

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LDC

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [REDACTED] LDC [REDACTED] though I prefer to be called [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1943. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I am married and have a daughter and one grandchild. I am now retired but worked throughout my adult life including three years as a police officer in London and several years as a social worker.

Life before going into care

3. I was born [REDACTED] in Paisley. In the house at the time were my mum and dad and my sister [REDACTED] who was a couple of years older than me and preferred to be called [REDACTED].
4. I seem to recall that my dad had a bit of a drink problem though not constantly and he was a loving father. I think my dad did work but I don't recall what he did. My recollection is that we had a stable and happy family life.
5. My mother suffered from TB and when she went into hospital my father arranged for me and my sister to go into Nazareth House in Cardonald, Glasgow. My sister later told me that, before we went into the convent, our dad took us to Ireland but I have no recollection of that.
6. I think the reason we went into Nazareth House was because my dad didn't think he could look after us on our own. I am not aware of anybody but my father being

involved in us going into the convent. If there was any social work involved in this decision then I didn't know about it.

Nazareth House, Cardonald, Glasgow

7. My first recollection of Nazareth House is that [REDACTED] and I were taken into the dining room where the other children were and we were given a meal. I was six years old. I think it was 1950 and it was sometime in the summer.
8. I don't recall what my first impression of the place was but I recall there was a nun there. I don't recall what the actual handing over process was. Nazareth House was run by nuns and the ones I remember most were Sister [REDACTED] LFH and Sister [REDACTED] FAF
9. We were all given numbers which were sewn or written on to all our clothes. I was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]. The convent supplied us with clothes which, to my recollection, were quite nice.
10. There was an old folk's home in the upper floor though the only time we saw them would be at mass. Our dorm was above this and it was all girls. I'm really not sure how many were in the convent but there were four dorms. My recollection is that there were between sixty and eighty but I'm really not sure. There was also a room in one of the dorms where a nun slept and which they called "a cell".

Routine at Nazareth House

Morning / bedtime

11. We were woken up at about 7:00 am by Sister [REDACTED] LFH coming into the dorm clapping her hands and telling us to get up. We would then go into another dorm where we knelt and said our prayers supervised by Sister [REDACTED] LFH. She seemed to

be an elderly lady to us and was short and stout [REDACTED] She was quite scary looking.

12. Your routine after you woke up depended on whether or not you were a bed wetter. I was a constant bed wetter. For those who didn't wet the bed the routine was that you got washed and dressed then, on some mornings, went to mass. After that you would have breakfast. I can't recall what time supper was or what time we went to bed.
13. Something else about bedtime was that when you were in bed you had to lie in a certain manner with your hands across your chest up to your shoulders and the sheet over your head until you fell asleep.

Washing / bathing

14. We had baths maybe once every two weeks. You would get in a line and get in to the bath one after another. The bed wetters were at the back. They always put a strong pink disinfectant, Jayes Fluid, in the water which I actually thought smelled quite nice. The water was always cold by the time the bed wetters got in and the towel they used to dry us all was wet and cold.
15. Your hair was washed in a different room and done over a sink. My hair was always long and thick. This meant that I also tended to have nits which was another black mark against me.

Food

16. I don't recall much about the food. I seem to remember it wasn't too bad. I do remember that the potatoes were awful. Some children maybe didn't like the food they were given and would try and get rid of it.

Chores

17. After breakfast we had chores like scrubbing and polishing the floors, making your bed or cleaning the toilets. The place was always spotless and if inspectors were coming we would be told to do an extra big clean. Although they didn't speak to us I recall that they were always impressed at how clean the place was.

