

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

BCR

Support person present: No

1. My name is BCR My date of birth is 1949 and I am presently 68 years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I always thought I was born in Inverness, but I'm not sure. I have one sister and five brothers. The oldest was then then there was me and then and then I don't remember the younger boys. I'm not sure what the difference in our ages was, except that is a year older than me.
3. My mum and dad were both alcoholics and split up when I was about six. Mum went back to and we were left with my dad. He couldn't cope though.
4. My earliest memory is standing outside, waiting on a car coming to pick up my sister and my younger brothers and me, to take us to Aberlour Orphanage. My two older brothers didn't go to Aberlour at that time. They went away to stay with our mum and only went there later on. That's all I remember, I don't remember anything else.
5. I was in Aberlour until I was about eleven and was back and forward like a yoyo after that. I was put in Ladysbridge Hospital in Banff for a couple of weeks and then went back to Aberlour. When I was fifteen I was put back in Ladysbridge and kept in there

till I was about thirty-five years old. After that I was put in Wellwood Hospital in Aberdeen. I had to go to Wellwood as a day patient after that and finally I got discharged when I was about forty-one.

Aberlour Orphanage, Aberlour

6. I was six years old when I went into Aberlour. I remember arriving at Aberlour Orphanage and somebody taking us away to get changed. I had been wearing a pair of black shoes, white socks, a kilt, white shirt and a brown jacket. I never saw those clothes again. It's funny what you can remember.

7. There was a school, a farm and everything at Aberlour. Everything was along one big long road with buildings along the sides. There were children of all ages there from babies right up to fifteen or sixteen. The babies were kept separate in a nursery, that's why I never knew my younger brothers.

8. Everyone was put into houses and there was a few houses at Aberlour, all with different names. Two or three were in separate buildings and the rest were in the one building. At first I was put in a house with other girls and my sister [REDACTED] I think it was called Appleby. When I was eight I was moved into another house, which was called Gordon. I was in there with a group of boys, I was the only girl, but I don't know why that was. I remember the names of two of the boys that were in there with me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

9. Mrs [REDACTED] BBG was in charge of Aberlour. She was horrible. There were also different people in charge of the different houses, some were married couples, some were single. They were known as the house mothers and house fathers. The one I remember most was Mrs [REDACTED] BBP she was really coarse and wicked to me. She was in charge of the house I was in when I first went into, Appleby House. I don't remember who was in charge of the house I moved to later on.

10. As well as the house mothers and fathers, there was a few staff in the kitchen and the grounds. One was a [REDACTED] AJF she was alright. There was also a Mrs Abernethy and a Mrs [REDACTED] BHM I can't remember the names of the others.

Routine at Aberlour Orphanage

Mornings and bedtime

11. We slept in big dormitories with lots of beds and lots of other children. When we were woken in the morning we all had to make our own beds, then get washed and dressed. After that we would go down the stairs for breakfast. Even though I was only six when I first went, I still had to wash and dress myself. We just had to learn ourselves.
12. At eight o'clock in the evening we were all sent to get washed and changed into our pyjamas. Then we had to go to bed.

Mealtimes / Food

13. There was one huge dining room for all the houses and we all sat at big tables in it. We ate all our meals in there, even on school days we had to go back for lunch. About half-past five we got our tea, but it was just an apple and a bit of bread. Before bed we got a cup of hot chocolate.
14. If you didn't eat your food, you just had to sit there. It would be kept for you the next morning if you still didn't eat it. I used to spit mine on the floor and would get a hiding for that from Mrs [REDACTED] BBP and then would have to sweep it up. I remember one night being given cauliflower and cheese and I hate that. I couldn't eat it so I was made to sit there all night.

Washing / bathing

15. I remember there being sinks, but I don't remember any baths or showers. There maybe were. Girls and boys all washed together.

Clothing / uniform

16. All our clothes must have been provided by the home. I remember having a "dirndl", a skirt with an elasticated waist, and a white blouse. I wore that all the time.

School

17. We all went to the school that was part of Aberlour. None of the other kids would walk with me though so the staff would make me stay back and walk there myself. Every time I got to the school and shut the door behind me, a thermometer would fall off the back of the door. It wasn't my fault, but I would get hit for it by the teacher. Sometimes I wouldn't go to school because I was too scared.

18. There were different classes for the different ages, and a few teachers. I never learnt anything at school there, I was a quiet child and often never went. I would just spend the time outside in the playground. The staff would have known, but they never did anything, they weren't worried about me. We got sports as well, but I used to hate sports.

Chores

19. We used to have to dust and clean the floors and do other things like that. The staff would supervise us when we were doing them.

