

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister Mary Vaughan

Support person present: No

Others present:

Una Conway from Donnelly and Wall, solicitor for the witness

Isla Bowen, Clyde & Co, solicitor for the Sisters of Nazareth

1. My name is Brigitte Vaughan. I was known as Sister Mary Anthony Vaughan which is my religious name. I was also known as Sister Mary and Sister Anthony. My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1935. I am 83 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

The Sisters of Nazareth

2. I joined the congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth on the 26th July 1950. I was professed in 1952. I started off my career in child care at an adoption centre at Ellerton Dale near Hull. I was sent there to get experience of babies and very young children.
3. In 1953 I was sent to Belfast to do my training for child care. The course lasted for two years and from there I was sent to Newcastle in England where I worked in a home with pre-school children. I was there for a year and in 1956 was sent to Birkenhead in England again to work with pre – school children.

4. In 1959 I was sent to Nazareth House in Cardonald near Glasgow, Scotland. I was to remain at Nazareth House in Glasgow for about six years until in 1966 I was transferred to Nazareth House, Lasswade near Edinburgh, Scotland. I stayed there till 1971.
5. I had no other placements in Scotland but I went to Swansea, Wales in 1972, and Birmingham, England in 1975, to work with children. I stopped working with children and then performed various roles in Liverpool, England, Birkenhead, England and Crosby, England where I am to this day.
6. My memory is not that great and I can't be precise with all that I have done but the dates I was in children's homes in Scotland are accurate.

Training provided for working with children.

7. I completed a two year course on childcare in Belfast in 1953. The course was quite specialised because it taught you how to care for babies. The policy at the time was not to split up family groups so you had to be able to deal with all ages. I also spent a year on placement in Birkenhead supervised by another Sister. I also had a year's experience at Newcastle working on my own. When I arrived in Nazareth House I had a total of five years' experience in caring for children.

Nazareth House Children's Home, Cardonald 1959 – 1965

8. I was sent to Nazareth House, Cardonald to replace a nun who had been working there. I was to remain at Nazareth House for the next six years working with children in the age group two to five. They were all pre – school. When the children reached five they would move to another group. At any one time I could have had between 25 or 30 children including babies. I had three other caring staff working with me along with a cleaner and a laundress.

9. Nazareth House, Cardonald was a very large building and when I first arrived there was a lot of renovation work being done particularly in the units that housed the younger children that I was dealing with. There was a dining room and off that was a sitting room. There was a washroom which had a washing machine and a number of sinks for washing. There were several toilet cubicles. The house had a very long corridor and off that corridor were the bedrooms on one side and the other facilities on the other side. The children were able to play in the corridor.
10. There were about eighty children residing in the home at any one time. I was responsible for my group of between 25 and 30 children. There were children of all ages up until the time they finished school and started work. There were also elderly residents living there. There were about fifty of them of both sexes. They lived separately from the children.
11. I seem to recall that we had medical cards for the children and had to keep them up to date. This process might have been introduced during my time there I can't recall. We would record the age and height of each child so that we could plan any extra care or dietary needs that may be required.
12. Nazareth at Cardonald was the largest of all the Nazareth houses run by the Sisters of Nazareth. All the houses were run in a similar manner. When I was at Cardonald that was the largest group of children I had to deal with.

Admission process for children at Cardonald.

13. The children would basically arrive at the front door of the home at Cardonald. There was very little involvement of the social services and quite a few of them would have a note from their Parish Priest. When there was a vacancy the parent would come and complete the admission paperwork and provide a letter of support from the Parish Priest. The Mother Superior would make the assessment to take the child into care based on what she was told.

14. There was an admission book that had basic details about the child. When they first arrived at the home they would have a medical from the doctor. The information that was gathered about the child would be passed on to me and I would have a basic understanding of the reason why they were in care.