School

18. After chores we would go to school which, at first, was just across the road though I didn't go to school until I was nine years old. Before that I assume we were taught in the home. I recall catechism classes but have no recollection of sums or anything like that. At playtime one of the nuns would bring us bread and dripping which I used to enjoy. When we got back from school we would have some recreation time or cleaning followed by tea.
19. I didn't start going to school until I was nine years old and I think it was perhaps the council who stepped in saying we had to be educated. The school I went to was just across the road and was called Our Lady of Lourdes. My sister went straight to Secondary School at St Patrick's which was, I think, in Govan.
20. I can't say I liked school but it was okay. Miss Campbell was my teacher. I think I did alright at school. I was good at spelling and English but terrible at arithmetic. I think there were about thirty children in the class. We got on alright with the other children but we weren't encouraged to make friends. I don't recall ever being disciplined in school but I think that was because I tended to stay in the background. I also don't recall getting homework at primary school.
21. When I started Secondary School it was a grammar school called St Margaret's which I travelled to by tram. After only about two terms I went to a newly built school called Our Lady of Lourdes which was next door to the convent. I actually became

the class captain which basically meant I supervised the class when the teacher was out of the room. I had a very good English teacher called Mr Miller.

Holidays / trips / leisure time

22. We never got on trips or went on holidays. Well, we did go to Nazareth House in Aberdeen for a week each year but that was just swapping one place for another. We didn't have toys or books unless you count the bible. We didn't receive any pocket money. On Tuesdays and Thursdays we had Scottish and Irish dancing classes which finished about 8:00 pm and then it would be bed. I can't recall any what you might call happy times in the home though I did learn to play the violin which was something I really enjoyed and even found solace in it.

Birthdays and Christmas

23. Christmas simply came and went though I recall that sometimes Lewis's, a big shop in Glasgow, held a party and your name might be read out and you would go along and get a present. My recollection is that I got to go twice, once when I was younger and once when I was older.
24. My only recollection of my birthday was cleaning orange paint off the statue of the Virgin Mary in the gardens. To understand this you have to understand something of the culture of the West of Scotland. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the Orange Order who, certainly at that time, hated all things Catholic especially anything associated with Our Lady. For that reason they used to pour orange paint over the statue. For some reason I was the one that had to clean off the paint [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Sibling contact

25. My sister and I were separated almost immediately when we arrived because she was that bit older than me. Although I knew she was in the convent, it was only on

the odd occasion that I would see her thereafter during my time in the convent. The only times I do recall seeing her was when the convent had visitors and [REDACTED] group and mine would be brought together to sing. [REDACTED] and I were always called out to sing together.

Visits/Inspections

26. I was about eight years old the last time my dad came to visit. I recall he brought a record by Mario Lanza for my sister and he brought me a wee prayer book that had belonged to my mum. That was the last time I ever saw him and I don't know what happened to him. Once a month, on the first Sunday, we got visits. I had various aunts who lived in Glasgow who used to come and see us. One aunt, who was quite glamorous, moved to America with a G.I. who she met during the war. She sent me and [REDACTED] a parcel with sweets and nice dresses which we actually got to keep.
27. One of my aunts, Aunt [REDACTED] visited regularly. She had daughters and sometimes they would come as well. There was an organisation called Knights of St Columba who would come and visit children who otherwise wouldn't get visitors.
28. We did get visits from inspectors but I don't recall any visits from social workers or anything like that. When the inspectors visited I don't recall them speaking with the children. Cleanliness appeared to be their priority.

Healthcare

29. I recall being in the Southern General Infirmary with a grumbling appendix. I was in for a few days but didn't actually have my appendix removed. Prior to that I had been in bed with a high temperature and ended up going to hospital in an ambulance.
30. There was another occasion when a doctor came to the convent to see me. I was apparently looking run down, perhaps due to my stay in hospital and, for some reason he thought the way to deal with that was to cut off my hair which was very

long and always plaited. The decision to cut my hair was probably due to the notion that hair drained the strength and they just cut off my two plaits there and then.

31. As far as regular medical care was concerned I think the only thing that was regular was the nit nurse who would put a fine comb through your hair. I was always having nits because my hair was so thick.