Leisure time

20. We weren't allowed to play very often, but we did get to now and again. We all had toys that we shared, some were in a courtyard at the back of the dormitories, bikes and things. Others were in a playroom inside. There weren't very many to go round.

21. I was always by myself and would stand outside the playroom, watching the kids inside playing with toys or reading the books. I often went for a walk in the fields as well. Sometimes I just felt like getting away.
22. Now and again some of the kids would get taken to the cinema, but I never got to go. I had to stay behind.

Trips / Holidays

23. On a Saturday we would be allowed to go down to the shops and got sixpence to buy sweets or whatever. It depended how old you were, if you were younger a member of staff would take you, otherwise you could go yourself. I never used to go to the shops though, I used to be kept indoors. I don't know why, I was always being punished for something. You only got the sixpence pocket money when you were good, so I didn't always get it.
24. We would go to Hopeman at Elgin for holidays once a year and go to the beach there. There was a house for the orphanage kids there. It was alright because it wasn't staff from Aberlour there, it was other people. We would get to play in the water and go for walks.
25. I remember someone took photographs of us on the beach at Hopeman, but not of me. There were never any photos taken of me at Aberlour. That just shows you how much they liked me.

Birthdays and Christmas

26. When it was someone's birthday, they used to have to go to what was called "Room 99". There were toys and games and dolls in there and we used to get to pick whatever we wanted.
27. Christmas was quite good. I remember a tree in the dining hall because we used to have parties in there for Christmas. I can remember going to the parties a few times,

although I wouldn't get to go if they thought I'd been bad. I didn't really like the parties anyway. I didn't like crowds of people, I was scared and nobody would dance with me.

Religious Instruction

28. We went to church twice every Sunday at Aberlour, at eleven o'clock in the morning and about six o'clock at night. After church in the morning we were taken on walks around the village.

Visits / Inspections

29. My dad came to visit a couple of times on a Saturday. He would meet [REDACTED] and me outside, but he was always drunk. He used to shout and say that he was going to kill mum if she came for us. He would do it in front of us, it was horrible. I don't think he wanted to see us, I think he just wanted to shout at people. I think he was the only one that came, I don't remember mum coming.
30. The social work never came to see me, I had to go and see them. I wish they had because I could have told them everything. When I was about nine or ten I remember taking a train to see a social worker in Aberdeen or Huntly with one of the staff, I don't remember who. It was the first time I had been on the train.

Healthcare

31. A doctor used to come to us at Aberlour and there was an infirmary there too. All the people that were sick had to go in the infirmary. I was in a couple of times, but I can't remember why.
32. When I was about eleven I had to go to Aberdeen hospital and was given E.C.T. (Electroconvulsive Therapy), because they thought I was crazy. I wasn't, it was just the way I was being treated. After that I was put into Ladysbridge Hospital in Banff for two weeks.

Abuse at Aberlour Orphanage

33. I was a really shy child and wouldn't speak to anybody. I used to keep myself to myself and I had no friends. I think that was the reason why everything that went wrong happened to me. I was bullied by the staff and kids at Aberlour. If somebody bullied me, I remember [REDACTED] sticking up for me, but she would get hit as well.
34. I had a few hidings at Aberlour, mainly from Mrs [REDACTED] BBP. It didn't matter what I did, I got it from her. She would throw me down and hit me with her hands. I don't know if other kids got it too, maybe they did. I couldn't breathe without somebody doing something to me.
35. My sister [REDACTED] told me when we were older that the staff used to lock me in a cupboard, but I don't remember that. Maybe they did, I just don't remember it. She also said that they used to make folk eat their own sick, but I don't remember that either.
36. Some of the other kids would do things to me as well. I had spiders put down my back and I can't stand spiders. The staff would see the other kids bullying me, but none of them did anything about it. I know Mrs [REDACTED] BHM saw, but she turned a blind eye.
37. Many a time Mrs [REDACTED] BBG pulled me by the hair from one end of the building to her office at the other end. I don't know why she did it, I never used to say very much and I had never done anything that I can remember. I didn't see her doing it to anyone else.
38. One of the house fathers was called [REDACTED] BBR. He was one of those that you couldn't trust. I don't know if he ever did anything to anyone, I didn't see, but he was creepy.

Leaving Aberlour Orphanage

39. I had to leave Aberlour when I was fifteen and they put me into Ladysbridge Hospital in Banff. I had already been sent there for two weeks when I was eleven. I don't know for sure who made the decision to send me there, but I think it was a Dr Cook from Ladysbridge. I don't know why.
40. After I had stayed at Ladysbridge for the two weeks in 1960, when I was eleven, I went back to Aberlour and it was a bit better. Nobody bothered me. Then when I was around fifteen I was put back to Ladysbridge to stay for good this time. I'm not sure of the dates I went or what age I was, except I definitely went for two weeks when I was eleven.

