

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LCQ

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is LCQ My maiden name was LCQ My date of birth is 1969. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Banff Hospital and grew up in Aberdeenshire. We moved from Banff to Aberdeen when I was five or six years old. My father was in the Merchant navy to begin with, and then became an electrician for the Hydro-Electric board. After the oil boom he got a job off-shore. We moved out of Aberdeen in 1979, when I was in primary six and my parents bought a property just outside of , Aberdeenshire.
3. Before I went into care, my family consisted of my parents and five siblings. I had an older sister called who is two years older than me, a younger brother who is a year younger, and my youngest sister who is two years younger than me. We were all quite close in age and had a lot of shared childhood experiences. When I was about twelve years old, my mother had a further pair of twin boys.
4. We lived in Aberdeen, just off when I first went into care. I think my father was working off-shore at the time. My mother worked part-time in the fish industry.

5. My parents had a violent and abusive relationship. I remember, on one occasion, the neighbours tried to stop my father chasing my mother with a sledge-hammer. They had quite a serious drink problem.
6. Both of my parents were angry people. My mother was always complaining that we were only at home because of her; otherwise we would be in care. We were frightened of my dad, especially when he had been drinking. We would be scared of going to the toilet at night in case we bumped into him, so we would go to the toilet on the floor in the bedroom instead.
7. I know from my social work notes, which start from 1976, that my parents were charged with neglecting us in that year. The notes state that the police had been repeatedly called out to our house over the previous two years due to domestic incidents between them. The police describe it as a continuing saga between 1974 and 1976.
8. My social work There was no social work involvement in our family prior to us going into care.

### **Moving to foster care –** [REDACTED]

9. I was six or seven years old when I first went into care. My parents had separated and we were told by a neighbour that our mother had just left. My mother had only temporarily left my father because he was getting so drunk. She returned to my father a short time later, but by that time we had already been taken into care.
10. I now understand from my notes why my mother used to say it was our fault. She had to stay in an abusive relationship because of us.
11. I remember being taken into an office and my father explaining to us that he couldn't care for us anymore because he had his jobs to do. There was a male social worker who agreed with him and we were told that we were going on a "special holiday".

12.

Another Institution

13.

14.

15.

**Nazareth House Children's Home, Aberdeen**

16. After the foster home we were taken to Nazareth House. I don't recall going home first or taking any of my own things with me. My notes tell me that I went in to Nazareth House in [REDACTED] 1976, and that home was chosen for us because we were Roman Catholic.

17. I remember being very confused and not understanding why we were there. We were never told why or how long we were due to stay there for. My notes say that I shed a few tears. Years later my mother told me that she had sent us a letter explaining everything but I never received it.

18. I recall being in Nazareth House for seven or eight months. We arrived in late spring-time. I was kept together with my older sister, [REDACTED] but was separated from my younger sister, [REDACTED] and my brother. I don't remember seeing them there. They may have been in separate groups; there was no attempt to keep us all together.
19. I know from my notes that the four of us were put into Nazareth house for three months initially.

### **Routine at Nazareth House**

20. During the week, there wasn't much interaction or talking between the children, we just followed what the nuns told us to do next. There were never any games and we never watched TV or anything. It was all just routine. We were mainly kept inside. I can't remember ever playing outside in the grounds.
21. We slept in dormitories, and the boys were kept separate from the girls. I remember seeing lots of single beds. I was in a dormitory at first but then got moved into a room with my big sister [REDACTED]
22. I'm not sure what time we were woken up but it was pretty early. All of the children in the dormitory were taken together to the washroom by a nun. There was a long hall outside the dormitories and we had to cross it to get to the washroom. There were four or six sinks in the washroom.
23. We then went for breakfast in the dining room. After breakfast we would go to school. I think it was St Peter's school but I am not sure. I can't remember how we got to school; it may have been by van. I don't remember much about school. I don't even remember what clothes we had to wear.
24. I was sent to the headmaster's room at school a couple of times. I was warned that if I didn't improve then I would get the belt. I never actually got the belt as far as I can remember. I never saw anyone getting the belt at school.