Staff at Cardonald

15. There were three caring staff assisting me in looking after the children. They were not members of the Nazareth Congregation. I recall a Mrs Frew who has since died. I also remember a girl called Catherine. There were a number of staff helping including volunteers and they came and went. I can't remember all the names. I was in charge of the group.
16. There was a Mother Superior in overall charge and I reported to her. When I was at Cardonald the name of the Mother Superiors who performed this role were Sister Alton and Sister Larissa. There would be a nun in charge of each group of children and there might have been four or five groups. They were supported by other staff who were not nuns. There were nuns caring for the elderly and also nuns who were involved in collecting. There were four nuns who did the collecting. There was a nun who did the catering.
17. The names of other Sisters and staff who I remember being at Cardonald were Sister LHA, Sister LFH, Sister LFP, Sister LHT, Sister LBG, LBG, Sister LFS, Sister Veronica and Sister LMF who went off in the van collecting. I also remember Sister LJD? and Sister Patrick. They are all dead now. There was a Miss LGF who at one time was also in charge of a group of children. She was a social worker who wanted to work directly with the children
18. I had very little working contact with the other Sisters but I used to meet them if we went on day courses together. There was a refectory and sitting room which was only for the Sisters and I used to meet them there most days.

Routine and life at Nazareth House, Cardonald 1959 - 1965*Daily routine*

19. After I had been to mass and had my own breakfast I would start getting the children up. My group would have their breakfast together then I think we would take them to wash their hands again. I had help from my staff and we would take the children into the playroom. The babies would need to be fed and the children could also play in the corridor. When the children were in the playroom they would be supervised by the staff.
20. They would play with plasticine and crayons. They would also do some singing and play games. A lot depended what was happening that particular day as we had to facilitate visits from the doctors and things like that. There was no fixed routine like a nursery school would have. They had a break where they would get orange juice and a biscuit at 10:30 am. I can remember them being dosed with cod liver oil. We often gave them the cod liver oil when they were in the bath as it was very messy and they would spit it out.
21. We would have lunch about 12:30 pm in the home. The staff would have their lunch separately. In the afternoon we would take the children for a walk in the grounds of the home where there was plenty of space to walk and play. Some of the younger children would go for a sleep in the afternoon.
22. The evening meal was about 5:00 pm. They all sat round the dining room tables. There would be about four children to a table. The food was brought to the children from the main kitchen which was nearby.
23. I think that the younger children went to bed at about 6:00 pm. Some of the older children would stay up later and watch some television. The older ones would get their dressing gowns on and went to bed about 7:30 pm. I would always check the children before I went to bed.

24. Sometimes the children would cry through the night. They would be most upset when they first arrived and I would sit with them and try to reassure them by talking to them.

Sleeping arrangements

25. The rooms were dormitories and the children had a bed space which was partitioned off. The children were in the rooms according to age. There was also a sick room which was situated near my room so that I could attend to the children through the night if they needed me.
26. I think that there were about six or seven younger ones kept together and there was a bigger dormitory which had the largest proportion of the older children. I slept in a room near the children. There was also a bedroom where two members of staff could spend the night.

Washing and bathing

27. We had five or six sinks for washing the children in my group. They washed their hands and face every morning. There were two baths which were half the size of a normal bath. I used to supervise bath time with the other members of staff. The children would undress in the bedroom and then come in for a bath. It had to be a quick process as there were quite a few. The water was changed every time a new child came in. You would also weigh them and measure them.

Food

28. The younger children in my group had three meals a day as well as a snack mid-morning. The food was very good and prepared by a Sister who worked in the kitchen. For breakfast there would be cereal and porridge along with bread butter and marmalade. There would be hot meals for lunch and tea.

Clothes

29. When the children first arrived at the home they would be wearing their own clothes and we would mark them so that we knew who owned which garment. They all had their own wardrobes where they kept their clothes. If they needed clothes we would go and buy them at local shops. Everyone had their own clothes. Mrs Frew did all the washing and ironing.

Healthcare

30. At some stage during my spell at Glasgow we did keep medical records for each child as it was important to track their development. I used to keep the medical records in a cupboard in my room. If anyone was unwell the local doctor would call at the home. We had two Dr LKQ/LVV who were not related. One of them retired and was succeeded by the other one.
31. The Doctor would come in every Sunday to look at the children. He also came in one day during the week and would deal with any medical matters connected to the children or the elderly residents at Nazareth House.

Leisure time

32. There were plenty of toys for the children to play with. They could be supervised to play outside in the grounds of the home. There was also a television room. The children also had their own toys which they accumulated over the years in care.

Possessions and pocket money

33. The children kept their own toys in their lockers. Some of the toys were donated and some of them were given to the children by their relatives.