Bed-wetting

32. Life was very harsh for you in Nazareth House if you were a bed wetter and I was a regular bed wetter. Wetting the bed got you earmarked and noticed, especially for further punishment.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Cardonald

33. Discipline in the convent was very strict. There was a lot of silence. In the dining room, if the noise went above a certain volume, we would all be told to stand with our arms in the air. I can't recall exactly how long we would do this for but it was long enough to make our arms tired.
34. If you were considered to have committed some sort of misdemeanour you had to kneel outside Sister [LFH] cell until she gave you permission to go back to bed. You could be kneeling there for lengthy periods..
35. Caning was the main form of discipline. Sister [LFH] was the person who gave the cane and it was always on the hand. I wouldn't say that the children were constantly beaten but that was only because there was a fear factor that encouraged the children not to misbehave.
36. There was one occasion when Sister [LFH] saw me crying. She asked me why I was crying and, while I can't now remember why I was crying, I recall that at the time I wouldn't reply. She then caned me until I told her why I was crying. I think I eventually told her that I was crying because I was thinking about my dad. That

wasn't true but I had to say something to stop her caning me. The next day when I was doing P.E. in school. I was having difficulty climbing because my hand was so badly bruised from the caning. The teacher noticed this and took me aside and then saw that my hands were bruised. I told her what had happened . She was very concerned. She allowed me to sit quietly in her office. I believe she may have reported it due to her concern.

37. Sister [LFH] didn't talk to me about this incident afterwards. In fact none of us ever felt we could speak to anybody about what was happening to us. Sister [LFH] is the only nun I recall beating us.
38. If you had wet your bed Sister [LFH] would sometimes put the wet sheets on your head whilst morning prayers were said. If they were still wet when you went to bed that night they still went back on the bed. She always said that the only reason we wet the bed was because we were too lazy to get out of bed and go to the toilet.
39. We would sometimes have to kneel with our wet night clothes on while morning prayers were being said. I don't recall the other children being nasty to those of us who wet the bed.
40. After mass in the morning, if you had wet the bed, you had to go to Sister [LFH] desk which was in a room downstairs where she kept a bamboo cane. where you would then be caned. Quite simply, if you wet the bed you got caned. I was caned at least three times a week. The caning was always done before breakfast. Caning was administered with you kneeling down and you were given two or three strokes on each palm, viciously.
41. If you were a bed wetter you weren't allowed a drink at night. If we got washed before we went to bed, especially after the dance classes, Sister [LFH] would put soap in the water to make sure we didn't drink it.
42. Another thing that happened if you wet the bed was that, when you got back from school, you would have to take off your pants which would be then checked by, I

think, one of the older girls. If you had wet your pants you got another caning from Sister [LFH]

43. Pulling the plaits of your hair was another favourite form of abuse. In later years there was a nun called Sister [LFI] She was a big heavy built woman, who took hold of another girl's hair by the plaits and spun her round. I will never forget the screams from that young girl.
44. I also recall seeing an older girl called [REDACTED] being severely beaten by one of the nuns in the dormitory corridor. I don't remember the nun's name. I just remember [REDACTED] screaming and writhing about on the floor.
45. When my sister left school she worked in the reception area of the home, called the parlour, and she started looking out for me after this. Sister [FAF] was in charge of my sister's group and was very strict with them.
46. The nuns had a thing about sexuality and you weren't allowed to hold hands or make friends.

Leaving Nazareth House, Cardonald

47. When I finished school I came out with quite good marks and went into a college doing tailoring in Glasgow. It was Sister [LFH] who said I was to do that. You didn't get a choice. When I left there I worked in [REDACTED] in Glasgow. It was about this time that Sister [LFH] contacted me and informed me that there was a couple in Glasgow who wanted to take in a girl of my age.
48. They were a Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] I don't remember where they stayed and all I recall was that they had two young boys. I was sixteen or seventeen years old at this time. I slept in the same room as the boys and had to deal with them when they got up. It was soon clear that I was only there as a skivvy.

