

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister ^{LRC} [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

Others present: Una Conway from Donnelly and Wall, solicitor for the witness
Isla Bowen from Clyde & Co, solicitor for the Sisters of Nazareth

1. My birth name is ^{LRC} [REDACTED] I was previously known as Sister [REDACTED] ^{LRC} [REDACTED] and am now known as Sister ^{LRC} [REDACTED] My date of birth is the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1938. I am 79 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I was born and brought up in Manchester. I have family who live in America.

The Sisters of Nazareth

3. I have memory problems and can't remember a lot of the detail of the places I was at or the people I met. I entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth in 1960 at Hammersmith in London. From there I was in Birmingham and in 1964 spent a year in Plymouth during a period when I was unwell. At this time I was known as Sister ^{LRC} [REDACTED] I moved to Nottingham where I passed my driving test. I was in big demand in the Order as so few Sisters had a driving licence.

4. I moved from Nottingham after about two years to a mother and baby home in Southampton where I worked as a 'collector' I think that I went from there back to Hammersmith for a while. In 1971, I was sent to Nazareth House in Aberdeen to do the Residential Child Care course and then work at the children's home there. I completed the Residential Care for Children course at Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen. It was either a one year or two year course and during that time I was in placements at other children's homes.
5. In 1974 I went to Nazareth House in Cardonald near Glasgow where I again worked with children. I went from Cardonald back to Hammersmith and spent a few years working at numerous establishments run by the Congregation in England. I spent a few years in Blackburn, England. About ten years ago I moved to where I am now at Nazareth House in Manchester. When I left Blackburn I changed my name from Sister LRC to Sister LRC. I am now known as Sister LRC. There was another Sister LRC who was part of the Sisters of Nazareth Congregation.

Childcare qualifications and training

6. In 1971 I completed a Residential Child care course at Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen. I cannot recall whether it was a one or two year course.

The childcare course

7. During the course I had to spend time at placements in other children's homes in the Aberdeen area. I was residing at Nazareth House in Aberdeen and was also helping out there when I was not at college.

Time spent working at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

8. I first went to Nazareth House in 1971 and whilst I was there I completed the Residential Child care course at Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen. The course was either one or two years long and was five days a week. At the weekends I also worked with the children in the home. When I completed the course the children at Nazareth House were keen for me to stay on and so I remained there until 1974.

Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

First impressions of Nazareth House, Aberdeen

9. Nazareth House in Aberdeen functioned as a residential children's home and also a residential home for the elderly. I was very busy at Nazareth house looking after my group of children and doing my studies. I was known as Sister LRC while I was there.
10. Nazareth House was a big place in the middle of Aberdeen. I had about nine children in my group and there were three other groups with about the same amount of children. I would estimate there were between thirty and forty children. At this time the children were all different ages as we wanted to keep families together.

Layout at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

11. The elderly residents were also looked after by the Sisters and were in a separate part of the building away from where the children resided. I remember we used to meet these residents when we attended mass at the church attached to Nazareth House.

The children at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

12. When I first arrived at Nazareth House in Aberdeen I had a family called [REDACTED]. They consisted of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The oldest was about two and a half and the eldest was ten. They all came from Glasgow. I think that the

children were put there because their parents were alcoholics. The only way that the parents could visit was if they were given a rail ticket by the social services. A lot of the children had no relatives. They were very happy children when they were at the home and I don't remember them being home sick or anything like that. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] still keeps in touch with me.

13. There were two children called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were part of my group. I can remember potential foster parents coming to visit these children. They were lovely children and were adopted by a family from Peterhead.

My role at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

14. When I completed my college course I was put in charge of a group of about nine children and was responsible for them on a daily basis. I organised them for school and all other activities that they did. I was answerable to the Mother Superior. I also had the assistance of another member of staff who was not a Sister.

Management structure at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

15. There was a Mother Superior in charge overall called Sister ^{LKO}[REDACTED] Sister ^{LKO}[REDACTED] is deceased. I think that she had a deputy called Sister ^{FAF}[REDACTED]. There were also other members of staff who were not Sisters. There were cleaning and laundry staff. Everyone reported to the Mother Superior.
16. If I had any issues with the residents or other members of staff I would go directly to the Mother Superior. I never had any occasion to go to the Mother Superior to report members of staff.

Sisters and other staff at Nazareth House 1971 – 1974.

17. The names of the staff I remember being there are: Sister ^{LJI}[REDACTED] who is now deceased, Sister ^{LJD}[REDACTED] who is also deceased, Sister ^{LRG}[REDACTED] and Sister ^{LKH}[REDACTED]. They were in charge of the children's groups at one time or another.