Holidays

34. My group would go on holiday every year to a holiday house in Troon. The accommodation could take my group and all the staff that were needed to look after them. We always went on this holiday in the summer time.

Trips

35. There were trips out when local companies had a party for some of the children. My group was much younger so it was not always possible to attend these parties.

Birthdays and Christmas

36. The relatives would usually visit if one of their children had a birthday. The children would get a small present from the home. The other children would sing "happy birthday".
37. Christmas was very good; there were a lot of invitations from different companies to go to parties. They would get toys from these benefactors.

Bed-wetting

38. I had a very young group of children so there were a number of instances of bed wetting. I would collect the wet sheets and arrange to have them laundered by our laundress. There was a protective sheet over the mattress. It was a daily routine and we just had to get on with it. We would also make sure that the children were cleaned up. We never made a big thing of it and most of them grew out of it.

Schooling

39. The group I dealt with were too young to go to school so they were looked after in Nazareth House.

Religious instruction

40. The children did attend church on a Sunday. The church was in the grounds of the home. It was a general mass for anyone who was at the home. The children always said grace before a meal. At night time they said a prayer to the guardian angel. I usually led these prayers.

Visits from friends and family

41. Some of the fathers of the children used to visit on a Sunday. The mothers were usually absent for one reason or another. Sometimes the fathers had to visit on a week day as they were working. They used to take the children out and on occasions were allowed to take them out for the weekend.
42. There were also visits from voluntary organizations to the children who had no parents. I remember visits from people connected to the Knights of St Columba.

Visits from social workers

43. The Home Office used to inspect the home two or three times a year. They had access to the school, the children and all the records that we kept. Whilst I was at Cardonald the system changed and the social work department took over. We would get visits from social workers who always wanted to know if we had any vacancies. There were also visits from potential foster parents. All the visitors had to be properly introduced and vetted usually by letters from the parish priest.
44. The Presbytery was across the road from the Nazareth House and we often got some of the priests calling in to say hello to the children. They also said mass at the chapel. There were no occasions when children could be taken out of the home without me knowing.

Records and record keeping

45. I did keep medical cards for all the children in a cabinet in my room. As far as I remember I passed these records on to Sister Muriel who succeeded me in my role at Cardonald. I don't know what happened to those records. There was also an "admission book" which recorded all the details of the children when they arrived. I think that case reviews did start but not until I had left.

Discipline and punishment

46. The children were very young and were learning. They were naughty on occasion and I would try and reason with them. They did have the odd squabble amongst themselves which I would sort out by speaking to them. On occasion I did raise my voice but I never had needed to physically chastise them. There was no punishment book that I was aware

Recollections of other staff discipline

47. I had very little contact with the other Sisters in the day to day running of Cardonald. I never saw any other members of staff physically chastising children.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Cardonald 1959 - 1965

48. The following nuns were at Cardonald most of the time I was there, Sister **LFH**, Sister **LHA**, Sister **LHT**, Sister **LFP**, Sister **LFS** and Sister **LBG**. Some of them were there when I arrived. Most have them had a group of children to look after at one time or another. I never saw them being abusive towards children.
49. I got on well with the other sisters. I can tell you that Sister **LFS** is deceased. The other Sisters were a bit older than me probably in their late fifties or sixties. I never saw any of those nuns discipline any of the children at any time.

50. *In relation to allegations of physical abuse against Sister [LFH]* I never saw Sister [LFH] physically chastise any child. Sister [LFH] had a very loud voice because she taught the children to sing and she could I suppose raise her voice at the children.
51. *On allegations of physical abuse against Sister [LFP] and Sister [LFS]* I worked with Sister [LFS] before. She was a great personality and had great experience with children. I never saw either sister physically punish a child at Cardonald.
52. *With regard to allegations made regarding some of the Sisters force feeding children,* I can tell you that I never witnessed anything like that, mainly because I ate separately with my group and didn't join the other groups at meal times. If a child was not eating some food I would try and reason with them. I did not force feed them.
53. I never saw any sister strike children with their fists, a stick or a ruler. I never saw any Sisters bash any children's heads together.
54. I never saw or heard of Sister [LFH] caning a child on their hands or any other part of their bodies. I never saw any of the children with marks or bruises on their bodies. *With regards to an allegation that a group of children could be seen on occasion standing outside Sister [LFH] room with either bed sheets over their heads or their hands in the air,* I never saw this.

