

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QBX

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [redacted] QBX My maiden name is [redacted] My date of birth is [redacted] [redacted] 1973. I am married to [redacted] I live with my husband, daughter (aged 16) and son (aged 11). My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Parents and siblings

2. My birth parents are [redacted] and [redacted], which is how I refer to them as they don't deserve to be called mum and dad. They lived in Glasgow. My two older sisters [redacted] (dob [redacted] 69) and [redacted] ([redacted] 71) were abused and neglected by [redacted] and [redacted] and were put into Quarriers in 1973, before I was born.
3. I have three other sisters, whom I found out about when I read my records.

Admission into the homeopathic hospital

4. I was found in a derelict building in Glasgow in [redacted] 1974 and taken into the homeopathic hospital on Great Western Road, Glasgow. I believe the hospital was run by Barnardo's. I was nine months old at the time and had bruises. I read in the hospital records that I'd been assaulted.

5. My GP records also show that I had bruises on me when I was only three months old so I don't understand why social services didn't remove me when I was born.
6. The only memory I have of the hospital is of me screaming and holding on to the bars of an old fashioned cot, which was like a prison cell, and nobody coming to get me. I can't explain why that memory has stuck in my head. I've wondered if it was a dream but I think about it all the time and I know it's actually a memory, not a dream. I also remember there was a Nurse Woods, who I know was good, but I don't remember anything else about her or my time there.
7. I stayed in the hospital for nearly three years.

Admission into Quarriers

8. I went into Quarriers when I was three years of age. I think I was put there because my two sisters were there. I know from my hospital records that the hospital wrote to social services saying that I should be placed with my sisters in Quarriers. The first letter was written six weeks after I was admitted. It was written by an Inspector Harrison – I think he was either the head of the hospital or Barnardo's. The records show that the hospital made phone calls and wrote letters to try to get me put into Quarriers with my sisters, but nothing happened for nearly three years.
9. I don't know why social work took so long to move me to Quarriers. They basically abandoned me and left me in a hospital for three years. I get really angry about that and also the fact that I was left with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for the first few months of my life. Social services knew [REDACTED] was pregnant and that I existed. They had good reason to take my sisters from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] yet I was left with these people who had abused, neglected and beat up children.

Life in Quarriers

10. I think there were around twelve or thirteen children, boys and girls, in the house when I went in. My sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were in the same house, but I didn't know they were my actual sisters until I was about ten or eleven. The house I lived in was number 33. The foster parents were [REDACTED] QAH/SPO. I believe that my sisters and I were legally fostered by them but I'm not certain about that.
11. Mrs [REDACTED] QAH was very young when she started in the job and didn't have any experience of working with children. She worked in the old mill in Paisley before she came to Quarriers.
12. Being in care was horrible. It made me feel that no one wanted me and all I wanted was a mum, dad and family.
13. I called Mrs [REDACTED] QAH mum until a few years ago. I was told to call her mum. There were other staff who looked after us when [REDACTED] QAH/SPO had days off. The staff I remember are Moira Gilchrist, Margaret McMahan and Eleanor McCourt. There was also a cleaner called Mary Lyle. I remember their cooking was awful, but otherwise they were fine. In fact, I think they pitied me and my sisters more than they did the rest of them.
14. Dr Minto was the person in charge of Quarriers. I think he knew everything that went on there. He and Joe Mortimer would often visit our house and were very pally with Mrs [REDACTED] QAH.
15. For a long time, I believed that two of the girls in the house called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were my older sisters and all the others were my foster sisters and brothers. That's what I was told and, apart from sharing a room with my actual sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I was kept away from them. I think it was because they had learning difficulties. I didn't have any kind of relationship with my sister

██████ when I was there because I wasn't really allowed to. The other children all knew who they were related to.

16. I eventually found out ██████ and ██████ were my sisters when social services gave me my birth certificate to show I was related to them. Even after that, Mrs. QAH used to say "But they're not really your sisters because you're different".

