

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GKJ

Support person present: No

1. My name is GKJ . My date of birth is the 1958 . My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I have very vague memories of my life before going into care. I was born in Bishopbriggs, Glasgow. I didn't know my real father. My mum was called and I had a stepfather . I have no real recollections of my family life however at one point I lived with my Grandma, . I attended at Auchinairn primary school in Bishopbriggs Glasgow for about a year. I did have friends at school although I have no siblings.

Larchgrove Remand Home Glasgow

3. At the age of five I was taken into care by the Social Services. A female Social Worker arrived at my mother's house and I was taken to Larchgrove by car. I was given no explanation as to why I was leaving my mother. I have no recollection of either the Social Worker or the journey to Larchgrove. Later in life I presumed that I had been taken into care because my mother was an alcoholic and couldn't care for me.

4. On arriving at the school I have a memory of it being a big place with very large doors. I don't remember anything else. I have never seen a building like it, it was very frightening. I remember hearing lots of children shouting, and members of staff screaming at them. I believe that I was introduced to some staff, and shown the dormitory where I would be sleeping with about ten other boys. There was about thirty boys at Larchgrove all were about the same age as me, seven or eight. I cannot remember any of the boys names. I don't remember any staff names. The staff would be addressed as "sir". All the staff were forty year old men. It was just run by normal people.
5. I was given no explanation about the schools routine. I was told that I was meant to be going to school. This never happened whilst I was there. I remember feeling very scared.

Routine at Larchgrove Remand Home

Mornings and bedtime

6. I was awoken very early by staff members coming into the dormitory shouting for us to get up. I would then wash in a small sink then go downstairs for my breakfast with all the other boys. We would have about a half an hour for breakfast. After this I would have to do my chores.
7. My chores would consist of cleaning and buffing floors, taking buckets outside and general cleaning of the home. There was something called education. I was never given the opportunity to attend.
8. Lunchtime would be for about an hour. I would then go back to my chores.
9. After supper, we would have about an hour in the recreation room watching the television. There wasn't any organised activities. We were supervised by staff at all times. If the boys were cheeky they would be pulled out from the room.

10. We all went to bed early and at the same time. We were locked into the dormitory's at night. We would have to bang on the door to alert the night staff that we needed to use the toilet.

Mealtimes/Food

11. I hated the food at Larchgrove. There was lots of vegetables. I refused to eat them. I am a very fussy eater. I don't really remember specific meals. I do remember being made to sit at the table until I ate the food. If I didn't eat the food I would be punished. I was very stubborn.

Washing/bathing

12. I would wash every day in the small hand basin in the main bathroom. This was used by everyone. I don't remember much about the bathing routine. I do remember having a bath once a week.

Clothing/uniform

13. The staff at Larchgrove supplied me with a jumper, trousers, pyjamas and sandals. I didn't have any of my own clothing.

Leisure time

14. The only leisure time that I was allowed was to watch Television in the recreation room. I had no toys or books.

School

15. I was aware that some of the other boys attended classes. I really wanted to attend school but I wasn't allowed. I was just made to do my cleaning chores.

Healthcare

16. There was a matron at Larchgrove who looked after the children if they were ill. I cannot remember her name. She had the appearance of old hag. I remember going to her office to have cream and bandages put on my blistered hands from buffing the floor. I never saw a doctor or a dentist.

Religious instruction

17. We didn't go to church, or receive any religious instruction.

Work

18. I spent most of my days cleaning the building. As a punishment I would have to clean the toilets with a toothbrush.

Birthdays and Christmas

19. I remember spending a Christmas at Larchgrove. I went to a small Christmas party where we had cakes.
20. My birthday was never celebrated. The first time I became aware of my birthday was when I was aged fourteen.

Visits/Inspections

21. I never received any visits either from my mum or from social workers. I was aware of other children being visited. People did come into the building but I never knew who they were.

Family contact

22. I didn't have any contact from my family whilst I was at Larchgrove.

Running away

23. I ran away about six times whilst I was at Larchgrove. I used to get out through the windows or the back door during the night. I ran away at every opportunity. When I ran away I would walk home to Bishopbriggs. This was about four miles from the home. At night I slept in sheds. My female social worker would be sat waiting for me at home. She would always say that running away was part of life. My mum and step dad didn't care what I did. The Social Worker would drive me back to Larchgrove. I used to be punished when I was returned to the home. I would be placed in a cupboard all day without food.

Discipline

24. The discipline was very sporadic. You used to be constantly slapped around the head with little or no notice. If you gave the staff too much cheek they would use the belt. I also remember being hit over the hand with a ruler. The staff would sometimes withdraw your supper, dinner or television. You could also be sent to bed early.