18. There was a Sister Bega and Sister FAF [REDACTED], both of whom are now deceased. There was a Sister Perry, Sister LFZ [REDACTED] Sister LBG [REDACTED] and a Sister LTX [REDACTED].
19. I remember being told when I was working on a placement in Dundee by another person that Sister FAF [REDACTED] was a very caring Sister and that if children ran away she would go out and look for them to bring them back. I didn't really work with Sister LTX [REDACTED] who also had a children's group, I only knew of her. The sisters, like the children came and went.
20. I had two other helpers at the home. Ruth was a member of staff and in her twenties. [REDACTED] was an older girl who helped out. [REDACTED] had two family members in the home. I still keep in touch with [REDACTED] and I attended her fortieth birthday.

Routine and life at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

Daily routine

21. Prior to dealing with the children I would be up early in the morning and I would say my prayers. I would go to the refectory for the staff where I had my breakfast. I would then attend to the children.
22. I got the children up in the morning about half past seven and readied them for school. Breakfast was taken in the little sitting room in our part of the home. All the groups had separate dining rooms. The Sister in the kitchen used to prepare the food.
23. The older children then went to school. I would sometimes accompany the children to school on the bus. The children went to St Peters Primary School in Aberdeen.

The younger children who were not of school age were looked after for the rest of the day by either myself or my assistant.

24. When the children came back from school I used to help them do their homework and then they would play until it was time for tea. I think that they had their lunch at school in Aberdeen but I can't recall.
25. I think that the children went to bed at seven thirty or eight o'clock. The younger ones may have gone earlier because they would be tired and ready for bed. I would often get the younger ones up before I went to bed and take them to the toilet.
26. I remember I always kept a diary and recorded things like visits by parents. It was a personal diary and I kept it in my room. I no longer have these diaries and don't know where they are.

Sleeping arrangements

27. There were two or three children to each room and I slept nearby them as I would be available to them through the night. I would also get the children up before I went to bed and take them to the toilet to prevent them from wetting their bed.

Washing and bathing

28. The children had a basin to wash in when they got up out of bed in the morning. A lot of the children had a bath in the evening. There were too many children to bath all in one night. It was one person to a bath and the water was changed after each person.

Food

29. The food was made by a Sister in the kitchen and was normal food. There was a cooked breakfast at the weekends. In the evening there was a main course and a pudding. If the children wanted a drink before they went to bed this was also provided.

Clothes

30. The children were provided with clothes and I think but I can't be clear about if they were also provided with a school uniform. I suspect this was the case so that they didn't stand out a school.

Chores

31. I was not aware of any of my children doing chores although they had to keep their bed areas tidy and prepare their clothes for the morning. They didn't do washing up or making of beds.

Leisure time

32. The children could play in the grounds as although they weren't big grounds there was room to play. There was also a sitting room with some toys.
33. At weekends I used to take the children down to the beach. We had a mini bus that we shared and I often took my group down to the local beach. I was always with the children during their spare time. I remember we went to a nearby park I think it was called Duffy Park.

Possessions

34. Nazareth House had little or no toys and the children had very few possessions so they played with whatever was available. If relatives brought them presents or sweeties the children were allowed to keep them.

Holidays

35. We used to go on a holiday to Tom Bay near Tomintoul in Scotland. It was a country place in the wilds. Two Sisters would go with one group at any one time. I used to drive. It was hard to go to lots of places because we had no money.

Trips

36. We did have a few trips out, mainly in the mini bus. We did a lot of walking. When we went to Tom Bay we stayed at an old school which was owned by the Catholic Church. We used to get permission from the Bishop to take children there. I used to do the cooking and we slept under blankets in the old school.

Birthdays and Christmas

37. The children's birthdays would be marked with a card and a present which I would have to obtain for them. They also got cards from their families.
38. At Christmas time we always had parties in the home. On Christmas day we would have a mass in the morning and then go out on the bus down to the beach.

Bed-wetting

39. There was only one boy that wet the bed and he couldn't help it. His name was [REDACTED] If anyone wet the bed I would change the sheets and wash the bed down. I would get another pair of dry pyjamas for the boy.

Discipline

40. My children were very young and on the whole were very well behaved. I never had to use corporal punishment and I never saw it used in my time there. I would speak to the children and give them a verbal row if they deserved it but I can't remember discipline being a problem.

41. As far as I know I never heard of a punishment book to record punishments given to children. There was no need as I didn't punish any of my children. I wasn't aware of any of the other Sisters punishing children.

