

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Joanne PEACHER

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is Joanne Peacher. My date of birth is 30 December 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I never knew my dad. My mum's name was [REDACTED]. She lived at various addresses in the East End of Glasgow. The addresses were all around Parkhead and Shettleston. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
3. My mum was a drug dealer and she used to take drugs herself. I was in and out of homes from the age of one. My mum had a big heart operation when I was one, so I was taken into care. My mum always said I went in crawling and came out walking. I was back in care by the age of two and a half or three. I don't remember the names of the places when I was very young, but I didn't have any problems there. I was well looked after.
4. I had health problems as a child as I was born with three kidneys. I had three operations when I was growing up. I also had to take tablets. When I was four or five, I was back living with my mum. The social workers didn't know she was a drug dealer, and they sent me back to my mum's to see how she got on. My mum gave me her tablet, as it looked the same as mine. I ended up in hospital for two and a half weeks. Because of that, I was taken from the hospital into care.

Kames Castle, Isle of Bute (first time)

5. Prior to being in Nazareth House, I was in a children's home in Kames Castle. I went to Whitehall School. I don't remember much about those places, but I didn't have any problems.

Nazareth House, Cardonald, Glasgow (first time)

6. They had no more space at Kames Castle. [REDACTED] so I went to Nazareth House. I went there when I was six. [REDACTED] I can't remember my first day there, but I loved it when I first got there.
7. I lived in a bungalow in the grounds of Nazareth House. I remember it was white and creamy. On the other side of the grounds there was a nunnery and there were children's homes all around.
8. There were about fifteen children in my bungalow. The age range was 5 to 18. The girls had one end and the boys had the other end. There was a family of girls, four sisters. They had been there for about three years before I arrived. There were also staff quarters, a living room and a big massive playroom. Sister [REDACTED] LHW was in charge of the bungalow.
9. There were quite a lot of staff. They used to do shifts. There used to be 4 or 5 on the night shift and 4 or 5 during the day. They were all civilians, apart from Sister [REDACTED] LHW. She was a really nice nun. She used to sit and talk to you, and you could chap on her door for anything. Sister [REDACTED] LHW stayed overnight, as did [REDACTED] LFV who was a civilian staff member.
10. There was a mother superior who ran the whole place. I didn't know her name. I think there might have been about one hundred children in the whole place.

Routine at Nazareth House

Mornings and bedtime

11. You shared a room, or you could have a room of your own. Some of the rooms had four children, some two and some were single rooms. I was in a room of my own until [REDACTED] arrived. Sister [LHW] would wake us up at 7.30 in the morning. We'd get ready for school, and then we'd have our breakfast. A minibus came and picked me up to take me to school.
12. At night time, I had to be in the shower for 8.30. I was allocated a time because of the number of kids. Then I'd put my pyjamas on. I was allowed to go and watch television for a bit, and bedtime was at 9.30 for the younger ones. The older children were allowed to watch television in their bedrooms, but I had to be in my bed for 9.30. At the weekend, I was allowed to stay up until 10.

Food

13. The bungalow had its own kitchen. The food would be brought from the main house to the kitchen in the bungalow. We would eat together in a big dining room. We used to have dinner at 5. If you didn't get there for 5, you'd had it. You wouldn't get anything to eat. There were a couple of boys who didn't make it on time, they were out playing football or whatever.
14. That didn't happen to me often. I was always there at twenty to five, demanding my dinner. The meals were alright, just like school dinners. If you didn't like it, you just had to do your best with it.
15. You'd put your trays on a unit and then they'd go in the dishwasher. You could help do the dishes if you wanted. You didn't have to, but if you had nothing to do you'd offer to help.

Clothes

16. We had our own clothes. They used to take us out to buy them. We could pick our own clothes, but the staff would pay for them. The clothes were washed by the staff. There was a launderette in the big house.

