

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GQO

Support person present: No

1. My name is GQO. I'm known as GQO. My date of birth is 1962. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in [REDACTED] in Shettleston. I lived at home with my mum, [REDACTED] and my three older siblings. My sister, [REDACTED] is the oldest. She is eight years older than me. My brother, [REDACTED] is five years older than me and my brother, [REDACTED] is four years older than me. I've never known my dad.
3. I have no memories of life at home because I was only eighteen months old when I was taken into care. My mum was charged with child neglect. She was apparently drinking all the child support money and just throwing us bags of crisps to survive on. I know the story ended up in the newspapers at the time. At nine years old, my sister [REDACTED], was basically having to keep the house together and take care of my brothers and I.
4. I was initially taken to Nazareth House in Cardonald with my sister and brothers. I have no memory of being taken there or staying there. My very first childhood memory is of Leaving Cardonald. I remember being put in a van, possibly with my sister and brothers, to be taken to Nazareth House in Lasswade. I remember the van had a coin box on the side of it for the public to put donations in.

Nazareth House, Lasswade

5. Nazareth House was in Lasswade, Bonnyrigg. It was a home for both boys and girls. It was made up of two main buildings. There was a nursery and younger children's building and there was another building for the older children. There was a path that ran between the two and I think there were about one hundred metres away from one another. I think the nursery and younger kid's building was for babies up to about six or seven years old. The older kid's building was from around six or seven years old up to maybe fourteen. In between the two buildings, there were priests' quarters with a tunnel running off them and there was a chapel up beside the older kids building.
6. Within the nursery building, I remember a dining room where we all ate, a playroom, laundry room and toilets on the ground floor. The dormitories were upstairs and there were some swings outside. In the older kids building, there was a dining room downstairs and several dormitories upstairs. The dormitories were separated by gender and age.
7. I only remember three of the Sisters by name. There was Sister GQP, Sister LBV and Sister Aloysius. Sister GQP was one of the worst. She would hit us constantly. There were also some young female civilian (civi) staff. I think the nuns put a lot of the practical jobs on them, probably jobs they should have been doing themselves. The 'civi' staff were our safe havens. They were far more like surrogate mothers to us than the nuns were. If we were chastised by the nuns, we would seek out one of the 'civi' ladies for a cuddle.
8. I think there were approximately five nuns and five 'civi' staff in the nursery and the same again in the younger children's section and the older children's building. The nuns were dressed in their habits all the time. I never saw any of them without their habit on. In terms of the hierarchy, the nuns were subservient to the priests and the 'civi' staff were subservient to the nuns. I can't remember how much interaction we had with the priests, but they could say or do as they pleased.

Routine at Nazareth House

First day

9. I was so young when I went to Nazareth House that I have no memories of arriving there. I only remember the van that picked us up at Cardonald to transfer us to Lasswade. One of my first memories of being there is of being upset when my brothers were moved. They were a good bit older than me and they were already cheeky wee Shettleston toerags. They got in a lot of trouble at Nazareth House. Their sense of fun was digging up the tiles in the front hallway. Eventually the nuns got fed up with them and they were both sent to Gryffe Children's Home in Bridge of Weir.
10. One of my brothers has now passed away. I wish he was still alive today because he would have a story to tell you on an epic scale. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later Unfortunately, he killed himself Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I understand how he must have felt as I've been in that dark place myself a few times in my life.

Mornings and bedtime

11. The routine at Nazareth House was slightly different depending on what stage you were at. In the morning, we got up, washed our face, got dressed and went downstairs for breakfast. It was porridge Monday to Saturday and cornflakes on a Sunday. In the nursery and younger children's building, we had playtime after breakfast. In the older children's building, you went to school after breakfast. After school, we had dinner at Nazareth House, a bit of time to calm down, and then it was pretty much straight to bed.