Schooling at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

42. The older children were educated at St Peter's Primary School in Aberdeen. Some of my group may have gone to secondary school in Aberdeen but I can't recall. I never had any complaints from the school about the children. I used to help with the homework. I can't recall ever seeing a school report.
43. I can't remember if the children in Aberdeen wore a school uniform or not. There were a few books in the house that the children had access to. There was also a nearby library but I don't remember any of the children using it.
44. My assistant Ruth or I used to read a story to the younger children before they went to bed at night. It was usually read to them in the group sitting room.

Healthcare at Nazareth House Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

45. I can only remember one occasion when a child in my group was unwell. If medication was required the Mother Superior had some medicines. I can't remember a doctor coming to the home. I only took one child to hospital when I was concerned about his health.
46. I recall two children who were twins came into the home. They joined my group. They were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They had come from another home. I remember that [REDACTED] was complaining of pains in his back. [REDACTED] was only eighteen months old. I was so concerned that I took him to hospital on a number of occasions but each time they said that there was nothing wrong. I insisted that they did an x-ray.

Eventually they found that he was suffering from tuberculosis. I remember that my whole group of children had to be examined.

Deaths occurring at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 – 1974

47. Whilst I was at Nazareth in Aberdeen I don't remember any of the children or staff passing away.

Religious instruction provided at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

48. The children were given religious instruction when they attended school. They were prepared for their confirmations or first holy communions by the school. The children did attend mass on a Sunday morning along with all the other residents at Nazareth House. There was a local priest who came in to say mass. The children did say prayers every morning after breakfast and I led them in those prayers.

Visitors at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 - 1974

49. Some of the children had visits from their families usually on a weekend. They would take the children out for the day.
50. I only recall one visit from the social workers when two of my group of children were being prepared for adoption. Apart from that I had no contact with social services.

Records and record keeping at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 – 1974

51. I was not aware of any records kept whilst I was there. I did keep a diary of visits by family members and the odd piece of information on the children but I no longer have these diaries. There were no official records on the children that I am aware of.

Inspections at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 – 1974

52. I have no recollection of any formal visits or inspections. The only dealings that I had with the social workers were when the [REDACTED] children were being adopted and the social worker wanted to speak to me. I also met the parents who were adopting. They were lovely children.

Review of care at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1971 – 1974

53. I never saw any abuse of children the whole time that I worked at Nazareth House in Aberdeen. I was dealing with young children who were all very happy when they were there. I did not have much day to day contact with the other Sisters who ran their own groups of children.

Specific allegations of abuse by Sisters at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

54. I have been advised that a number of children who stayed at Nazareth House, Aberdeen, have made allegations of abuse against members of the Order, Sisters of Nazareth. I am aware that there are specific allegations made that *if a child wet the bed, that child would be made to stand with the wet sheets over their head. They would have to do this in front of the other children.* I have no knowledge of this and

never saw it happen at Nazareth House in Aberdeen it is just not true and I don't believe that the Sisters would do that.

55. *Further, I understand that it is alleged that if a child wet the bed they were put into a cold bath and scrubbed with disinfectant.* I never saw this happening and it is a shock to me. I never heard about anything like that.
56. *On allegations that Sister FAF and Sister LTX showed abusive behaviour towards the children;* I never saw or was aware of any Sister hitting a child. I was not aware of any Sister including Sister LTX using a stick or ruler for hitting a child.
57. I never witnessed force feeding of children and I certainly never forced children to eat. It never happened.
58. With regards to allegations made that children were locked in cupboards. I never saw that and I never did it to any children.
59. I never worked at Nazareth House in Lasswade although on one occasion I did visit there. I do not know a Sister LDR or a LDU
60. Regarding whether I know a Sister LJI, I believe that I do but I knew her as Sister LJI. I also know a Sister LFB who I think I worked with in Aberdeen. However the name LBF means nothing to me.

Reporting of abuse at Nazareth House, Aberdeen

61. I never saw any abuse of children the whole time that I worked at Nazareth House in Aberdeen. Had I witnessed any abuse of children I would have gone straight to the Mother Superior and reported what was going on.

Leaving Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1974

62. It was decided that I should be moved to Nazareth House in Cardonald. The decision was made by the Mother Superior. At this time the social worker asked me if I would take some of my group of children who came from Glasgow with me to Cardonald. I ended up taking all four members of the [REDACTED] family [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] with me to Cardonald. It was so that they had more contact with their own family who lived in Glasgow and would be closer to them.

