never been to any sort of counselling and feel that the army was the best help for me. I know that my brother has been for counselling. I have also been to a few of the INCAS meetings.

Hopes for the Inquiry

60. The whole purpose for me is to get the Catholic Church in Scotland to admit that they were wrong and that the abuse did go on. Children shouldn't have to go through what we went through. The main thing for me is that it does not happen again.

61. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I would be more than happy to give oral evidence at any future hearing should it help. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

LCI
[REDACTED]

Signed.....

Dated..... 15/05/2017