

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Stephen Francis HALL

Support person present: No

1. My name is Stephen Francis Hall . My religious name is Brother Francis Hall. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background and professional qualifications

2. I am a member of the Christian Brothers and work within the Congregation of Christian Brothers. I first entered the Christian Brothers in 1969. That was in a Training House in Toddington, a village in the Cotswolds, Gloucestershire. The process is a number of years of training and trial until making the final commitment. I made my final commitment in 1977.
3. After I joined the Christian Brothers, I obtained a BA Ordinary degree from Liverpool and I did a one year post-graduate Teacher Training course in Manchester. I began as a teacher. I taught in Edinburgh and England for about ten years. I then moved to other roles, such as supporting teachers in schools, around spirituality, and running training programmes and workshops for school teachers. I then worked with a Youth Team in Liverpool. The team was trained to work with teenagers in their personal development. Later, I joined an international team of men and women doing training courses in spirituality around the world.
4. After that, I joined the Congregation Leadership Team, based in Rome. The Congregation Leadership Team oversees the whole Congregation. I carried out that

role for six years from 2008 until 2014. My current role is with the Transition Support Team setting up new communities in developing world countries. I am currently in Zambia.

The Congregation Leadership Team, Visitation and the Rome Archive

5. The Congregation Leadership Team has five members who are elected by a delegate chapter of Brothers from around the world. According to the Catholic Church Canon Law, there must be one team in charge for six years. I was a member, not a leader. The Team was based in Rome. We would visit the rest of the Brothers' communities scattered throughout the world, to monitor, encourage, supervise and support in whatever way.
6. One of the roles of the Team based in Rome is called Visitation. Every time a Brother goes off to a country, meets the Brothers in their community and watches what's happening, he would write a report. The report would be about how the Brothers were doing and any problems, particularly personnel problems. Those Visitation reports all came back to Rome and were filed there. Rome held the personnel files. School files would more likely be held in the country where the school was and not in Rome.
7. Another set of files which the Rome archive has, is which Brothers were located in which places. Every year, there would be lists of Brothers under the towns, cities or wherever they were.

Role within the Christian Brothers in June 2000

8. In June 2000, my role in the Brothers was as a member of the English Province. It is known as the English Province but is responsible for all the schools and activities of the Brothers within Scotland and England. We didn't have jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. We shared out the roles. We all had the general role of meeting every month and taking decisions, being the financial trustees for that part of the Christian Brothers

work, being members of Boards at schools and making pastoral visits to all the Brothers' communities. We had our own Child Protection Policy and a designated Child Protection role because cases were surfacing from the late 1990's, in England and Ireland particularly.

9. I had the particular Child Protection role. Within that role I had various duties. We had a support team, an advisory team of lay professionals in the area of child protection and one Brother who was a trained counsellor.

Handwritten Note

10. I have been shown a handwritten note by the Inquiry. I don't remember the actual writing of the note but, having seen it, I know that I wrote it. The note was written as part of my role overseeing Child Protection within the English Province Leadership Team.
11. The note is in two parts. Part Two has '*From Michael Colasuonno re Farrell 20.06.00*' written at the top of the page. I take that to be 20th June 2000 and that to be the date the note was written on. Michael Colasuonno was one of the Brothers who was on the Leadership Team in Rome at that time, in 2000. Part One of the note would have been written earlier, perhaps a week or two before. I don't have the date of Part One of the note.

Handwritten Note - Part One

12. I would have written Part One of the note following upon the allegation received over the phone from the Scottish Police against Reverend Farrell. I received the call from the Scottish Police and arranged the visit of the police officer. I was in Manchester at that point. The note was an internal memo for me, to make sure I recorded what the police required and what happened, in order to report at some point to the Advisory Team. The Advisory Team met every now and again as needed.

13. The police officer said during the phone call, and you can see this in Part One of the note, that the police wanted to look at the archives to see which pupils were under Farrell's teaching and/or supervision. He went on to say that this was a sample the police were looking at because of the allegation. He requested to take away photocopies of the relevant documents for the records. The police officer said if the case didn't go anywhere and was unfounded, it would end. He said if there was any substance in the allegation, the police may well get back to me for the original documents to use in a subsequent court case.
14. Part One of the note goes on to say, '*send address: (2) Date: - June 22nd (in afternoon)*'. This is my note, to myself, to send Detective Collins the address of our house. The visit was scheduled for 22nd June, in the afternoon.
15. When I received the call from the police concerning Reverend Farrell, I knew Reverend Farrell as Mark Farrell. At that point, he was no longer a Brother. I remembered Mark Farrell from the 1980's or 1990's. He was a member of the hundred or so Brothers within Great Britain. I would have met Mark Farrell at gatherings here and there. I knew him as an acquaintance but I did not know him personally or particularly well. I never lived in the same town as him nor was I in the place as him. Before the phone call, I had not heard of any allegations involving Mark Farrell.