Bed Wetting

25. I used to wet the bed at least three times a week. I was made to lie in it until the morning. In the morning you would have to strip your bed and take the sheets to the laundry. I would be hit around the head by staff with their hands. I was also called names. I was disgusted about the way the staff treated myself and the other boys for wetting the bed. I regularly wet the bed up until the age of fourteen.

Abuse at Larchgrove Remand Home

26. Whenever I refused to eat my vegetables I would be slapped around the back of the head. I was then locked in a cleaning cupboard in the dark for up to three hours. This would happen regularly. I saw it happen to other boys as well. There wasn't just one cupboard. There were a number of them just off the main door.
27. I was regularly called names by the staff. They would be cruel by saying that my mother didn't love me and didn't care about me. I can't recall who said these sort of things to me. It made feel down.
28. I was regularly being slapped around the head for being cheeky. I couldn't tell anyone about my treatment as I wouldn't be believed. There was nobody that I trusted who I could tell. The boys never spoke about their treatment.
29. Sometimes staff would come into the dormitory's at night and remove children from their beds. No one spoke about what had happened. As soon as the door would open you knew that somebody was going to be taken out.

Leaving Larchgrove Remand Home

30. After I had run away for the sixth time I was taken into an office. One of the staff told me that I was being moved to another un-named home. The only reason that I was given was because I constantly ran away. I do not recall who told me that I was moving.
31. I was taken by two members of staff from Larchgrove to Rossie Farm in Montrose. As far as I am aware I had no contact with my social worker with regards to my move. The car journey took a long time to get to Rossie Farm.

Rossie Farm Montrose

First day

32. When I first arrived at Rossie Farm I was very frightened at the size of the place. It was massive. The farm was in the wilderness. It was in the middle of fields with tree's all around it. There were two very different blocks. I later learnt they were open and closed blocks for the boys. I was greeted on my first day by the "Chief". He was a man in his forties. He was very tall and he had black coloured hair. I do not recall his or any of the other staff members names. My initial impression was that they were going to treat me well. I was spoken to in a nice way.
33. Rossie was very different from Larchgrove. My clothes were taken off me. I was given their clothes to wear. I was shown the upstairs dormitory that I would be sleeping in with about fifteen other boys. I was also shown the dining hall. I believe I was placed at Rossie Farm by the local authority. The age group of the boys was between seven and twelve years old There were about a hundred boys.

The Open Block Rossie Farm*Mornings and bedtimes*

34. I would be woken at 06:00 am by the staff shouting and bawling. I then went for a wash in the sink before going to the dining hall for my breakfast.
35. After breakfast I attended classes to be taught maths and English until lunchtime. In the afternoon I had to clean the toilets and the halls. Some of the boys were allowed to work in the gardens. This was only after you had worked your way up to it by being well behaved. We had supper at 5:00 pm. Afterwards we would wash and then go to the recreation room where we could watch television and play games for two hours. We were in bed by seven.

Mealtimes / food

36. I didn't like the food. I don't recall what we had to eat other than soup. If you didn't eat it then it would still be there for you when you returned for the next meal.

Clothing/uniform

37. When I first arrived at Rossie Farm I was given a pair of jeans, a brown jumper, some shoes and a pair of boots for the Sunday walk.

Washing and bathing

38. The bathroom was on the ground floor. You would have a bath twice a week. A small group of boys would go to bathe in the bathroom each time. A member of staff would stand by the door supervising.

Leisure time

39. Sometimes in the afternoon we were allowed outside to talk and smoke. I didn't smoke. After supper we would be allowed to use the recreation room. There were no toys, but there were plenty of books. I wasn't able to read them as I had never been taught to read and write.
40. On Sundays it was very different. There was no school and no chores. We would have to go to church in the morning. We would then all go for a five mile walk in the afternoon. We were heavily supervised but some of the boys still tried to run away.

Schooling

41. I can remember being taught maths and English by the staff at Rossie Farm. I never learnt anything because I tried to ignore the staff. The class was pretty disciplined, kids didn't mess around We didn't have any lessons at the weekends.

Healthcare

42. There was a matron at Rossie Farm who would look after you if you needed any medical treatment. You would have to ask permission before being allowed to see her. I recall receiving treatment from her for headaches. She gave me paracetamol. I don't recall ever seeing a doctor or the dentist.

Work

43. During the week I would have cleaning duties. I would have to scrub the floors in the halls and clean the toilets in the afternoon for four hours. I wouldn't have cleaning duties at the weekends.

Christmas and Birthdays

44. I don't recall celebrating my birthday. I can remember a Christmas dinner, and children receiving presents from their parents. They were allowed to keep these presents. I didn't receive any gifts. I didn't have any personal possessions.

Visitors

45. I didn't have any visitors. My family never visited me. I do not recall being visited by anyone in authority. Other children had visits. They used to have cigarettes brought in for them which the staff allowed.