Routine

17. My time in Quarriers was very regimental. We were forced to go to church or do stuff connected to the church. On a Sunday you went to church, then to the Crusaders youth group, back again to church after dinner and then to the Youth Fellowship at night. During the week, you had to go bible study groups, girls' brigade or girl guides and the church youth club. That's why I don't go to church now.

18. The food was terrible. Sunday was the Lord's day so you got a boiled egg and toast for breakfast. Every other day you got horrible porridge. There were seven meals served up. For example, on a Monday you got mince, on Tuesday it was boiled fish in milk and butter, on Wednesday it was stew, etc. You got the same meals every week. A typical pudding was lumpy semolina. You also got a plain biscuit and a drink of milk before you went to bed. If you didn't eat your food, you got into trouble and didn't get anything else. You had to be a certain age before you got a cup of tea. These were Mrs. QAH's rules.

19. On a Friday or Saturday night we got fifty pence for the ice cream van.

20. You had to say grace in the morning before breakfast and pray every time you sat down at the table. If you didn't pray or talked during prayers, you got sent away from the table and told not to disrespect the Lord. You also got cuffed on the ear if you said "For God's sake" or "Oh my God".

21. My sisters and I were always the black sheep in the house and were treated differently from the others. I don't know why that was. It might have been because my birth mother [REDACTED] was brought up in Quarriers and wasn't highly thought of. I think she caused a lot of trouble growing up and then turned out to be an alcoholic and abuser. I don't know if we were treated differently just because of [REDACTED] or because we were abused and damaged children. Perhaps the other children came from more respectable backgrounds. I just don't know.
22. Other children were allowed to do a lot more things than us. They were allowed to go out with their pals and have pals over, but we weren't. They got to go abroad with the school but we didn't, even although social services would have paid for some of it. Sometimes the chance would come up for someone to have their own room but it was never offered to us. We had to share a room because we were sisters. We were sisters when it suited them.
23. Mrs QAH showed favouritism towards my foster sisters [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. She didn't allow me or [REDACTED] to be bridesmaids or go to my sister [REDACTED] wedding. We were still at Quarriers at the time. She had a say because she paid for the wedding. [REDACTED] was the bridesmaid and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to it.
24. I wasn't allowed to get my ears pierced or have stylish clothing or hairstyles. My sisters and I were dressed in horrible clothes. When I was fifteen and sixteen my weekends consisted of singing in a choir, which I was forced to do. Others in the house got to wear fashionable clothing, have their hair cut stylishly and got the latest gadgets. I remember being so excited about getting a spiral perm when I was thirteen and I told everyone in school about it. I ended up with a hairdo like an old woman in Coronation Street, as Mrs QAH wouldn't allow me to have it done. [REDACTED] was allowed to get it though. I remember bursting out crying when I saw my hair. Maybe Mrs QAH got more money for looking after the others than she did for us.

Birthdays

25. I don't remember anything special being done for my birthday – 13th, 16th, 18th – there was nothing. Other children were treated better on their birthdays.

Physical and emotional abuse by Mrs QAH

26. Mrs QAH was quite an abusive and aggressive person. I was frightened of her. It's only when you grow up, you realise that the way she handled situations was not normal. I did realise she wasn't a nice person when I was younger but I didn't have anyone else.

27. If you didn't do what Mrs QAH wanted, you got sent to your bed. The lights were put out and no one was allowed to come to speak to you. You never got any warning. There was no counting to three as you do with your own children; it was just straight to bed. Other routine punishments were clips round the ear, wee nips, elbows to your body and wee slaps.

28. She used to smack me on the back of the head with the hairbrush if I said "Ouch" when she was brushing out a knot. She would say "I'll give you something to cry about" and hit me. She was famous for that. She did that to my sisters as well.

29. She hit me one time outside the C & A shop in Glasgow because I didn't want the skirt she was getting me. It was a big horrible old fashioned thing. When she got me outside she took my pants down and smacked me on the bum because I'd made a scene in the shop. I was thirteen years old at the time. I think I reported it to social services but it's not in my records.