49. I was still working at [REDACTED] in Glasgow at this time and sometimes after work, I would go visit my sister [REDACTED] who was still living and working at Nazareth House. We would talk a bit about our childhood and what was going on. I recall on one occasion I could smell alcohol on her breath and that was the first time I realised she had a drink problem.
50. On the last occasion I went to see [REDACTED] I couldn't find her. The next day I was at work when I got a message saying that the nuns wanted to see me after work. I assumed they wanted to tell me something about [REDACTED] so I headed back to Nazareth House as soon as I finished work. When I got there Sister [REDACTED] LFH was at the door and immediately said "You're going to Bishopton". At the time she didn't tell me why though I found out later that a woman had had her purse stolen and I was getting the blame for it simply because I had been seen entering the building the day before.
51. She was talking about The Good Shepherd at Bishopton which we all believed was a locked residential place where you only went if you were really bad or out of control. It was a place that was constantly used as a threat to us to keep us in order.
52. Sister [REDACTED] LFH made no mention of [REDACTED] but instead put me in a van and I was driven to Bishopton. I was too shocked to question what right she had to do this. In fact I was probably so institutionalised that I didn't dare question her decision. I simply did as I was told. I look back now and wonder why I didn't question it. I probably thought I simply didn't have any rights.
53. I have no idea if either my work or the [REDACTED] were informed that I had been sent to Bishopton as I was to spend the next two years at Bishopton and wasn't able to contact either of them.

The Good Shepherd, Bishopton

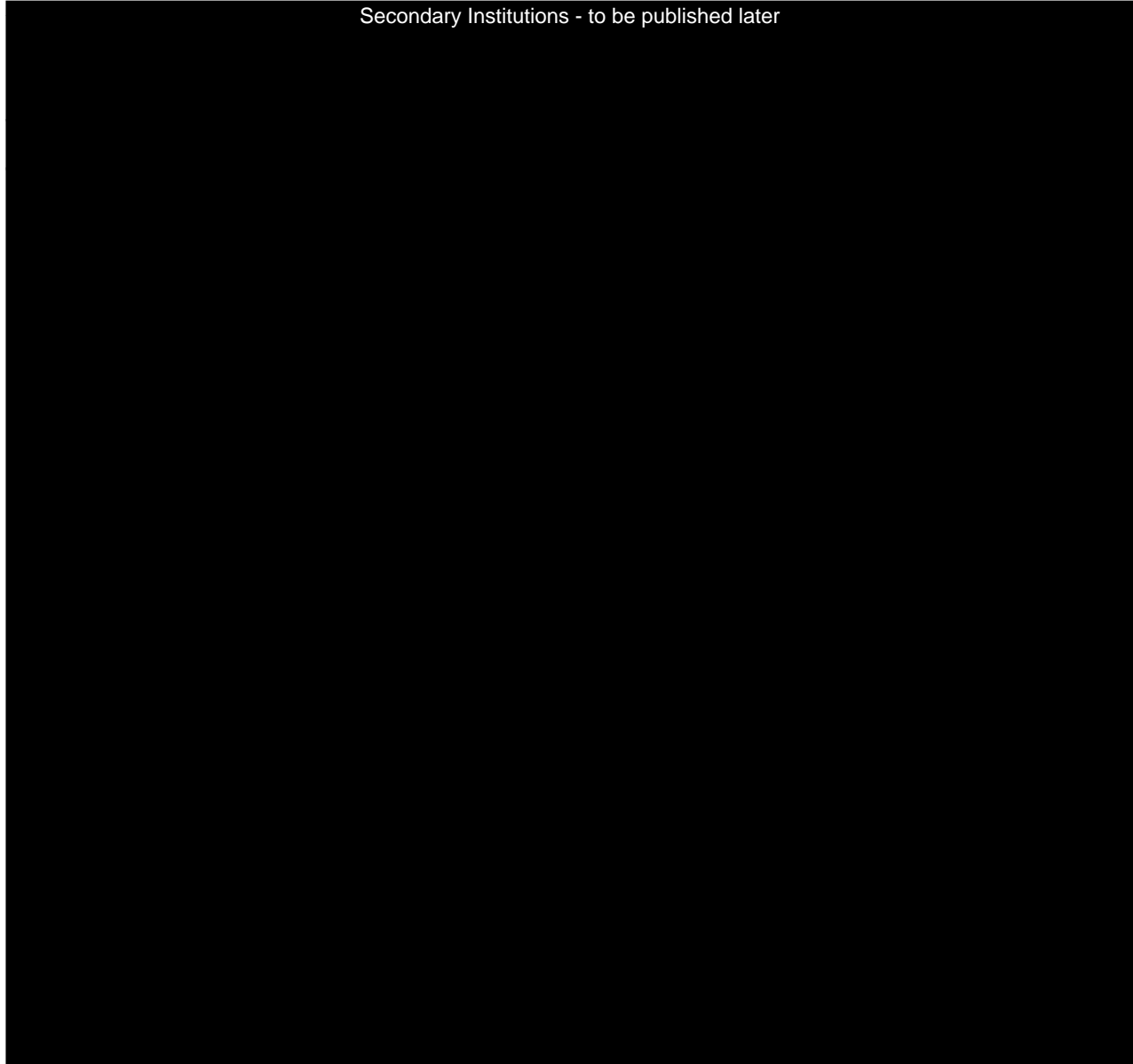
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

