

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HPO

Support person present: No.

1. My name is HPO, my date of birth is 1962. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I am the second youngest of five brothers. The oldest is , then , myself and . Before I went into care I stayed with my mum and brothers in Possilpark, Glasgow. My mum and dad were separated. They had split up when I was six. At that time I had no real contact with my father other than if I saw him in the street.

Life before care

3. My mum worked full time as a cleaner and my auntie would look after us. Because my mum worked I could do as I wanted. I basically got away with murder. When I was about thirteen I started playing truant a lot from school. Before this I had done well at primary school and first year at secondary school. I had been getting good reports.
4. Around this time some of my friends and me broke into a shop. We were caught by the police and taken to Glasgow Sheriff Court. I was initially remanded for three weeks at Larchgrove Assessment Centre to allow for social work reports. This was extended by a further three weeks. I previously had contact with the social work and

I had been in front of children's panels. I think this had happened about five times. Looking back I think I had behavioural problems and was involved with the wrong crowd.

Larchgrove Assessment Centre, Glasgow

5. At Larchgrove I was in Bute House, which was a secure unit. There were four of us in a room. The room was not locked but the unit I was in was secure.
6. You basically done nothing, it was boring. You would just talk during the day. Twice a day you were allowed out for an hour to exercise in the yard.
7. There was no schooling or education. There were books, but not for school.
8. Within the unit I was in there was a snooker table. There were games that you could play with as well.
9. I was taken from Larchgrove to court. I was sentenced to eighteen months detention. Larchgrove decided that I would go to St Marys List D school at Bishopbriggs. At this time I would have been about fourteen years old.

St Marys List D School, Bishopbriggs (Initial attendance)

First day

10. I was taken by car from Larchgrove to St Marys. There was a big chipped drive that was lined with trees. The school looked like a mansion or grade one listed building.
11. Mr LNI SNR met us at the door. I was taken upstairs and given sand shoes, denims, a red jumper and a blue shirt. I was told to change into these clothes.

12. I was shown my dormitory. It was a long corridor with single units off it. There were no doors. It was all boys. I think there were thirty to forty, aged about twelve to sixteen years.
13. I was then taken to the kitchen area where there was a large dining hall. I was left there and told I would get a sandwich.
14. A guy, aged about forty, came in with a sandwich. I later found out that this was the cook, Bill Franks. He sat next to me and put his hand on my leg and told me that I would be fine. He then started moving his hand further up my leg and kept saying that I would be fine. As he was doing this two boys, aged about fourteen came in. They went into the kitchen with the guy.
15. I got up and saw that the main door was open. I ran outside and into the trees. That was all within thirty minutes of me arriving at the school. The first night I slept in a field.
16. I went back to Possilpark and stayed for a bit with a friend, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] gave me a change of clothes. After this I stayed in derelict buildings. There were two alcoholics in one of the buildings and they sort of looked after me. They became like family to me.
17. I absconded and stayed away from St Mary's for about a year. During this time I never went back to the family home. Eventually my brother [REDACTED] talked me in to giving myself up. [REDACTED] was seven years older than me and by that time he was married. [REDACTED] had been trying to find me when I had absconded.
18. During the year I had absconded I never spoke to my mum. I know that the police had been looking for me but I don't think that the social work had been involved.
19. [REDACTED] took me back to his house in Maryhill and then returned me to St Mary's.

St Marys List D School, Bishopbriggs (After absconding)

20. When I was taken back to St Mary's. HHG [REDACTED], who worked there, asked me who I was. When I told him, he said that I held the record for the quickest stay and the longest away. I think that HHG [REDACTED] used to play [REDACTED]. When I returned there was no police involvement. I was taken to the same dormitory as before and given the same type of clothes.
21. It was a mixture of care and remand boys. I would say there was a higher population of boys on remand than in care.
22. There was a semi-detached house in the grounds. This was for the older boys who were about to be released. It was mainly boys who had been on remand that went in there. I never went to this house.

Staff

23. The staff at the school worked shifts. It would be different people on duty day and night. There was more staff on during the day and less at night. I would say that the majority of them were generally ok. Mr LNI [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] of the home. I think that one of the other staff ZHXC [REDACTED] had a social work background. The staff that I had most dealings with was Bill Franks and LYT [REDACTED]

Routine*Mornings and bedtime*

24. The usual time that we got up was around 8.30am. Someone came along the dormitory and woke us up.
25. We went to bed at 8.30pm. We would be given supper, usually a sandwich, about 8.00pm in the TV room. Lights out was around 9.00pm.