30. She smacked me hard across the face when I was fourteen for being cheeky. I reported that to social work, but nothing happened.

31. I remember running away four times to get away from her. I hid in the graveyard. I was gone for about two or three hours each time. There's nothing in my social work records about that.
32. Before I knew about [REDACTED] and what she was like, I used to ask about her and say things like "I wonder if she's thinking about me today on my birthday". I used to wonder if I'd get a card or something from her, but I was never allowed to speak about her.
33. Although Mrs QAH didn't know [REDACTED] personally from her time at Quarriers, she knew of her. She always used to say to me "You're going to turn out just like [REDACTED]. You'll never be any better than her, you're a 'no-user' ". A lot of other people in Quarriers said that to me too. When people say these things you start to believe them. She also used to say to me "No wonder your mother and father never wanted you." A lot of the things she said were really hurtful.
34. Mrs QAH thought of me as a trouble-maker. It says in my records that I was a problem child. That came from her, not social services. It's in the records that I had to be told repeatedly what to do and that I was unpopular with the older children in the village because I meddled in everyone's business. I was only nine at the time. It seems from my school records that I was great there though.
35. Mrs QAH had her own set ways and you had to abide by her rules. I lived in a place where I was in fear. I couldn't talk to her about things. When I was fifteen or sixteen all I wanted was a father figure so I started seeing an older guy. I now know it wasn't the right thing to do but I just wanted someone to talk to and love me. In her eyes that was me going off the rails, but I was never a bad child. I never took drugs, got drunk or got in trouble with the police. I just went out with someone who was older.
36. My records show that Mrs QAH considered me a problem because I was staying out late when I was seventeen years old.

37. Mr [REDACTED], my dad, had a job in [REDACTED] in Glasgow so he wasn't around a lot. I was very close to him. I was allowed to go to the football with my dad when I was older. I liked football and it was like a treat for me. That caused huge arguments between him and Mrs QAH.

Other staff

38. John Porteous was around when I was there. I was scared of that guy. I had a feeling about him and didn't go near him. He used to wait for us when we came off the school bus and would walk up and down with his hands behind his back inspecting us. His eyes would always go down to your chest. As soon as I was old enough, I knew he was undressing you with his eyes. When I was only about eleven, I used to say that he gave me the creeps and was told to be quiet. I was frightened of QBT and Bill Dunbar too. In my opinion, they were just like John Porteous. Even when John Porteous went to jail, I said to Mrs QAH that I had told her he was a creep and she still denied he had done anything wrong. Everything was always kept under wraps.

School

39. I went to East Fulton primary school and then Port Glasgow High. My sister [REDACTED] went to Linwood High. I was sent to the same school as [REDACTED].

40. I tried to tell Mrs QAH for a long time that I was being bullied at school but she never believed me and used to say I was talking rubbish. I was bullied because of how I dressed and wasn't allowed to do things after school. I had to give the bullies my dinner money and do their punishment exercises. I used to skip off school because of it.

41. In third year a girl punched me when I was standing at the bus stop and I battered her. I had to learn to stick up for myself. I tried to explain to Mrs QAH that this was one of the people who had been bullying me for three years and she said "I don't care, you're such an embarrassment." She was more interested

in herself than me. I got put to bed and wasn't allowed out, which didn't really bother me as it meant I got out of doing church stuff for a week.

42. I remember sneaking a pair of Bermuda shorts into my bag to wear to school on a roasting hot day. Everyone in my year was wearing them at the time and I had to wear a skirt which came down to my ankles. I thought I would be the bee's knees that day and no one would bully me because I would be wearing the same as everybody else. Mrs. QAH knew what I had done and rather than coming to me, she went to the headmaster and I was called out of class to his office. There she was sitting in his office with my school skirt, which she made me put on. When I got home that day, she went on about me being an embarrassment to her and how I was going to end up just like my mother.

Contact with family

43. One good thing Mrs. QAH did was keep us away from [REDACTED] whenever he came down. I remember him coming down one time with a baby. She was possibly protecting us from him.