Reporting abuse at Nazareth House, Cardonald

55. In the event that I had witnessed some abuse by a member of staff on a child I would have immediately reported the matter to the Mother Superior to deal with. I never had cause to do that.

56. The children were able to report any incidents of abuse to the Sister that was looking after them. They were also able to tell their family visitors that were calling at the home.

Leaving Nazareth House, Cardonald 1965

57. After six years at Cardonald I was sent to Swansea do some more training and work at another institution there. I stayed there for a year and also had a period of ill health when I was moved to Plymouth to recuperate. In 1966 I was sent to Nazareth House, Lasswade near Edinburgh.

Nazareth House, Lasswade near Edinburgh 1966 – 1971.

58. In comparison to Cardonald the home at Lasswade was smaller but the premises were much more modern. The home had just been renovated and I was one of the first Sisters to enter the new accommodation. The accommodation was like a house which was separate to the other buildings. There were twelve to fifteen children in my group and we went under the name Hollycot. There were a lot of family groups. The groups were of mixed sexes.
59. There were three other groups at Lasswade. Hollycot group was split into two smaller groups with children of different ages. We had under-fives and some babies along with older boys and girls who were at secondary school. The age range was from babies to fifteen. We also had some children that had failed the medical when they were going through the adoption process.
60. The children would sleep at Hollycot. All the older children had single rooms with toilet facilities. There was also a nursery that could hold four cots. I slept in a bedroom next to the nursery.

Routine and life at Nazareth House, Lasswade 1966 – 1971

Routine

61. The older children had to be woken earlier because they were going to secondary school in Dalkeith and the school bus left before eight thirty in the morning. Sometimes they were up at 6:30am. I would be at mass first thing in the morning so I had staff to assist me in getting the children up. The older children looked after themselves but assistance had to be given to the younger ones.
62. Breakfast would be served in the dining room in Hollycot although the food was prepared in a central kitchen that serviced the whole home. It was brought to Hollycot on an electric trolley. The breakfast usually consisted of cereals and bread rolls.
63. The older children would get public transport to St David's Secondary School in Dalkeith. Lunch was served at school and the children would come back on public transport when school finished.
64. There was a nursery school in the home which was run by a trained nursery school teacher. I think that school also took children from outside the home. I would be looking after the very young children who didn't go to nursery. The nursery children would come back in the afternoon from nursery school and often went down for a short nap.
65. The older boys would get a drink and a biscuit when they got back from school. Tea was usually served between five and six. The food came on a trolley from the main kitchen. I would help some of the children with their homework. Some of it was done before tea and some of it after tea it just depended on what was happening.
66. At weekends the children did not attend school. A lot of the children came from Glasgow and they would have visits from their family members. The staff used to take the children to the local park at weekends.

Staff at Lasswade

67. The names of the members of staff I can remember working at Lasswade when I was there are: Sister Bernadette, Sister LNR, Sister LFX and Sister LJS

Food

68. I never had any complaints from the children about the food and most of the time the children were ravenous and would eat everything on their plates.

Leisure and activities

69. The older children would go to cubs, brownies or guides and I remember making the blouses for them. They watched television and one of the privileges for the older ones was to watch "match of the day" on a Saturday night. I can remember them watching Donny Osmond on television.
70. There was a sand pit and a paddling pool outside Hollycot house. There were toys available for the children to play with.

Holidays

71. I remember all the groups used to go on holiday to Dunbar. I wouldn't always go because someone had to look after the younger children. Sometimes I would go for part of the holiday and take some of the younger children.

Washing and laundry facilities

72. There were baths available for all the children and they had their own sink and washing facilities. There were baby baths for the younger ones. There was a laundry at the home where all the clothes were washed. It was run by a member of staff.

Birthdays/Christmas.

73. We had a small kitchenette attached to Hollycot House and we were able to make birthday cakes for the children. The children also had their own pocket money.
74. The children had a lot of invitations to parties. They were able to go out and spend some money on clothes. I remember one of the Sisters making a crib for them. It was your home as well as the children's and you had to make do as best you could.