Mealtimes/Food

12. We all ate in the dining room together and the mealtimes were always supervised. One of the nuns would say grace and then we would collect our food and sit down. At the time, I had nothing to compare the food to. It was all I had ever known. I remember

sugar sandwiches were a thing. I have no idea why. I also remember being forced to drink salt water once. The nuns were trying to make me vomit. I might have eaten something I shouldn't have, but I don't remember exactly why they did that. I was also force fed by the nuns twice.

Washing/bathing

13. I get a bad feeling when I think about the shower area. I don't know why. I think there were baths and showers. Cold showers were used as a form of punishment. You could end up in a cold shower for anything, from sneezing to blasphemy.

Clothing/uniform

14. All my clothing and school uniform was provided by Nazareth House. I'm sure the clothes we got were all second hand and they would have been labelled with our names. Everything I had, came from them. If it didn't come from them, it didn't exist. I wasn't just in a home, it was my home. It was my reality because, as far as I could remember, I had never known anything else.

Schooling

15. When I was five years old, I was introduced to the primary school in Bonnyrigg. I think it was called St Mary's. In the summer, we walked to school in groups. In the winter, when it was dark in the morning and at night, we got a minibus to and from school. I remember there were two playgrounds at school. One for the Catholic children and one for the Protestant children. There was a bit of teasing back and forth, but that's just how it was back then. My first teacher was Mrs Drummond. What a woman she was. She was great. Overall, I loved going there and have positive memories of school.

Healthcare

16. The nuns would beat us regularly, but I don't remember being beaten so badly that I needed medical care. Even if I did need it, I wouldn't have got it. I once broke my collar

bone in the laundry room. I sat on an industrial steamer and it fell on top of me. They did take me to hospital for that, but only after they shouted at me for injuring myself. I seem to remember having the mumps at one point. I think we must have had a doctor or nurse checking on us from time to time, but I have no real memory of that.

Religious instruction

17. We attended mass every Sunday and benediction on a Wednesday. Then there would be prayers, holy days, red letter days, communion and confession. I think we started confession to get our first communion. We always attended the chapel within Nazareth House and we got the whole Catholic doctrine thrown at us. I remember having to go to a nun's funeral in the chapel. It was an open casket and that was the first time I saw a dead body.
18. I didn't like the religion side of things. I didn't understand why they were all going on about the joy of the lord, with a scowl on their face. They were talking about how wonderful the love of Christ was, but with a face like thunder. I always thought, 'he's not done a very good job for you'.

Chores/pocket money

19. We did have some chores to do in the home. As far as I remember, we had to clean our dormitories on a Saturday or Sunday and everyone just pitched in. I think we got some pocket money for doing our chores, but I don't recall exactly where it came from.

Trips and holidays

20. I'm sure the nuns and 'civi' staff would have taken us on some day trips, but I can't remember where. We did go on an annual holiday to Dunbar. We stayed in barracks there and I remember there were two big cannons in the forecourt.

Birthdays and Christmas

21. I don't remember having any celebration on our birthdays. It was just a normal day. At Christmas, we went to a carol service at another school. We would get cakes and things that we wouldn't usually get. I remember putting on a really bad play and singing 'I Belong to Glasgow'. Christmas was something to look forward to, but I don't have any memory of ever getting presents.

Bed Wetting

22. When the nuns woke us up in the morning, the first thing they did was check to see if we had wet the bed. If you had, you would get a caning. The nuns would rub the wet sheets on you, put your face in them and make you smell them. They made us feel ashamed and embarrassed and that was definitely their intention.

Visitors/ Family contact

23. I didn't have any visitors at Nazareth House until one day the nuns told me that my mother was coming to see me. Up until that point, I hadn't been told anything about my family. I remember when they told me that my mum was coming, I ran around telling all the other kids that I had a mum. I was just so excited that I had a mum. The day my mum came to see me, she was so nice to me, but that only lasted a couple of weeks.

Review of care /External inspections

24. I don't remember ever seeing a social worker or anyone coming to inspect Nazareth House. We were totally at their mercy.

Sibling Contact (if in care)

25. When I was moved to the older child's building, my sister went to work as a carer in the nursery. I didn't really see her after that. I found that very traumatic. She was the only family I knew because my brothers were both in Gryffe and I didn't get to see them.