44. I never had any contact with [REDACTED] when I was at Quarriers. I know that [REDACTED] was wanting to fight with Mrs. QAH a lot because she didn't agree with how we were being brought up. I have to thank her for that as, although Mrs. QAH dragged us up, [REDACTED] wasn't a nice person and who knows what my life would've been like if I had been brought up by her

45. I have memories of people coming down to visit us and I didn't want to see or go with them as I didn't know who they were. And, I couldn't understand why I was expected to see these people along with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]; as far as I was concerned they were not my sisters.

46. I remember one time [REDACTED] came down to visit. It was a Saturday afternoon and I was about eight or nine. I was supposed to go out with her, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and the social worker but I didn't want to go. I think they went out a couple of

times. I hid behind the couch because I didn't know who she was and wanted to stay with my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I remember Mrs QAH wouldn't speak to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for a while because they had gone with [REDACTED].

47. There was another time when I refused to go with them and the social worker handed me a big bag of sweets when they came back. I didn't know that [REDACTED] had bought them. I was just so excited to get sweets.

48. Even after I found out who [REDACTED] was, I still didn't want to see her.

Contact with social services

49. We didn't see a social worker very often and weren't really allowed to see them on our own. It's in the records that social services had to give Mrs QAH an assurance that we wouldn't be fostered before she would allow the social worker to see us. It also says that she seems to have made us very uptight about leaving Quarriers and we were always heavily chaperoned by her.

50. I think Quarriers hid a lot of things from social services. I remember being told that the social worker was coming and that I had to be on my best behaviour and keep my mouth shut. When social workers visited, Mrs QAH would make out that we had been doing things we weren't actually allowed to do, like going out with pals. I remember being about ten and thinking to myself "I didn't do that". They would take her word over mine if I said something different from her; they would just blatantly ignore me.

51. The records show that social work meetings with us were cancelled. A social worker named Sheila Gordon is mentioned in them, but the only one I remember is Robert Winters. I was lucky if I met social workers any more than about a dozen times from when I went into Quarriers until I was about fourteen.

52. Robert Winters sticks in my head. He was the Lord Provost of Glasgow at one point. He took me and my sisters up to Glasgow to see where we came from.

Imagine taking children to a place where one of them was found battered in a derelict building and the other two were abused. It bewilders me as to what they were thinking.

53. I remember reporting to social services that Mrs QAH smacked me across the face when I was fourteen. Other people had already made reports about her. It's in my records. I don't remember who I spoke to. They spoke to her but nothing happened. I believe some of the younger generation after me reported her too and nothing was done then either. Mrs QAH is very manipulative and could convince people that others were liars. People thought she was a good Christian woman. Also, I had been made out to be a problem child who caused trouble so that's how she could get round it. But why was I a problem child? Did anyone ever think about that? Mrs QAH would make me out to be bad so she could look good.

54. In my experience a lot of people are not what they make out to be to the authorities. If you're getting a big weekly pay cheque, you're going to keep the authorities sweet.

55. I had a befriender at one point and think that got stopped because they wanted to foster me. It says in my records that Mrs QAH didn't consider us "candidates" for anyone else. I don't know why.

56. My records show that I reported Mrs QAH again to social services in 1990. I was seventeen. I phoned and told them that she'd hit me and been saying hurtful things to me about [REDACTED]. I don't remember anything being done about it.

57. As far as I know Quarriers was the only place for children to go all those years ago. There would have been nowhere else for them to go if they'd been removed from there.

Sisters' experiences

58. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] weren't treated right in Quarriers because they had learning difficulties. Mrs QAH played on that and allowed them to do hardly anything.
59. I had to stick up for them after I found out they were my sisters. When I was older, I was always getting into fights with other children in the house because they were picking on them, which Mrs QAH allowed them to do.
60. I saw something written in the records about what Mrs QAH did to [REDACTED] and it came back to me. I actually remember it happening. [REDACTED] had been seen at a bus stop speaking to three boys and Mrs QAH took her to the doctor to make sure she hadn't had sex. As far as I know the doctor did what Mrs QAH asked him to do.