Leisure time

17. After dinner, I was allowed out until about 7:30 at night, if it was light. If it was dark, we couldn't go out. We could play outside in the grounds. There was a big football pitch. We could play there or go out on a bike, whatever we wanted. When it was dark, we would watch telly or play in the playroom. I used to play on the computer, play pool or play table football. There was quite a lot to do.
18. Sometimes, the staff would take the younger kids out for a walk before bed time. We were taken to the cinema for a Christmas show, but not often. We never went away anywhere overnight.

School

19. I got taken to school in a minibus. The rest of the kids would walk to school, as it was nearby. I went to a special school. I used to be the first one on the bus and the last one off it. I wore school uniform. I got my lunch at school. At school, I learned reading, writing and maths.

Birthdays and Christmas

20. One year, I spent Christmas at Nazareth House. It was really good. We put decorations up, and had a proper Christmas dinner with Christmas pudding.
21. Most of the time, I went home for Christmas, because my mum got better. We used to get a black carrier bag to take home. I remember being given Barbie dolls and clothes. My mum said it was a horrible present to get. I didn't like Barbie. That year, I

remember [REDACTED] won a battery-powered toy at the home. Everybody wanted a shot.

22. We got loads of stuff for our birthday. You'd get a cake and a party. People would come from elsewhere in the home. It was really good.

Visits/Inspections

23. When I first went into the home, I wasn't allowed to go home. My mum would phone [REDACTED]. She'd come and visit on a Saturday. It wasn't supervised. My mum would come and have a chat with Sister [LHW] [REDACTED]. When I got a bit older, about 8 or 9 years old, [REDACTED] home every second weekend and stay from Friday to Sunday.

24. I remember people would come in to have a look at the place. They would look around the rooms. They didn't talk to us, but they'd talk to Sister [LHW] in the office. They would just turn up. I think they came every three or four months.

25. Sister [LHW] took me [REDACTED] to a children's panel. [REDACTED]. It was about three or four months after [LFW] assaulted me. [REDACTED] at home for four or five months, but my mum couldn't cope. She went downhill. [REDACTED] returned to Nazareth House. [REDACTED]

Medical care

26. I don't remember a nurse being at the home and I don't remember a doctor visiting.
27. I used to have to go to the hospital for check-ups about my kidneys. I had three operations, when I was 3, 6 and 9 years of age. They had to take parts of my kidneys away each time. It was too big an operation to do it at the one time. I have a big scar from my stomach to my back. Sister [LHW] would take me to the hospital every six months.

28. If you fell and hurt yourself, you'd be taken to the doctor's. We used to go to the dentist every six months. We'd go in groups of three or four.

Religious instruction

29. All the children had to go to the chapel every Sunday. It was right next to the grounds of the home. We also said prayers at mealtimes. We didn't have to say prayers before bedtime.

Pocket money

30. I was given pocket money by Sister [LHW] The amount depended on your age. I got about £1.50 a week. A fifteen year old girl got about £5. An ice-cream van would come round to the home every Saturday and I'd buy sweeties.

Discipline

31. If we did something wrong, we would get into trouble for it but nobody hit us, apart from [LFV] If you swore, you'd be sent to your room. You would be called out for meal times. You would be grounded and told to stay in your room. The length of time you were grounded for depended upon what you'd done. I was grounded about three times.
32. I smashed a window with a snowball once. I was grounded for about three weeks. I didn't get my pocket money and I couldn't play in the playroom. I had to sit in the living room.

Abuse – Nazareth House

33. Somebody told me one of the nuns kept hitting a girl. I didn't know her name. It was in the big house. She came over and we played with her. She said, "I keep getting hit". I told her to report it but she said, "No."