Discipline

26. We were physically punished for just about anything. There was often no basis for it and it would simply depend on how the nuns felt on any given day. You could do something one day and not be punished for it, but the next day, you might be punished for doing exactly the same thing. There was no rhyme or reason to it and I can't imagine the physical punishment was ever recorded anywhere.

Running away

27. I never ran away from Nazareth House. Where would I have gone? I was aware that other kids ran away, but I don't know what happened to them when they got caught. I can well imagine though.

Abuse at Nazareth House

Abuse by the Nuns

28. When I think back to my time in Nazareth House, the feeling I get is oppressive. The attitude the nuns had stank. They wouldn't get a job today looking after a pumpkin, never mind a child. They always shouted at us and everything was always our fault, even if they did something wrong. If they dropped a glass, it was always 'look what you made me do'. There was just so much negativity and all the children were terrified of them. It was so easy to upset them over the most ridiculous things, like a kid wiping his snot on his sleeve.

29. My first physical encounter with the nuns was when I was in the nursery. I would have been around three years old. I didn't want to eat my cabbage. I said I didn't like it and I was told to eat it anyway. I could be stubborn as a child and I just sat there. So as not to lose face, one of the nuns came over, took a handful of cabbage, opened my mouth and shoved it in. She force fed me. It happened again, on another occasion, when I didn't want to eat liver. Suffice to say, to this day, I can't stand cabbage or liver.
30. There were varying degrees of abuse between the nuns. There were some who would be cowardly and watch while others were physically abusive and then there were the ones who were violent themselves. Sister GQP was one of the worst of them all. To me, she was the main head case. She was the one meting it out over the most trivial things. Things that a mother would give you a quick telling off for. She would slap you, pull your hair and push you down.
31. One time, I upset Sister GQP and she beat me with wooden rods from the drying cupboard. That was her weapon of choice and you knew if the drying cupboard was opened you were going to get a proper doing. She hit me all over my body with the rods, but mainly on my back, bum and the backs of my legs. She would sometimes hit you on the head with the rods, but never in the face. They tended to avoid the face unless they were slapping you.
32. The worst beating I got from Sister GQP was when I really didn't deserve it. I must have been around five or six years old because we were allowed to walk down the brae to the sweet shop unsupervised. I went down with another two boys. As we were walking back, a car stopped beside us. The guy driving asked us if we were going to Nazareth House and said he'd give us a lift. We got in the car with him and he drove past Nazareth House and stopped at the edge of a wood. I knew at that point that something wasn't right. We got out of the car and he said he was going to show one of the other boys something. He took him by the hand walked into the woods. We started shouting our friend's name and then he appeared from the woods. He said that the guy just let him go when he heard us shouting.

33. We knew, because of our conditioning, that we would be the ones in trouble. We walked to the main road and a police car came along. The police said they had been looking for us. They didn't even ask us what had happened. They just took us back to Nazareth House. I'm pretty sure we told the police that a bad man took us.
34. What I think is hugely relevant, was the nuns response to this. You've got three kids, who have basically been kidnapped by what appears to be a sexual predator, but it was our fault. When the police left, we were slapped and put in separate dormitories. I heard the drying cupboard getting opened and I got the beating of my life. There were two nuns involved. One came in and started it, then the other obviously decided she wanted her turn as well. One of the two nuns was Sister GQP [REDACTED]. They were screaming and saying that I had brought shame on Nazareth House. That's why I was getting beaten, because I had embarrassed them by bringing the police to the door. On top of that, I got no dinner and was told to pray for forgiveness. What was I going to pray for, forgiveness for being kidnapped and then beaten up?
35. I remember having marks, welts and pain all over my body from the beatings. The fact that they wouldn't mark your face has to tell you they knew what they were doing was wrong. Even the 'civi' staff were scared of the nuns. If they saw the nuns beating you they couldn't or wouldn't say anything. They were totally subordinate. If they tried to comfort you after a beating, the nuns would tell them not to spoil us. They had to comfort us out of sight of the nuns, which a lot of them did.
36. I honestly believe that Sister GQP [REDACTED] had some serious mental health issues. I would see her walking back from the priests' offices having full angry conversations with herself. She should have never been near a job where she had responsibility for others, especially not children.
37. The physical abuse happened so often that it became normalised. We lived in a constant state of fear. It was a three pronged attack of psychological, emotional and physical abuse. They would say their actions were out of love, but that was just nonsense. They would tell us that god loves us and we had disappointed him. It was