Running away

46. I remember running away on at least two occasions when I was about eight. I used to get out through the windows and try and get home. I can recall on one of the occasions that I was out all night before I was apprehended by the police. I was shut in a room at the police station until the staff from Rossie arrived to take me back.
47. On a second occasion I escaped through a window and I jumped into the back of a lorry. The lorry travelled quite a few miles. The driver discovered me and I was handed

in to the police. Again I was shut into a room until the staff from Rossie picked me up. The following morning without any explanation I was placed into the closed block.

48. I would be severely punished for running away. On the occasions that I ran away, I was taken into an office at Rossie Farm. I was slapped, kicked and punched in the back by two members of staff who's name I cannot recall. I was then sent to my bed, where I was again slapped around the head.

Bedwetting

49. I regularly wet the bed at Rossie Farm. I was made to sleep in the wet sheets. When I awoke in the morning I was kicked and slapped for wetting the bed. I then had to take my sheets to the laundry. I do not remember the names of any of the staff who did this.

50. Whenever I wet the bed I would be slapped. I would be black and blue with bruises from the beatings that I took, but no one ever questioned how I came by the bruises.

The Closed Block Rossie Farm

51. The closed block had bars upon the windows, and it was very secure. There was about forty boys in the block. We slept in dormitory's of about six boys. The regime was far stricter. There was no education, no recreation, we just had to clean. We all ate together. There was no talking in the corridors. I didn't mingle with the other boys. I was a loner.

52. I was given a very sharp shock when I was placed into the closed block. I was terrified. I was getting hit all the time. I was indoors for the whole of the time I was there. I returned to the open block after about six months.

Discipline

53. The discipline was very sporadic and quite different in each of the blocks. In the open block you were regularly hit with little or no notice. In the closed block although you were regularly hit, the supervision was a lot closer and stricter.

Abuse

54. The staff would regularly call you names like "retard". They would say to me "Your mother doesn't love you"
55. There was also a dark cupboard at Rossie similar to the one at Larchgrove. If you did something wrong like being cheeky they would lock you in it for at least two hours.
56. There was some bullying that went on between the boys and some fighting, but nothing of note that I can remember.

Life after being in Rossie Farm

57. One evening I was told by the top man at Rossie that I was going home. I was about ten when this happened. The following day after breakfast I was driven home by a female to Bishopbriggs. I cannot recall anything about the female or what type of car that I was driven in.
58. At first I was very glad to be at home until my Stepfather started to physically abuse me. After about two years back at home I couldn't take it any longer. I ran away to London. I slept rough in the streets for about two years, getting food and clothes from wherever I could find it. I moved around the whole of London and never got into trouble with the police.
59. When I was about fourteen I returned to my Grandma's house in Bishopbriggs. I really liked being there. I attended at Bishopbriggs High School for two years. I quite liked

school but I struggled with reading and writing. I had no contact with my Stepfather only my mother. As far as I can remember I had no interaction with social services.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution

60. At the age of sixteen, I was regularly getting into trouble with the Police. Eventually I was sent to Polmont where I served two years. The regime at Polmont was strict. I was mentally abused. I don't want to talk about my experience at Polmont, but it was better than the other places.

Life After Care

61. When I came out of Polmont I took a number of jobs in the Glasgow area. In 1980 I had to get out of Glasgow for fear that I would get into bad company. I moved to Aberdeen to work offshore as a deck hand in the oil industry for about five years. I subsequently got married and had a family.

Impact

62. When I left care I felt extremely depressed. I believed that nobody wanted me. I felt very alone. It would have been much better if I had had a sibling. I always felt sorry for myself.
63. I have shed many tears when I think back at what I have been through at Larchgrove and Rossie Farm. If I hadn't been in these places I am sure I would have got a lot further in life and been a better person. I have been quite aggressive to my peers all my life.

64. I am able to show love to my own family because of what I have been through as a child. My daughter has been through difficult times and I became the carer for my grandchildren to prevent them from going into care and suffering what I had suffered.
65. I could never tell anyone about the abuse I have suffered. They wouldn't have listened to me. I don't trust anybody.
66. I have had nightmares thinking about my time in care.

Treatment/support

67. I recently received a twenty nine week course of therapy that was organised by Future Pathways. The therapy gave me the opportunity to get things out of my system.
68. I have only recently told my wife. I did so bit by bit. I was too embarrassed to tell her everything. A friend of mine told me about the Inquiry which prompted me to contact the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry.

Records

69. I contacted Dunbartonshire Social Work Department two years ago to apply for my records. I was informed that my records had been lost.

Lessons to be Learned

70. I am unable to read and write. I would have loved to have been given the opportunity to have had an education or training.
71. Children should have a loving and caring environment. They need the support of trustworthy adults. Children should be listened to and have someone to talk to.

72. No child should be in a children's home and I believe that the people who harm children should be punished.

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.

Signed .....
GKJ

Dated 15 11 19.....