34. I remember a boy saying, "Don't believe in Sister [LHW] She'll hit you because she hit me." I asked him what happened and he said that Sister [LHW] hit him on the back of the head. I never saw her doing anything like that.
35. If you did something wrong, [LFV] would hit you on the back of your head. It started 4 or 5 months after I went there. She liked things to be done properly, the girls standing on one side and the boys standing on the other side. If we stood on the wrong side, she'd come and clout us on the back of the head. It was forceful. She'd say, "You silly girl. You're supposed to do it properly." I think she did that to me about once a week.
36. When I was 8, Sister [LHW] was away at a conference. [LFV] was in charge of the bungalow. I was out in the snow, playing with another girl. [LFV] shouted, "Come in here, you." She whacked me with a stick 3 or 4 times on my ankle bone. She hit the other girl on her back. [LFV] had told me not to say anything. She told me to say I'd fallen.
37. I couldn't move my foot. Sister [LHW] came back later that day. I was limping and she asked what had happened. My ankle was swollen. I told her I'd fallen and twisted my ankle. Sister [LHW] took me up to the hospital. She phoned my mum, and my mum came as well. I told the doctor my ankle had given way in the snow. They said I had a fractured ankle. The doctor said it wasn't a twisting injury and it looked like I'd been hit with something.
38. Sister [LHW] kept asking what happened. I kept saying I'd fallen. I think Sister [LHW] knew I was lying because she kept asking me. I was too scared to say anything. Sister [LHW] went to the toilet. My mum asked me who had done it. I told her, "[LFV] hit me with a stick." I asked her not to tell Sister [LHW] because I thought I'd get into more trouble. She told me I wouldn't.
39. They put my foot in plaster. My mum came back to the home with me. Everybody was asking me if they could sign the plaster. [LFV] was in the kitchen. My mum

grabbed her and said, "If you touch my daughter again you're going to get arrested." Then my mum punched her in the face. Sister LHW pulled my mum off her and then went to have tea with my mum.

40. I went to my bed because my ankle was sore. LfV came and said sorry to me. I said, "It's okay, but just don't do it no more." She said, "I promise I won't." After that, she was closer to me than normal and being friendly. It didn't feel right – she was just being too close.
41. I never saw the other girl again. She stayed in the big bit of the home. She was older than me, about eleven. I never saw her again at chapel or anywhere else. I don't know what happened to her.
42. I came out in a rash from German measles three or four days after breaking my ankle. My foot was in plaster. I had to stay in my bed. LfV came into my room, wearing a mask. It was like a nurse's mask but I knew it was her. She said, "Open your legs." I opened my legs and she put a stick inside me. She said, "If you say anything to anybody, I'll come and get you." The stick was like a broom handle. Something was playing on the telly with a big bear, I think it was Rainbow. She heard somebody coming so she put the stick under my bed and ran out the door.
43. I didn't tell anybody about what happened in my room until I told my husband about ten years ago. I didn't feel I could tell my mum at the time. The hitting stopped after that.

Leaving Nazareth House

44. [REDACTED] I was about 11. I wanted to move and I was old enough to ask them. I wanted to be closer to my mum. Nazareth House was three buses away from my mum's and my mum didn't drive. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

45. Before I went, I stayed at Inver House overnight [REDACTED] They asked if I felt okay there and I said I did.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Nazareth House, Cardonald, Glasgow (second time)

67. After Kames Castle, [REDACTED] at Nazareth House for three or four days until a space became available at Inver House. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Sister LHW was still there. It was brilliant to see her. All the other staff were different to our previous stay there.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Reporting of abuse at Nazareth House and Inver House

70. I told my mum that [REDACTED] LFV broke my ankle when we were at the hospital. I never told anybody else at the time. I didn't tell anybody about the incident in my room or the incident at Inver House.
71. For many years, I didn't tell anybody else. I think I was too scared. I just wanted to forget about it. I wanted it to go away and not come back. Then I started getting flashbacks and seeing her.