always our fault and at that time, I believed it. No one does guilt like the nuns. They are the guilt champions of the world.

Sexual Abuse

38. There was a married couple called Mr LNK and Mrs who lived in a cottage . I think they must have been in their late 70's to mid-80's at the time. Mr LNK might have been the janitor or grounds keeper, but I'm not sure. He might not have even worked at Nazareth House.
39. Mr LNK had a dog and he allowed the children from Nazareth House to go into his garden to see the dog. There were quite often several children in his garden at a time. One day, when I was in his garden with around five other children, he talked about putting the dog in a show in Bonnyrigg and said we could go with him. Later, we were taken back to Mr LNK house to talk about the dog show. Mrs brought out some tea. Mr LNK lifted me onto his lap and I remember his hands being everywhere. Mrs had forgotten to bring something out of the kitchen and Mr LNK said he would get it. He lifted me up and took me into the kitchen with him. While he was holding me, I felt a really bad pain and screamed out. He got annoyed with me and put me down. I ran back out to the garden.
40. Later that day, when I went to the toilet, I saw blood on my underpants. I didn't understand what had happened to me at the time, but I knew it was wrong and all I wanted to do was get back to the nursery. I now know that, while he was carrying me, he put his hand in my trousers and forcibly inserted his finger in my anus. I wanted to tell the nuns, but I thought it was my fault he did that to me. That's what the nuns had reinforced in us. That was the doctrine they taught.
41. The kids in Nazareth House used to talk about Mr LNK. They would say they didn't like him. That he was always picking them up and hurting them. I didn't understand what they meant until it happened to me. I'm sure I told some of the other kids what he did to me and I wasn't the only one scare shitless to go near this guy. The same thing must have been happening to other kids and he had free access to all

the kids he wanted. The nuns never questioned why some of the kids were so scared of him. That was neglect on their part. I find it funny that as a result of my mum's neglect, I was put in the care of a load of violent neglectful nuns.

42. I also have some memory of something bad happening to me in the tunnel between the older children's building and the priests' quarters. I've tried to remember what happened more clearly, but I think my mind has locked it away tight. I think I was around seven years old at the time. Whenever I get a flashback of that tunnel, even to this day, I freeze.
43. The older children's building was sexualised beyond belief. I remember being really embarrassed by it. There was sexually explicit behaviour going on between the children, which to me, is a sign of an underlying problem. The behaviour was quite openly talked about and the nuns must have been aware of what was going on. The level of sexual awareness had to come from somewhere. To me, that was learnt behaviour by the kids.

Reporting of abuse at Nazareth House

44. I didn't report any of the abuse I suffered at Nazareth House. Who could I report it to? All the nuns were battering the kids. The physical abuse side of things was openly known to everyone there. I would have been too scared to say anything as I would have been punished for speaking up.

Leaving Nazareth House

45. When I was around eleven years old, someone decided that I could go back to live with the same woman I had been taken from about ten years before. The same woman who had neglected us. I started off having day visits with my mum. I'd get the bus to Glasgow with my sister. Because my sister was older, she had the choice to stay at Nazareth House or live with my mum. She decided to stay at Nazareth House to care

for the nursery children. That was her passion. She eventually went on to get a degree in childcare.