Life after Quarriers

61. I left school in 4th year and worked as a secretary and then in a nursing home. I left Quarriers when I was seventeen. I felt that I had to get away and live my own life. I stayed with someone in Renfrew for a while.
62. Although Mrs QAH has done a lot of bad, I've got to say she did some good in a way too as I didn't take drugs and never got into trouble with the police.
63. I still had contact with Mrs QAH until a few years ago, but was still treated differently from my foster sisters. She paid for my foster sisters' weddings, but not mine and didn't come to mine. I was the only one whose driving lessons she didn't pay for. She didn't support me through [REDACTED] with my daughter and I had to give birth to my son on my own. I still called her mum then. She made a fuss of my foster sisters' kids but didn't bother much with mine. She bought prams and cots for my foster sisters' children, but not mine. She looked after [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s kids to let them go to work, whereas I had to put my daughter into a private nursery. It was cruel treatment.

64. I got behind in my rent a number of years ago and went to her for help because I was frightened I'd have to go into a homeless unit with my kids. Her response to me then was "Your kids will just need to go into care then won't they dear".

65. I was very close to my dad. I love the bones of that man, but Mrs QAH manipulates him as well and told me years ago that I'm not allowed to talk to him.

66. I tried to be a foster carer and passed all the stages in the process until I made my views clear about allowing children contact with abusive parents. I don't want any child to go through what I did and don't think children should see abusive parents. I was told that I can't foster because of my views.

Impact of experiences

67. I feel worthless now. I keep thinking nobody wanted me, which is true because obviously they didn't. Mrs QAH was being paid a fortune to look after me and didn't really want me; and the other person didn't want me at all.

68. Even now, people I grew up with say to me that I was the black sheep. I met a woman in a supermarket called . She left Quarriers when I was about seven or eight. The first thing she said to me was "There's the wee black sheep." I've also kept a Facebook message from someone I got in touch with a few years ago. He said in his message "The family name were always the black sheep."

69. Sometimes I feel that I'd rather not be here and wish I had been aborted. I've read things in my records that Mrs QAH said about me and it really hurts to find out what she thought of me. Everything in my records makes me feel that I should have been aborted.

70. I don't celebrate my birthday, that's a horrible time for me.

71. I'm not close to my sisters. For years I was kept away from them and I believed that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were my sisters. I only got in touch again with [REDACTED] in May this year. I don't really have a relationship with my sister [REDACTED]. I think she's been brainwashed by Quarriers and is still being manipulated by Mrs [REDACTED] QAH. When [REDACTED] died I got my two sisters' agreement to give away all the money he left so that abused children could benefit from it. Mrs [REDACTED] QAH told [REDACTED] I was a liar and had spent it on myself, and told her to stop speaking to me. My foster sisters are not allowed to speak to me either.
72. I was ready for a nervous breakdown a few months ago because of it. I wasn't eating or sleeping and was crying all the time. I was cracking up. I thought to myself "She's still doing it to me to this day". It was eating away at me so I wrote Mrs [REDACTED] QAH a letter and told her how I felt. I said she was a hypocrite and that she'd ruined my life. This has had a big impact on my daughter as well as she sees what Mrs [REDACTED] QAH and my foster sisters are doing to me.
73. I don't trust anyone. I don't even know if I trust myself at times. When I first had my kids it was difficult for me to show them love because I'd never had it.
74. I'm an overprotective parent. I only let [REDACTED] and my ex-husband look after my children. When they were young, I didn't allow anyone to change their nappies or bath them. It was the same when I met [REDACTED] – he wasn't allowed to bath my daughter or see her naked. I need to know where my children are and who they're with all the time. I'm constantly on the phone making sure they're alright. I know I've got to let them lead their lives but it's very difficult because I don't trust anyone. I'll probably be the same throughout their lives.
75. I kick-off at the slightest wee thing. I've got a lot of anger in me. I feel a lot of anger towards the social work department and Quarriers. I'm frustrated. I fly off the handle with my husband and take out my frustrations on him. I feel that I should've been given a better life with more opportunities than what I got and it tortures me mentally.