Ladysbridge Hospital, Banff

41. After a while at Ladysbridge, maybe a couple of years, I was put into Wellwood Hospital in Aberdeen, which was connected to Ladysbridge. I was about seventeen then. It was sort of a halfway house. Ladysbridge found a doctor that would look after me there.
42. I went to work when I was at Wellwood and something happened to me there, but I don't want to go into that. I was also bullied at work there, but I never told anyone at the hospital, I didn't feel I could. Everything was just building up and eventually I cracked.
43. It was horrible what happened to me, I didn't deserve it. After that I was put back to Ladysbridge and that was me, I was locked in there with the other patients and never got out. The doors were locked in all the rooms and were never opened.
44. Dr Cook looked after me at Ladysbridge until he took ill and then a Dr Ross from Aberdeen took over.

Ladysbridge - Abuse at Ladysbridge Hospital

45. I hated Ladysbridge. I used to get my arm twisted up my back by the nursing staff and got given injections to make me sleep. Other things happened as well.
46. I thought the male nursing staff liked me because they were nice to me, but they didn't, they were grooming me. They did things to me, but I don't want to say what. There was more than one person and it happened a few times. It always happened when there was nobody else going about. I don't know what age I was other than that I was young when it happened the first time. It went on a long time.
47. I went back to stay at Wellwood after I'd been at Ladysbridge for quite a few years. I'm not sure exactly when I went there, but I wasn't there for very long.

Wellwood Hospital, Aberdeen

48. The staff at Wellwood weren't so bad, it was just when I started to work, that things were worse. The doors at Wellwood weren't locked and I would go out to work at Ross Chicken factory during the day and come back to the hospital to spend the night.
49. I left Wellwood in 1984, I remember because I had my son [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. That was my life starting when he was born. I think it must have been Dr Ross that made the decision that I could leave. I don't know what changed and I don't know why they had kept me in there in the first place.
50. I was put into a little bedsit and had to go back to Wellwood as a day patient. Even when [REDACTED] was born I still had to go and had to take [REDACTED] with me. They had a crèche for babies and [REDACTED] had to go there.

51. After about a year I got a house in Sheddocksley in Aberdeen and made the only friend I have ever had while I was there. She was good and she looked after [REDACTED] to give me a break.
52. I was a day patient at Wellwood for six years and I remember [REDACTED] was given a social worker called Sam McBrearty. I got pregnant again and he told me I had to get rid of the child because I wasn't fit to look after it. I didn't realise at the time that that man used to abuse kids. He used to take [REDACTED] out and about and it made me wonder what he might have done. He's in the jail now.

Life after being in care

53. I lived in Sheddocksley in a two bedroom house for a few years and used to take [REDACTED] for walks everywhere. I just wanted to be out, I didn't know what it was like.
54. I've lived everywhere, I just can't settle, I think it's because I don't know where my home is. I must have been in eight or nine houses and [REDACTED]'s been everywhere with me, it's a shame. I moved to [REDACTED] about six years ago to be nearer my sister [REDACTED]. She just lives up the road.
55. I only kept in touch with one of my brothers, [REDACTED] but he died last year. I've not had anything to do with the others.

Impact

56. I have no self-confidence and I think they took all that away from me. Before I went to Aberlour I was quite happy, but once I got older, things just got worse. I know something happened to me at Aberlour, but I can't remember what it was. I think that's why I've got no self-confidence.

57. I still keep myself to myself. I don't like when folk are behind me, I don't know why. I don't like crowds and I'm scared of people. I believe that Aberlour and Ladysbridge spoilt my life. I never had a life up until I had [REDACTED] They took it all away from me.
58. I never had an education. I can't read or write very well and I can't add up.
59. I get tablets for depression, I've had to take them for a long time.

Reporting of Abuse

60. I've never reported to anyone in authority what happened to me at Aberlour, Ladysbridge or Wellwood to anybody. I just couldn't.

Records

61. I got some of my records from Aberlour about a year ago and on them it says I was impudent to Phyllis Hendry. I don't think I was ever impudent though, I was just a kid. My records cover when I was in Aberlour and Ladysbridge, but I couldn't read them. It wasn't nice to read and I got rid of them. They said I got moved to Ladysbridge because I broke windows, but I never did that.
62. I did read in my records that someone from England had been writing to Aberlour, wondering if I had got the presents they had sent. I don't know anything about that though. I don't know who that was and I don't remember getting any presents.

Other information

63. My son [REDACTED] joined the army, although he's now left and lives in America with his wife. They live in Denver and just had a wee baby boy.

64. 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.

BCR
[Redacted Signature]

Signed

Dated 6/6/18