Life at Home

46. My mum was obviously telling the right people what they wanted to hear because she wasn't at all fit to look after me. Between the time I went into care and me leaving Nazareth House, my mum had suffered a stroke. She had some paralysis down one side which affected her arm and leg. She only had use of one arm and had very obvious difficulty walking.
47. She had a council house in the East end of Glasgow at that time. My brothers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], had been back living with her for around a year. I was initially excited because I was going to have a family again. I felt like I had an identity for the first time. That wore off quickly as within two weeks of me going home, she was drinking again. She would throw things at us and shout in our faces. To make things worse, I started getting bullied. I had been sheltered to an extent and I was just thrown into an East end Housing scheme. I was a fish out of water. My brothers did their best to protect me, but after a while, [REDACTED] left and then [REDACTED] followed. I was stuck with her.
48. After two years, I ended up at a Children's Panel because I had started displaying anger. They tried to threaten me by saying they had the power to put me back in care and they were surprised when I told them that's what I wanted. That's when they took me out of [REDACTED] care for the second time. I was sent to St Marys Kenmure Boys School in Bishopbriggs. I was around thirteen years old and I stayed there until I was fifteen, almost sixteen, years old.
49. I do forgive my mum because she had her own troubles. That said, as a child, you shouldn't have to make allowances for the person who is supposed to be caring for you.

St Marys Kenmure Boys School, Bishopbriggs

50. St Marys seemed to be made up of a mix of kids who had been taken into care and those who had been sent to it as a List D school. I think the kids were all between twelve and sixteen. When you went in the front door, there was a recreation room on the right. There was also an assembly hall, dining room and kitchen on the ground floor. The dormitories were upstairs. There was one on each side of the hallway. In each dorm, there were partitions with either one or two beds in each. I think the dormitory I was in was called De La Salle. The classrooms were in a separate building.
51. The headmaster was a big Irish fellow. I had one run in with him and I got a smack for chucking water at someone.

Routine at St Marys Kenmure

52. I just remember there was loads of bullying going on at St Marys. I tried to run away from the place once. I had enough of the bullying and I made a run for it when we were being lined up in the yard to go inside. The staff saw me and one of the other boys came after me and talked me out of it. I think I got a bit of a talking to from staff, but that was about it. They tried their best at education and tried to take us away on wee day trips. All in all, I think it was a good place. I felt like I was being looked after there.
53. There was only one thing that happened to me while I was at St Marys and that was sexual abuse. That's really all I want to talk about in connection with St Marys.

Family contact

54. I got a weekend pass to go home on a Saturday and Sunday, but I didn't want to go. The weekends in St Marys were the best bit as a lot of the boys would go home and sometimes there would only be two or three of us left. The staff would take us out for the day to Milton Campsie or somewhere like that. Eventually, I agreed to give home leave a try after there was an incident with a member of kitchen staff. I just wanted to

get out of the place as often as I could. On my first visit home, [REDACTED] was fine. The second and third time I visited, she was on the drink again. After that, I was a bit of a scamp and would pretend I was visiting my mum, but I was actually going to stay with my mates.

Abuse at St Marys Kenmure

55. As part of my duties at St Marys, I helped in the kitchen. I was sexually abused by a man who worked there. His name was Bill Franks or Franklyn and he was a sex pest. He once asked me to get him something from the cupboard and he came in behind me and shut the door. He slipped his hand straight down my trousers and groped my genitals. I recoiled. He went down on me. I managed to get away and stormed out of the cupboard. It was child molestation and that guy should never be around kids. After that incident, I asked for a change of duties and stopped working in the kitchen. I felt ashamed of what had happened and blamed myself for what he had done.
56. He had a gesture that he would always make with his hand. He would put one hand down by his side and wiggle his fingers while looking at you. It was suggestive of wanting to touch your genitals. He did that a lot to lots of different kids. The more I think about it, the creepier I think it is.
57. I told some of the other boys what he did to me. I remember some of the other boys told me he had assaulted them too. I think one of them was called [REDACTED]. I never told any of the staff at the school, but I now wish I had spoken up at the time.
58. When I think about Bill Franks or Franklyn now, he reminds me of Yasser Arafat. That's who he looked like. I think he must have been in his forties when he worked in St Marys.