76. I can be fine one minute and then I just burst out crying for no reason. I can see something on the television and it sets me off.
77. I wouldn't be alive if it wasn't for my kids. I wouldn't do that to my kids. I don't want them to have the life I had. I give them lots of material things as I want to give them what I never had. This causes arguments with my husband as he thinks it's too much. He doesn't understand this need in me to give my kids everything as he got things when he was growing up.
78. My time in care was just awful. I was mentally and emotionally abused and I don't think it's ever going to leave my head; it's always going to be stuck there.
79. I've seen psychologists in the past. When I was younger I was in a really bad way and tried to kill myself a few times because I had nobody when I left Quarriers. I was attending [REDACTED] mental health hospital as an outpatient but they just spoke to me and I felt more depressed when I left.
80. I was on anti-depressants for years but stopped taking them about a year ago. I don't want my kids to see me having to take pills every day. I remember when my son was only five he asked me whether I had taken my pills that day; I don't want my children to be asking me that.

Records

81. I have obtained my medical, social work and Barnardo's homeopathic hospital records. They don't amount to much. There's not enough information about my time in hospital. I had been trying to get the hospital records since I was sixteen and only managed to get them in May this year. I was happy to get them but I was expecting much more; they've not given me any peace of mind.
82. My medical records show that Mrs [REDACTED] QAH missed some hospital appointments for me. I didn't know that until I read it in the records. I should have got an operation on my eye but it wasn't done when it was supposed to be done.

83. The social work records show that in 1982 they didn't think we were in the right place. They had reservations about Mrs QAH being able to look after us. Concerns about the placement are also noted in 1986. It's noted that my sisters and I were totally "institutionalised" and that "previous attempts to alter/discourage this had failed". The note goes on to say that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were probably too old to deal with any change but I would maybe respond to it. That tells me that they knew what was going on. I don't understand why they had concerns about us but did nothing about it. This is why I'm saying I've got a big grievance with social work.
84. The records say that my sisters were backwards. They're not backwards; they've got learning difficulties and that's because they suffered abuse and malnutrition and the social workers didn't take them from my birth mother quick enough. I don't understand why they used that kind of language. Forty years is not that long ago.
85. It's written in the records that I was also backwards and would never be a high-flyer. I always had it drummed into me that I was never going to make anything of my life, but there's nothing backwards about me: if anything I am too mouthy.
86. There are things written in the social work records that I don't understand. For example, they said we were second generation [REDACTED] family name at Quarriers and had been "nicely institutionalised by that august agency".
87. I tried to get someone from social work to explain what they meant by the words used and why words like "backwards" were used, but they weren't helpful. They basically told me that was then and this is now, and that half the social workers won't be alive now anyway. But, I think that they should be able to read and explain things as they are also social workers.
88. I phoned up the social worker Robert Winters at one point as I thought he would remember me but I wasn't allowed to speak to him.

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

89. This is something I have wanted to do for a long time. It's been good to get it off my chest. The other authorities just don't listen. I hope the Inquiry can stop other children being abused and social services get much better at what they do.

90. I am happy for my statement to be published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I do not want my sisters' identities to be disclosed. I want them kept out of the whole thing. It would be really difficult for them because of their learning difficulties and they haven't read their records.

Final thoughts

91. Until the day I die, I will want answers as to why I was treated so badly and failed by social work. I know in this day and age if you had one child taken off you, the same thing would happen to the next one. I don't know why it wasn't the same then. I think that's why so many people my age are mixed up.

92. I have seen a solicitor about a civil action against social services. It's not about compensation. I would like social services to acknowledge that they left me in danger as a baby and then put me in a life which led to me becoming institutionalised. They knew from when I was a baby what kind of life I was going to have but they didn't seem to bother, and they don't seem to be bothering now. I just want someone to say we're sorry, we got it wrong and it's never going to happen again.

Signed QBX

Dated 8/14/16