25. We had dinner in the home. We sat in the dining room in silence during mealtimes. The nuns sat or stood with the children. I remember there was one long table. We were made to eat everything that was on our plate. On one occasion during a mealtime I was made to eat boiled bacon. I had terrible difficulty chewing and swallowing it. A nun was standing over me. I was told to: "Just swallow it". They kept making me swallow it over and over to the point that I ended up being sick everywhere.
26. At bedtime we went to the washroom, got washed and changed into our pyjamas. We were supervised by the nuns. We had to brush our hair 100 times before going to bed. We had a set amount of time to brush our hair, and then it was lights out.
27. Me and [REDACTED] had always shared a bed at home so we would climb into each other's beds at night to comfort each other. If the nuns caught us in the same bed, they would physically remove us. They would use firm force, not hard-force.
28. The atmosphere was very clinical. There were no smiles, no affection. I spent most of the time scared.
29. The weekends were better as there was a change of staff. It was civilian staff, rather than the nuns, looking after us. There were two young female staff members who came in. I think they were students. The weekends had a much more positive atmosphere. It felt more like a family and there was laughter.
30. My sister and I would always have our hair washed on a Saturday and get ringlets put in. It was for church on Sunday. I was allowed to spend time together with my sister as long as we were being watched by the nuns.
31. We had bible study classes in preparation for our first Holy Communion. There was a priest who took those classes. I can't remember his name. We learnt about the concept of being wedded to Christ.

*Trips and visits*

32. I think my mother and father came to visit us once. The second time they came, they took us home.
33. I know from my notes that there was regular contact with my parents. The nuns expressed concern to the social workers that visits with our parents caused us distress.
34. I remember going away on the annual holiday with Nazareth House staff for one or two weeks. I can't recall whether it was with the nuns or not. [REDACTED] was with me and we went to a big house in the country. I remember the summer holiday as being one of the only times we were allowed outside.
35. I know from my notes that we went on holiday for three weeks, somewhere near Speyside.
36. On one occasion, we went swimming. I think it was at a swimming pool in Aberdeen. I remember going to the pool and trying to teach myself to swim. I don't remember anything except trying to swim to the edge and eventually just seeing bubbles.
37. I don't remember bringing any personal possessions with me from home or from the foster home when I arrived at Nazareth House. However I must have been allowed some possessions as I can remember having a piggy-bank. I had some pocket money in it that I was saving. One day I went to my bedroom and found my piggy-bank smashed and my money was gone. I was told that the University students had been in the home collecting money for charity.
38. I don't remember any Birthdays or Christmases at Nazareth House. I think we were sent home before Christmas.

*Running away*

39. I remember running away to Duthy Park in Aberdeen. I was missing the ponies that I had played with when I was at home, so I stole some bread from Nazareth House to feed them. I don't remember if I was punished when I returned.

*Healthcare*

40. I never saw a doctor or nurse whilst at Nazareth House.
41. Both of my sisters had health problems but I never saw any doctors or official medical intervention on their behalf. [REDACTED] had epilepsy and used to have fits. On one occasion she had an epileptic fit and there were lots of adults holding her down on the floor. One of them was a nun called Sister [REDACTED] LJI [REDACTED]
42. My mother had explained to me that you were not supposed to hold [REDACTED] down when she was having a fit. I was trying to tell the nuns this and explain that she should be put on her side to make sure that she didn't bite her tongue, but they wouldn't listen to me. It was terrible to watch and I remember becoming quite hysterical and thinking that they were doing it all wrong. I remember being dragged out of the room.
43. [REDACTED] had asthma and used to have asthma attacks. She was always coughing at night. Once she coughed so much she coughed up blood all over the carpet. The nuns told us off. Their attitude was more about how we could damage the new carpet. I was seven and [REDACTED] was nine at the time.

**Abuse at Nazareth House**

44. The abuse at Nazareth House was more about mental and psychological punishment rather than anything physical. I remember being made to feel very bad, sinful and ashamed. They attacked our self-esteem.

45. We were Catholics and were made to attend church mostly at the weekends. On one occasion, my sister and I were taken down to the chapel and were told to kneel and say prayers. There was a coffin at the front of the room and we were made to kneel six rows back and pray over this person for an hour. I remember it was an old person but I can't remember if it was an open coffin or not. I don't know why they had sent us to do that but I found it disturbing.
46. I remember on one occasion being sent to the washroom so that the nuns could deliberately shame the bed-wetters. Two girls and a boy came in carrying their wet bed sheets. They were about the same age as me. They were frog-marched passed us all, into the laundry. There was a laundry at the back. I felt awful for them because they were walking with their heads down and looking ashamed. They were made to put their sheets in the washing machine in front of everyone. I tried not to look at them. I felt awful. I think it happened more than once.
47. There was a room just off the main hall that used to terrify us. It was an old dentist's room and there was a strong smell of gas coming from it. There was lots of antiquated dental equipment in there. It looked like a torture chamber. We were always scared as to what went on in there. I remember spending hours outside the room with my sister counting our strings of rosary beads. I was told we had to count the beads because we had to save our soul and atone for our sins. We were told that we were sinful.
48. We were taught never to question an adult. You would get the belt if you ever did question them.

### **Leaving Nazareth House**

49. I was six or seven years old when I was taken out of Nazareth House. I had no knowledge or warning that we were going home for good. We were given the impression that we were just visiting home, but then we just didn't return.