Leaving St Marys Kenmure

59. I decided I wanted to leave St Marys when I was fifteen. I said I would go back to stay with my mum. Within a month of going home, I had left and moved to Newcastle. That was the start of my roaming and I've been finding my way ever since.

Life after being in care

60. After leaving care, I got a job as a roadie for a band who was part of the punk scene. I made my way to London with them. I was glad I had a job, but I was surrounded with alcohol and other things. I was only sixteen or seventeen at this point. It was the punk era and life was very much sex, drugs and rock and roll. I've had some problems with drugs over the years, but it didn't last long. I heard alarm bells and got myself some help to get it sorted.
61. At nineteen years old, I met a Spanish girl and went to Madrid for what was supposed to be two weeks, but I ended up staying there for eighteen months. When I came back to the UK, I went to film school and got my Cinematography degree. My job has taken me around the world and I've been in some amazing countries.
62. I have a twenty-five year old son and I am now married, but not to my son's mother. My son is some boy and I was so determined not to let what happened to me affect him. I've carved out some kind of life for myself, but the one thing that has overshadowed everything in my adult life, is my mental health.

Impact

63. I've been diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, the symptoms of which include dissociative psychosis and depression. I've been prescribed various medications by my GP. I was originally put on lithium and I would literally be dribbling. I stopped taking it and my manic periods would be longer and stronger. I would walk down the road shouting at

things that weren't there. I had ten years of that. Around eighteen to twenty years ago, I was put on a new medication and it changed things for me for the better. It didn't solve everything, but it made my episodes less extreme and less disabling. My mental health difficulties are a direct result of what I went through as a child in care.

64. My mental health has dictated the type of job I've been able to do. I've tried working for other people, but I've lost jobs through moments of psychosis and behavioural problems. Because of that, I've had to do freelance jobs all my life. Because of my illness, I think too much. My brain never stops. Learning languages is something that helps me and keeps my brain occupied. I currently speak seven languages. I also do lots of different courses to keep my brain busy. My physical health has suffered as well. I'm sixty now and I've had two heart attacks and have COPD.
65. I get flashbacks from my time in care. Especially over the last couple of years since reading an article about the work of The Inquiry. I go through periods of not being able to get out of bed for days to not being able to sleep for days at a time. My education and relationships have all suffered from bouts of self-loathing. I've had five or six serious suicide attempts over the years. I often think, if all of my decisions weren't dictated by anxiety, I could have reached my full potential. If I didn't have to use all the energy within me to not kill myself, if I could have put that energy towards something else, I could have done so much more with my life. That's what they've taken from me.
66. I've got to a point now where I accept myself and I forgive myself, but I don't forgive them.

Treatment/support

67. I spent a year in a therapeutic community called The Henderson in Sutton. It was a live in community and they had a multidisciplinary team. The majority of people there were dealing with abuse. I don't think that place exists any more.

Reporting of Abuse

68. I have now reported the abuse I suffered at Nazareth House and St Marys Kenmure to the Police. I suspect Sister GQP and Mr LNK will be long dead now. The only one who might be alive is Bill Franks or Franklyn who worked at St Marys Kenmure.

Records

69. I toyed with the idea of getting a hold of my records, but I never followed through with it.
70. As an adult, I went back to Nazareth House out of curiosity. The nursery building isn't there anymore and there seems to be more private dwellings on the grounds. I met a nun on the pathway and I explained that I was in care in Nazareth House about fifty years ago. The nun told me that it's an old people's home now. I also went back to St Marys Kenmure, but it was in the process of being demolished.

Lessons to be Learned

71. I think that every individual who has the responsibility of caring for children should have background checks carried out and just because they might be from some holy order, they don't get a pass on that. There also has to be someone to oversee the kids in care in each institution. I think it would be helpful to have channels, which bypass the hierarchy of an institution, to allow kids or staff to whistleblow. As a kid, the one thing I wished for, was someone to speak to and confide in. I just wanted someone to listen and say to the people who were supposed to be caring for me 'what is wrong with you'.

Other information

72. 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..... 

Dated... 29/09/22