55.

56.

57.



Life after being in care

58. I didn't stay long in Middlesex. I applied for and got a job when the new P.O. Tower opened in London. I started work there on the very first day it opened. At the time I was living in a Civil Service hostel in Knightsbridge.

59. After that I worked for the police force in London which wasn't like it is now and basically we looked after woman and children. My main job was actually catching men who were described as "flashers". I stayed in the police force for three years.

60. After that I was asked to set up a task force [REDACTED] looking after security there. From there I went to work on a cruise ship in the Caribbean managing two shops on board. I did that for a year and was thereafter offered a job on a world cruise but by then I had become tired of being at sea.
61. When I returned to London I started in social work working with children and that was where I met my friend [REDACTED] I did that for three or four years. I then met my husband, [REDACTED] had a baby and thereafter spent a lot of time in various countries in Africa as my husband worked in the oil business.

Reporting of abuse at Nazareth House

62. Other than telling my P.E. teacher when she saw my bruised hands following a caning from Sister [REDACTED] LFH I have never reported the abuse at Nazareth House.
63. I recall that I did tell one of the monks, whom I went to confession with, about the beatings we were getting in the home. He said he would look into it but I don't think he ever did.
64. A few days after I arrived at the Good Shepherd in Bishopton, Mother Philip called me into her office and asked me about Nazareth House and when I told her about the canings she was visibly upset. It felt as if, for the first time in my life I was receiving some sort of kindness.
65. I don't think any of us ever felt we would be believed if we spoke about what went on there. I suppose the first person I really told about it in any detail was my friend [REDACTED]

Impact

66. Initially I was left with no confidence and didn't think much of who I was. It was only when I went to the Good Shepherd that I was treated well. In Nazareth House you were never called by your first name and you were either called by your surname or were just a number to them.
67. Being there had a massive impact on my sister who eventually died following problems with alcoholism that started when she was in Nazareth House. On the occasions that I visited her home in later years there were obvious signs of deprivation. She ended up with a very disturbed life and eventually died of alcohol related problems.
68. There are times when I recall my times in the convent and it can be triggered by something as simple as somebody mentioning something in conversation. I just don't have any pleasant memories of my time there.
69. It has also put me completely against religion as you have to ask yourself how, if God exists, such an entity could allow people to treat children the way we were.

Treatment / support

70. I've never sought any counselling in respect of what happened to me in Nazareth House. People have often advised me to see a counsellor but I've always found that speaking to my friends is what has helped me.

Records

71. I wrote to the Sisters of Nazareth's headquarters in Hammersmith but all I got was a small piece of paper with very little detail though it did say that I was put into the care of the ██████ Family when I left Nazareth House. There was no detail about what actually happened in Nazareth House or why I was sent to Bishopton.

Lessons to be learned

72. I think it comes down to legislation but, then again, how do you legislate against such things? Even now you hear about abuse going on despite the fact that such large institutions don't exist. Looking back I think it is disturbing that officials did come to the convent but they didn't speak to the children.

73. 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.

LDC


Signed.....

Dated..... 19/2/18.....