50. My notes also state that my parents were annoyed that they weren't given the address of where we were on holiday, when we went to Speyside. The social workers got involved and told the home that they had no right to withhold that information from my parents. Shortly thereafter we returned home on a trial period.
51. I get the impression that we were sent home and allowed to stay there. It is unclear from my notes whether we were in Nazareth House for three months only or in and out of care for seven or eight months.

### **Life back at home**

52. When we got home there were lots of presents. I can't remember if it was Christmas or not, I just remember it was really nice to go home to all these presents. There was never any discussion about if or when we were going back to Nazareth House.
53. During the period whilst I was living at home after Nazareth House I was sexually assaulted, but I didn't tell anyone. It was someone from the village and I was always scared of bumping into him.
54. I do not recall there being any social work involvement with my family after we returned home from Nazareth House. Social services did not get involved until I was brought before the children's panel for missing school when I was aged twelve.
55. My parents had separated by this stage and my mother had met someone else who she would get drunk with. My mother had left us for three weeks entirely on our own, which is primarily why we were taken back into care. It was also because my sister and I were skipping school.
56. I was twelve or thirteen years old when I was sent to Nicoll Lodge Children's Home. [REDACTED] was pregnant so she stayed with my mother. It was only me, my younger brother and [REDACTED] who were sent to Nicoll Lodge.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

57.

58.

59.

60.

61.

62.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

63.

64.

65.

66.

67.

68.

69.

### **Life after being in care**

70. I carried on going to school for a few weeks when I went home. I had to go before another children's panel, and I told them that I didn't want to finish school. I didn't take my final exams. I just wasn't coping in the school system. I think my earlier time in care had institutionalised me, and I had a mistrust of adults, which made it difficult for me to cope in school and other similar social situations.
71. I was supported by my social worker, Mr Watts, through the "East Training Scheme" with YTS.
72. I did my [REDACTED] stage two exams and then went on to do auxiliary nursing. I have gone back and sat my English Highers and done two years in college. I completed an animal care course and I am currently a veterinary nurse of seven years standing
73. I have been married for 28 years and live with my husband. I have a 28 year old son who lives in Canada. I have been a veterinary nurse for the last seven years.

### **Impact**

74. Whilst in care, I became a very shy and withdrawn child. I couldn't stop questioning why my parents were the way they were. I always felt different, I never really fitted in. By the time I got to secondary school I had real issues with authority. I developed a very big chip on my shoulder and felt very let down by my parents.
75. I feel like I didn't have a childhood. I also feel a lot of guilt about my siblings and try taking on all of their problems. It is only in the last couple of years that I have spoken to my siblings about being in care. I am in touch with my siblings now. I have always felt that I need to look after them.

76. I did not finish my schooling because of my distrust of adults. I chose to leave school because I could not cope in the school setting. I did not realise what I was doing to myself. I was a very angry teenager. I built up a wall which I didn't break down until I met my current partner.
77. The impact of being sent into care has continued into my adult life. I feel that I have psychological and mental scars. I struggle with low self-esteem, I feel like I'm not worth anything and I am always comparing myself to other people.
78. I have a few friends [REDACTED], but I find making friends difficult because I don't feel adequate enough. I have no confidence, especially in company. I can't be in big rooms with other people. I feel institutionalised.
79. I have had suicidal thoughts and had to take sick leave from my job. I was working for Tesco at the time and had to take time off due to my mental state. I had a grievance against Tesco upheld for their treatment of me during that time.
80. I saw a clinical psychologist at the Royal Cornhill hospital in Edinburgh in 2005. I was referred by my GP but I am no longer under their care.
81. I have had six sessions of private counselling in Aberdeen over two years. I have also had rape counselling four or five years ago as a result of the sexual assault.
82. I am always worried that my depression will have an effect on my son, as it has affected my relationship with my partner.

### **Other information**

83. The reason I decided to give this statement is because I had such a strong memory of the children in the washroom that were marched passed us carrying their sheets for bed-wetting. I felt their embarrassment and shame. Those children had been put into care and forgotten about. At least someone can stand up and say that they saw what happened to them and it shouldn't have been done.

- 84. I don't understand why nuns were ever allowed to look after children. They had no thoughts, feelings or compassion for children.
- 85. A child isn't always able to say what they are feeling, but that doesn't mean that they are not suffering. People who are linked to caring for children should have the skills to detect what children are feeling and have more of an understanding.
- 86. I feel that children should be counselled at the time the problem is detected, and helped over a longer period of time. I feel that not dealing with it at the time has negative impacts throughout life.
- 87. 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..  LCQ .....

Dated.. 09/11/2017 .....