Religious education

75. There was a chapel attached to the home and a local Priest would come in to say mass. I would teach the younger children some basic prayers and some hymns. The older children would be given religious education at the school they attended and they would make their confirmation and first communion there. We would also say grace before meals.

Healthcare

76. There was another Doctor [REDACTED] LKQ? [REDACTED] who worked at Lasswade. [REDACTED] He would examine the children when they first came to stay at the home. We also had a children's hospital nearby. If any child had to go to hospital we would get a local taxi to take us. I also kept a medical card in a room that was set aside as a treatment room.

Records

77. There were medical cards for each child and the younger children had more detailed ones. These cards were kept in a room I set aside for a treatment room in Hollycot House. I left these records behind when I left. There was also a case history record for each child so that the person taking over the care of that child would have knowledge of the previous history.

Chores

78. The children did very little apart from keep their rooms tidy. The older children would use the kitchenette to learn to do simple culinary tasks like making scrambled eggs. The children didn't have to do any cleaning duties.

Inspections

79. By now the social work department was running the care system in Scotland and they had a lot of input into care at Lasswade. A lot of the parents of the children had lost parental rights and so the social workers were more heavily involved. We seemed to be inspected more often by the local authorities including the odd spot check which was unannounced.

Personal possessions and pocket money

80. The children kept all their own possessions and toys in the wardrobe their rooms. There were other toys which were provided for them by the home which they could all play on. I think that the children did get pocket money.

Discipline and punishment

81. There was no formal punishment system. The only thing that I did with the older boys if they didn't heed a warning to behave was to remove the privilege of watching Match of the Day on a Saturday night. If a formal procedure for punishment came into being I would have had to follow it but I don't recall any punishment book. I never saw colleagues or members of staff disciplining children verbally or physically.

Running away

82. There was a time when the older boys ran away and built a tree house and lived in it for a few days. When the children ran away those would be anxious times till we got

them back safely. We would have to make a report to the police. Some of the children went through a stage of that kind of behaviour until they settled down.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Lasswade 1966 – 1971

83. I remember a Sister **LFX** while I was at Lasswade and I remember her playing the mouth organ. I never saw Sister **LFX** disciplining a child whilst I was at Lasswade. *With regard to a specific allegation about Sister **LFX** punishing children who wet the bed by making them stand up at breakfast time and giving them cold baths,* I never saw this as I was working in a different area and she certainly never did this when we were on holiday together. I do not know anything about Sister **LFX** force feeding a child on a number of occasions.
84. I did know and worked with a Sister **LFD** while I was at Lasswade. I also knew a Sister **LHA** but only from Cardonald not Lasswade. I never saw either of these two sisters force feeding a child because I was not with the other groups when they were eating their meals.

Reporting abuse at Lasswade

85. I never had occasion to go to see Mother Superior to report another Sister for committing an abusive act towards the children. Had I witnessed such an act I would have without doubt reported it. The only times I went to the Mother Superior were to sort out staffing issues and matters regarding the running of my group.

Leaving Nazareth House, Lasswade 1971

86. When children left Lasswade they would be prepared by the social worker for their life ahead. A lot of them went back to their parents. None of the cases were the same.

87. I finally left Lasswade in 1971 to go to back to Swansea. For a while after I left kept in touch with the children at Lasswade but I have since lost contact. I also lost contact with the staff.

Prior statements

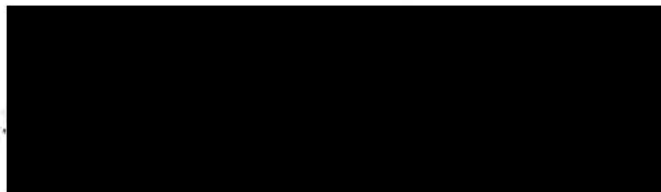
88. I have never given a statement previously in connection with child abuse or the matters we have discussed today.

Closing thoughts

89. I never knew about abuse at either Cardonald or Lasswade and I never saw any of it happening. I feel that children who are abandoned by their parents have to take it out on somebody. It's a form of disturbance. It was a different era when I worked at these homes and fifty years have passed. I wish I had more time to spend with each child individually. As I continued to work with children I saw big improvements where children were given bikes and fishing rods. Caring people have much more to offer the children now.
90. 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.....

Sister



Dated.....

15th April 2018