Nazareth House, Cardonald 1974 – 1978

63. I went to Cardonald straight from Aberdeen and was to remain at Cardonald for about three or four years. It was run along the same lines as Aberdeen except this time I had a larger group of children of about twelve. The children were a bit older and were attending the local school which was just down the road. They ranged in age from seven to twelve. I can remember I had family groups called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The group that I had was mainly girls.
64. The sleeping arrangements were the same as Aberdeen and I think that my group took up about five bedrooms. We were situated at the back of the house near a big field. I did have two younger boys called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were kept together because they were a family group.
65. I slept in a bedroom near to where my group slept so that I was available if I was needed through the night.

Routine and life at Nazareth House, Cardonald 1974 – 1977

66. The routine was more or less the same as being at Aberdeen. We got the children up in the morning; made sure they washed and had breakfast before they went off to

school. I can't remember saying prayers there. The school was just down the road and the children could walk there easily. They wore a school uniform for going to school. I can't remember if they had lunch at school or came back to the Nazareth House to eat. I remember how little homework the children had when they came back from school.

67. The children would come back from school and play in the grounds with each other before they had their evening meal.
68. Similarly to Aberdeen I had an assistant to help me manage the children. Her name was LGB but I can't remember much about her.

Staff at Nazareth House, Cardonald 1974 – 1977

69. There were quite a number of nuns working at Nazareth House. There were four spate groups of children. I remember a Sister LVO a Sister LJS who went to America and a Sister LHW who looked after the babies. I also had an assistant called LGB who helped out. There was a cleaner called Margaret Ferguson who was very good.

Bed wetting

70. I don't remember any of my group of children wetting the bed. I sometimes used to get up at night if I heard the children going to the toilet. I never saw any children being humiliated if they had wet the bed. It just didn't happen.

Schooling

71. The children were educated locally and I don't remember any of my group causing problems at school. I think that the children did get school reports but I am not sure. They seemed to get on with the other school children as again I had no complaints.

Food

72. The food was cooked by the Sisters in the kitchen and was very good. There was plenty of it for the children. The children really enjoyed the food and were very healthy. I never saw any children being force fed food.

Chores

73. I never saw any of the children performing chores and certainly no children in my group ever had to do chores.

Possessions

74. The children looked after their own possessions and were allowed to keep any presents or things that were given to them. At no time were these possessions taken off them by me or the other staff.

Visits and trips and holidays

75. At the weekends a lot of the children had visits from family members or would go home for the weekend if it was appropriate. There was a local priest called Father Gibbons who had a holiday home in Largs that we could also use.
76. I remember the local taxi drivers in Glasgow used to organise a day when they took the children out on a trip. The people in Glasgow were very good to the children at Nazareth House and would invite them to parties and out for meals.

Christmas and birthdays

77. The children used to get a card and a present on their birthdays. Christmas was always celebrated with a mass and then the children would get presents and there would be a Christmas meal. I don't remember the children going home as most of their parents were alcoholics.

Medical

78. I can't remember any doctors coming to Nazareth House and I didn't have to take any children to hospital. I didn't think that there was a need for any medical help in the time that I was there.

Discipline

79. There was no disciplinary book kept or at least I didn't have one and wasn't aware of one being kept.

Inspections at Nazareth House, Cardonald 1974 – 1977

80. I don't remember any inspections of Nazareth House, Cardonald by the authorities. I don't remember visits by the social services.

Specific allegations of abuse by Sisters at Nazareth House, Aberdeen 1974 – 1977

81. I have been advised that there is an allegation against Sister LHW [REDACTED]. The allegation is that she abused the children by hitting them. Sister LHW [REDACTED] also had her own group of children in a little detached house in the grounds. I never saw her hitting children and don't believe it. I know Sister LHW [REDACTED] and am very friendly with her. Her name is LHW [REDACTED].

82. I do not know the names Joseph Duffy and LFV who were allegedly members of staff. The names don't mean anything to me.

Leaving Nazareth House, Cardonald 1977

83. I left Nazareth House, Cardonald in 1977 or 1978. I left to attend a course for looking after the elderly in Cheltenham. I did not return to Cardonald.

Previous reporting or allegations

84. I have never had to provide a statement to any other person in connection with child abuse. I have never been accused of child abuse. I have been advised not to discuss these matters with anyone else as they are confidential.

Record keeping and background information on the children

85. There were no records kept on the children and I certainly didn't keep any. We did receive some information on the circumstances of the children and the reasons they were put into care. A lot of what I learned came from the children. I had written some personal notes at the time in the form of a diary that I was not prepared to share with other staff. I no longer have those diaries.

Closing thoughts

86. I am very surprised that this Inquiry has been going on for so long. The poor Sisters that served at the various Nazareth Houses are finding this very difficult.

87. 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.....

LRC

Dated... 16th April 2018.