Food

26. The quality of the food was good. It was probably better than I was used to. If you didn't eat the meals there were no punishments.
27. You would have your breakfast before going on the work detail. Lunch was during the work detail and dinner was about 5.30pm.

Work

28. I was put on a daily work detail. This could be in the kitchen, with the joiner or with Mr LYT LYT was a sort of handyman farmer type person. He stayed at the school in a bungalow up the hill with his mother.
29. You didn't get to choose what work detail that you were in. Looking back now it was like child labour. You worked five days a week from about 9.15am until 3.00pm every day. You stopped between twelve and one for lunch. I was with Mr LYT for about three months. After that I was in the kitchen for about four months. I also went to work in a farm. I think it was a friend of Mr LYT who had the farm.
30. When I was with Mr LYT I used to help to build fences, plant potatoes, cut the grass and the trees. It was like everyday farm work. When I went to work at the farm I used to have to clean out the stables.
31. In the joinery shop we were shown how to make stools and things like that. I would say this place was the closest to a school environment. We were taught about the technology of woodwork.
32. When I was in the kitchen I would work as directed by the cook.

Discipline

33. I don't think that there was a strict discipline regime. You would get your privileges taken away. This could be your cigarettes, if you smoked. You might not get to go to the TV room. The biggest thing to lose would be your weekend leave. The staff knew how important your home leave was to you.

School

34. I never went to school at St Mary's. I was never offered the opportunity to go to school.

Chores

35. The only chores I was given was to make sure my own space in the dormitory was clean. This would be my bed and the set of drawers I had for my own things.
36. Some of the boys kept the dormitory clean, but not me.

Hygiene

37. There were no restrictions on access to the baths and showers. You could go for a shower morning or night, it was up to you.

Holidays/trips

38. The school had its own mini bus. There would be visits to parks and events at weekends although not every weekend. It was dependant on what staff were available. If HHG the [REDACTED] was on duty he would take you to the football at Parkhead. HHG was a good guy.
39. After about five months I was allowed to go home at weekends. The reason it was five months was because I had previously run away. If you were going home at the weekend then they would give you the bus fare. You left on a Friday and had to be back by 6pm on the Sunday. This would be every weekend unless someone gave

you a bad report. All it took was one of the staff to put a report in against you. This would be whether it was justified or not.

40. There was a boy at the home who I knew by the name '██████'. He was an orphan. I got on really well with him. ██████ asked if he could come home with me for a weekend. He asked Mr LNI ██████ if he could do this. My mum had to write a letter saying that this was okay and that she would look after him. ██████ was then able to come home with me for a weekend.
41. I didn't go on any holidays when I was in the school. I don't know if any of the other boys went on any holidays with the school.
42. On one occasion I was allowed home to my mums for two weeks.

Leisure time

43. There was a TV room that you could go to at night. There was also a snooker table. You did have access to books. If you wanted a book for at night then you had to take it out during the day.

Birthdays and Christmas

44. My birthday wasn't celebrated in the school. It was just another day.
45. I was allowed home for Christmas. I'm sure this was the same for most people. I think that we were given presents at Christmas in the school. I remember there were Christmas trees put out.

Visits/Inspections

46. I know that visits were allowed at the school. I was going home regularly so I didn't need any visitors.

Medical care

47. I don't know if there was a doctor or a dentist. I didn't see one when I was there.

Religion

48. It was your own choice if you wanted to go to mass at the chapel. There was a priest at the school. I don't know if he was a local priest or not. He was there quite a lot. You used to see him most days.

Abuse

LYT

49. The first work detail I was on was with LYT. He was referred to as Mr LYT. LYT was a bully. I don't know if LYT was his right name. He was maybe aged about fifty at that time. You had to do things his way or you got a slap. He was the handyman and also handy with his hands.
50. I remember one time we were building a fence. I had to hold the wire when it was being tightened. I told Mr LYT I couldn't hold it as it was hurting my fingers. He slapped me on the face and told me that there was nothing wrong with my hands.
51. Mr LYT would slap you on the head most days if he thought you were doing something wrong. He would also kick you if he was standing beside you. A lot of times he would be shouting at you. When he was shouting at me it made me feel scared.
52. It was an everyday thing with Mr LYT. He would shout at all the boys and slap them as well. It wasn't just me.