72. When I was living in Wishaw, I told my husband what had happened to me. We'd been together for about ten years. My daughter was about 6 weeks old so I think it was in 2002. He said I needed to tell the police. I said I couldn't do it but he told me I had to. A police lady came and took a big statement. After that, I had to go to Glasgow to give a statement to the Procurator Fiscal. Then I got a letter back saying they couldn't do anything. She had told me in person they couldn't do much. From giving the first statement, it took two years before they told me they were closing the case.

Life after being in care

73. It was alright when I left care. I lived at my mum's. I was still going to school. When I left school, I worked in an old folks' home for about 4 or 5 weeks, but it was too hard. When I was twenty one, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] came to my house and [REDACTED] kept saying, "Why don't you go out with him?" My mum said, "No." [REDACTED] said, "Well, it's not up to you, it's up to Joanne." Then I went out with [REDACTED] and we moved to England within a fortnight.

Impact

74. When I was sixteen, the social workers couldn't work out what was wrong with me. They said I'd need full time care for the rest of my life. When we lived in England, I was diagnosed with Munchausen's syndrome by proxy.
75. I was in Asda at the Forge Shopping Centre in Parkhead when [REDACTED] was about three. It was about 2001. I saw [REDACTED] LFV and I hid. I don't know if she's still alive.
76. When [REDACTED] was three, I took him to the hospital and they told me nothing was wrong with him. I took him home and his temperature went sky high. I took him back and they told me he had meningitis. He was at death's door. I kept taking the kids to

the doctors. Because of that I was labelled with Munchausen's syndrome by proxy. I think the social workers got the wrong idea because of that label.

77. [REDACTED] was 6 and [REDACTED] was 5 when they were taken into care. We were living in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] went away to Newcastle for a couple of days and I took ill. The two children were jumping on the bed, playing. I was making the dinner. [REDACTED] came to sit at the dining table when it was ready. I said he could have a treat afterwards for being a good boy. [REDACTED] wouldn't get off the bed. I grabbed her and kicked her in between her legs. That's why they took the children off me. I didn't remember that I'd kicked my daughter. [REDACTED] told the teacher she had bruising. I admitted to kicking her by accident.
78. Our daughter, [REDACTED], is now 17 and our son, [REDACTED] is 18. They are in different care homes in Inverness. They've been in care for ten years. They've never been together in care. We see my son every month and my daughter every two months. We go to visit them for the day. It's a two and a half hour drive each way. I told them something happened when I was in care, but I haven't told them what happened. I struggled to cope with the kids. I think that's because of the abuse I suffered.
79. I've had mental health problems. Over the years, my husband feels the authorities have ignored my needs. [REDACTED]. After that, I had a mental health assessment and I was labelled as having a personality disorder. I started taking olanzapine. I was taken into [REDACTED] hospital in Inverness. I was there for about a month and a half in 2007. Before that, we had asked for support and we didn't get it.
80. About three years ago, I was in prison for eight weeks in England for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 18 months ago, I was in prison in Aberdeen for about eight weeks, off and on, for doing the same thing.
81. For the last few years, I've been getting flashbacks. I don't like my husband touching me. If I go to bed, I wake up screaming. When I have flashbacks, I panic.

82. I'm currently [REDACTED] which means [REDACTED] meetings every six months. I see Maria, a probation officer, every two weeks. I finish that next month. I've been working with Future Pathways. I work with Ian Connor there. He wants the NHS to deal with counselling. I see a psychiatrist every six months. I still take olanzapine at night to calm my nerves. It relaxes my body before I go to sleep.

83. Although I have more support now, I can't go out anywhere without my husband. I've never been able to work.

Records

84. My husband phoned up Nazareth House to try and recover my records. He's been trying for three years. He's filled in a form several times. Last week, we were told that people had been off sick but they'd look into it again.

85. The Catholic Church in Glasgow said they'd do all they could for me [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but I still don't have my records.

Other information

86. I want people to know that they shouldn't hide abuse. If you hide it, it makes things worse.

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... [REDACTED]

Dated 28, 8 17