Handwritten Note – Part Two

16. Ahead of Detective Collins coming to Manchester on 22nd June 2000, I contacted the Brothers' archives in Rome to see if there was anything about the Reverend Farrell. Michael Colasuonno went to the archives and searched through, looking for anything to do with Farrell. It was the personnel files, the Visitation reports, that Michael searched through when I phoned him. Michael was one of the Leadership Team based in Rome at the time.
17. Part Two of the note is what I was told over the phone by Michael Colasuonno, from Rome. He said Farrell was a young Brother, from Ireland originally, who was, as many were, sent to other countries outside Ireland. Farrell was sent to South Africa with few

qualifications. I don't know why that was. Farrell was in south Africa for ten years from 1967 to 1977. Farrell came home, which would have been to Ireland, for a visit because he said he was homesick. Farrell asked to be transferred back to Europe from South Africa. Brothers are free to do that. They can be sent somewhere and ask to be transferred somewhere else. Farrell ended up in England. I don't know why.

18. I don't know from where in the Rome archive that information came, except that the archive would have a record of where each Brother was each year. The archive may have recorded that between 1967 to 1977, Farrell was in South Africa. There may also have been lists of transfers, saying Brother X goes to England.
19. The note, Part Two, says '*Visitation report only reference is:-*'. Michael Colasuonno looked through all the Visitation reports for the period. The only reference he could find was a letter from Colman Curran, General Counsel, to Joe O'Neill, Provincial. Colman Curran was on the Leadership Team, back in the 1970's, I presume. The General Counsel is a member of the Leadership Team in Rome. The Provincial was the Brother in charge in South Africa at the time.
20. Michael Colasuonno told me the letter said, '*I hope they won't put him in a boarding school. I'm sure you know about that.*'
21. I have been shown a letter by the Inquiry. The letter is dated December 17th 1977. It is written by Colman Curran to Brother Clement. Brother Clement is Joe O'Neill. I had never seen the letter before I was shown it by the Inquiry. The wording in the letter is very close to what I was quoted over the phone. I'm surmising that the quote came from the letter.
22. Looking at the letter dated December 17th 1977, it looks like I misheard the last part of what Michael Colasuonno said. In the letter it says, '*I hope they will not, put him into a boarding school – I am sure you gave them some advice about placing him.*' I may well have misheard or miswrote what I heard. You could say the implication of it is the same either way. I suspect Michael had the letter when he spoke to me because my note says, '*from Colman Curran (to) Joe O'Neill in a letter...*'

23. At the bottom of the page, I have written, '*Pursue: 1. Sth African Archives and 2. Joe O'Neill (in Marino)*'. This is an internal memo to check with the South African Archive whether there was anything else about Reverend Farrell. Joe O'Neill was the South African Provincial of the time, in 1977 or so. The memo is a suggestion to follow up with Joe O'Neill. He might have remembered something more.
24. I was trying to follow up the information before the visit from the police. I can't remember whether I told that information to the police. As far as I know, the police officer came to our headquarters on the 22nd of June and this phone call happened on the 20th of June. As far as I know, it wasn't pursued with the South African people nor with Joe O'Neill. There are no further records. I can't remember pursuing it. I don't know why it wasn't done. I don't remember passing it on to anybody.

Visit by Police on 22nd June 2000

25. Detective Mike Collins came down to our headquarters in Manchester and stayed for an afternoon. I assisted him in going through all the records he wanted to look at and photocopying the records he wanted. I had got all the records out, so that we had them ready. They were spread all over the table. Detective Collins spent his time leafing through the files, looking for what he wanted. He made his own photocopies of whatever he wanted and put them in his briefcase. Then he left.
26. I can't remember any conversation about the allegations. I wasn't expecting that. The police couldn't, professionally, speak to me about any of the details. Detective Collins reiterated at the end that this was a sample the police were doing. If the allegation was unfounded the case would end but the police may well get back to me for the original documents to use in a subsequent court case. That was the last I heard or saw of Detective Collins. I had no further involvement in allegations involving Mark Farrell. I heard nothing back from the police.


Internal Reporting of Brother Farrell's Case

27. I cannot remember whether Brother Farrell's case came before the Child Protection Advisory Team. The team was operative during this period. That would be the main group that I would have reported the case to. I was reporting other cases to them on an ongoing basis. I have recently enquired of the archivist in Dublin, who now has all the files, as to whether there were any records. The archivist couldn't find any.
28. The only other Team I might have reported this to was the English Province Leadership Team. Periodically, where there were cases like the case involving Mark Farrell, I would report the outline of the case to that Team. We had meetings every month and minutes were taken. I'm not a party to those minutes any more. The minutes are in the Dublin archives.

St Ninian's School, Falkland, Fife

29. I had no involvement with St Ninian's School in relation to Mark Farrell's case. I was stationed in Edinburgh for two years in the early 1970's. The Brothers ran a boy's day school, Scotus Academy. I was on the staff. I visited St Ninian's twice a year with rugby teams. We never stayed overnight. We took our team to St Ninian's, played a game of rugby, had tea and came home. I had a picture of St Ninian's in my head. I knew all the Brothers who were stationed there over the years.
30. During my visits, I didn't encounter anything that gave rise to concerns about the way children were treated at St Ninian's. I used to hear stories of wet beds which was something that always struck me. It's not something of concern, it's maybe part of life with boarding schools and teenagers. I couldn't say there was anything visible or an atmosphere which was threatening or negative in any way. St Ninian's seemed a lively, busy place. I admired the men who stuck it out to be there. None of them were from the area, they had all come from Ireland or England. I thought, they are really doing a good job.

31. 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..... 22nd May 2019