Bill Franks

53. When it was my turn to work in the kitchen. Bill Franks, the cook, was there. He wasn't very tall and was aged about forty. He had a goaty beard and long black hair and looked like a person from an Italian background.
54. There was never any violence but he was touching you constantly. On one occasion, me and him were alone in the kitchen. I will never forget it, it was a Wednesday. He took hold of my hand and put it on his leg and then put it further up. He wouldn't let go off my hand until it was on his penis. He then started moving it up and down. Then it was over.
55. After this happened I got a bad report put in against me. I missed my home leave that weekend. I was called into Mr LNI office and he told me my leave was cancelled because of the report. He didn't say who had put the report in. The following Monday I was back in the kitchen. Mr Franks said to me, "See that's what I can do to you. I can stop your leave anytime I want". I took it from this that he had put the bad report in about me and if he wanted to he could stop my home leave.
56. I was on the kitchen work detail about another two weeks then I was moved. Nothing like what happened that Wednesday happened again. He did still keep touching me constantly. I done everything I could to try and stay away from him. Although there was a party of five boys working in the kitchen, he was very 'sleekit'. If there were three of you in the kitchen he would send two of the boys away to do something else. This meant I would be left alone with him. I know he would have done things with the other boys as well not just me.

Reporting of abuse

57. I have never spoken to the police or anyone else in authority about what Mr Franks or Mr LYT did to me.

58. I would moan to the staff about Mr LYT and what he was like. The staff would just say that that he was grumpy and that was the way he was.
59. You weren't able to report what happened to you in that era. If you were hit you just got on with it. The attitude was that you must have done something wrong.
60. I never had an opportunity for a one to one with a staff member where I could discuss things.

Leaving St Mary's

61. My brother, [REDACTED], managed to get me a job as a bin man with Glasgow city council whilst I was still at St Mary's. You would be given your bus fare and go to work. At night I went back to the home. I did this job about four or five months before I was released.
62. When I started working I was given a packed lunch. You had to go to the kitchen to get this. It was normally lying on the table for you. If it wasn't there it would mean that Bill Franks was on duty. I would have had to go in the kitchen where he was. The first couple of times this happened I went into the kitchen and Bill Franks was there. He would touch me on the leg and the bum. He would say that I was his favourite boy.
63. After this if my lunch wasn't there I wouldn't go in the kitchen as I knew he would be there. What Bill Franks did to me, made me angry and frustrated. I didn't think this would ever happen to me as I was street wise.
64. The Home Office had to agree to me being released from St Mary's. I basically had to be given payroll. This was because I had absconded when I first arrived there. As I had a job I was eventually allowed to leave.
65. I was told about a week in advance that I was to be released.

Life after St Mary's

66. After leaving St Mary's I stayed with my dad as I didn't get on with my mum's boyfriend. I hadn't been in contact with my dad before then. I stayed with my dad for about six years. When I came out of St Mary's I was lost for about two years. I was getting into trouble and drinking a lot.
67. I worked as a bin man for two years. After this I became a butcher and did this job for about 21 years. I then went back to being a bin man.

Counselling

68. I have never had any counselling. I don't think that this is something I need. If I did need to speak to someone I would speak to my wife about it. It was my wife who encouraged me to contact the Inquiry.

Impact

69. I wouldn't say my time in St Mary's had any real impact on me other than I started drinking a lot. I did start to get into a bit of trouble. When I was nineteen I was arrested for attempted murder.
70. The attempted murder charge was eventually dropped to assault. I was given a fine and probation. About this time I met my wife and since then life has been good. I settled down and have never been in trouble since.
71. I have never forgot what Bill Franks and LYT did to me. I have though managed now to put it to the back of my mind. I think I have dealt with it quite well.

72. What happened to me with Mr LYT and Mr Franks definitely had an affect on me. I would say what Bill Franks done to me made me homophobic when I was younger. I'm not homophobic now. Before I wouldn't be friends with people who were homosexual. Now I have friends who are gay. I also get very angry if I see someone hitting another person. I don't see the need to hit kids. This is probably all to do with what happened to me.
73. When I was in St Mary's no one listened to you. I think that now people do listen. People have a voice now. At St Mary's people made you do things and if you didn't you got hit.

Impact on others

74. I don't smoke but when I was in St Mary's, children of thirteen were allowed to smoke twenty cigarettes a day. At Larchgrove you were allowed four cigarettes a day. I can't believe that this was allowed to happen. I have two friends who were thirteen and didn't smoke when they went into St Mary's. They started smoking there and to this day still smoke.

Records

75. I have never tried to recover my records for my time in care. I didn't even know that this was something you could do.

Other information

76. I would hope that the Inquiry will stop abuse in care.
77. At St Mary's I didn't feel that I had a voice. If you asked someone a question they never gave you an answer. There was always an excuse, they would say that they were too busy.

78. One of my big regrets was that at St Mary's I was never given the opportunity to have an education between the age of fourteen and sixteen. Even to have got an E in an O level would have shown I had done something.

79. 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.. 6/3/18