

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PQN [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is PQN [REDACTED] though I am known as PQN [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1963. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Background

2. I am presently unemployed and have two grown up sons. My parents are both dead. My mum was 43 when I was born and dad worked but was fifteen years younger than mum. He was also a drinker. I have one sister and four brothers, two of whom are twins. I also had a twin who was stillborn. I live alone.
3. I was the youngest of a fairly large family. The size of the family and my dad's behaviour was quite a handful for my mother as there was little in the way of ages between me and all my siblings. We were a poor family though I know poverty impacted on everybody. It was tough, especially for my mother.
4. The place in question is Ladyfield West which was a children's unit attached to Crichton Royal Hospital. It was like a Victorian Asylum and became one of the largest mental hospitals in Dumfries and Galloway. It was a very large site. I stayed in a stone villa across from the hospital. I was placed there after a psychological examination. I was staying at home at the time.
5. The people who can give me the answers are no longer here. I got help from doctors. I was experiencing emotional difficulties from the age of seven. I was having withdrawn behaviour and I was missing school a lot and ended up being

referred to educational psychology and through a series of events to child psychiatry. It was decided that mainstream schooling wasn't appropriate for a child with my behaviour and procedures led to me going to Ladyfield. I was the only one of my siblings to go there.

6. I was taken to various paediatricians as a child and given EEG wires on the head to measure my brainwaves. I was aware I was maybe considered not right in the head.
7. The decision to send me there wasn't done through Children's Hearings but my mother had regular contact with the psychiatric Social Worker at the time, a woman called Elizabeth Glen, who looked at the dynamics of my family, especially in relation to me. I was sent to Hawkhead Hospital where I saw a Doctor Nelson over a period of months and the way it was put to me was that I was going on a holiday. I was driven down to Dumfries on this "holiday".
8. Being a child I didn't really have any concept of what it meant, you wouldn't until you were actually there and I was even told in the weeks prior to going that I could take my cat. It turned out that I couldn't which I found really upsetting. We didn't have a car so dad borrowed a pick-up to take us there. When they just left me there I thought it was an awful thing. I used to think my dad mustn't have loved me because he left me there but years later mum said that on the way back they had to stop because he was so upset at having left me.

Ladyfield West, Dumfries

9. Ladyfield West is in Dumfries. I went there when I was nine years old in 1972. It was continual at first but I eventually got parole which meant I could go down town with some pocket money. Later I started getting home visits every second weekend whereby they would put me on a train and my mother would pick me up in Glasgow. The place was run by Dumfries and Galloway Health Board I

think. It was for "maladjusted" children, children with behavioural problems and associated mental health problems.

10. Once I was in the house that first day I realised that my parents had gone. I was very small and the first thing I remember was being in the office naked and screaming my head off for my mother. I had flea bites and the staff just stood pondering as to what the marks were. I was exasperated and screamed "They're fucking flea bites". I was really frightened. Next thing I knew I was covered in calamine lotion and put in a hospital bed and that was my introduction to the place.
11. Ladyfield West was mixed gender, with about seventy per cent being boys, the oldest being fourteen or fifteen. There would be about four girls and twelve boys at any one time. I was probably the youngest.

Staff

12. There were three or four members of staff who alternated and there was always at least one member of staff on duty. The women who looked after me were enrolled nurses. They were lovely women. The more senior nursing staff were probably registered nurses. The nurses were "in local parentis" and were a motherly influence. There was none of that from the male staff but that was certainly how I saw the female nurses. Years later I read that that was their remit though to me it seemed to come natural to them.
13. All the staff were either enrolled or registered. Two that I recall were Mary Dalrymple and Betty Cameron and another I only remember as Morag. PQQ [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] with [REDACTED]. He was in his late forties at the time and I recall him being tall and bald. Jack Smith was [REDACTED] as him. A woman called Flo was the cook and the cleaner was called Alice. There was a school teacher called Mr Gunn

14. School was for three hours in the morning and taken in a hut in the grounds. Schoolwork had to be brought in for me because they didn't have anything that was at the level I had been doing at school. An occupational therapist also came in once a week.
15. The kids there seemed to be long-term and certainly the ones I knew were there for the duration of my time there.
16. The first night a nurse put her hand under my backside to see if I had wet the bed. I told her "I don't piss the fucking bed".

Routine

17. The routine was that you would be woken up and go to the toilet block where you would clean your teeth and face. You would shower at night. After washing you would go back upstairs and collect your bundle of clothes and go for breakfast. School was between nine and eleven thirty and then you would play for a while. Lunch would be brought in in big tins from the main hospital.
18. If you didn't have occupational therapy or a psychological session you just played. I used to hang about a big tree stump because I could get good reception for my radio. You had cinema on a Saturday morning and there might be swimming twice a week and the fact that I had parole meant I could also go to the town. Sometimes when out I realised I could run away but for some reason I never did.
19. When I was coming back to the hospital from home every second week it would take me half an hour on the train before I would stop crying. I had to walk from the train station to the hospital on my own. It was a very lonely journey and I can't believe they use to allow such a young child to make that journey themselves.

20. At night there would be a few toys for us to play with or we could watch the TV. Then it would be a shower and bed though, boys being boys we would carry on and have pillow fights and things like that. There were four or five beds in each dorm. The boys had hospital beds but the girls were nicer.
21. I didn't have a problem with the food. Getting three meals a day was a novelty for me. In fact, getting a shower was a novelty for me.
22. Initially there were no books but a nice old guy by the name of Jack Smith took me downstairs once and showed me a cupboard stuffed with books. I was delighted. That happened much later in my time there and came out of the blue.
23. There was a fibreglass rocket that you could use as a slide but there was nothing else outside though you could make your own fun climbing trees or playing in the bushes.
24. There was no organised sport other than the swimming.
25. You did get medical checks but I don't recall any dental care.
26. There was no religious education and I was always home for Christmas and birthdays.
27. There was a lot of shouting but I don't recall any physical chastisement. The biggest punishment was to be sent to bed and denied sweets.
28. A lot of the kids were on medication and several of them were chemically sedated and had their behaviours controlled with Largactil. I know this because I was a nosy wee bugger. I would read the bottles and the card index which showed who was getting what. I was never given any medication.

Abuse

29. What I remember in particular happened on a regular basis. I am convinced that what I saw was abuse of the girls in their dorm by the same person over a number of years. The reason I saw what I did was because I was a nosy child.
30. PQQ [REDACTED] was a revered man who was a disciplinarian who many found scary. I wasn't so much scared of him as wary. I was a thorn in his side and I used to deliberately piss him off. All the rest of the staff were informal but he always wore a white doctor's coat with his name badge and he was very proud of his status. I'm saying this as an adult but am trying to recall how I saw it as a child.
31. In a service tunnel underneath the house was a boot room. As you came out of it on the left were the showers then the kitchen. One thing PQQ [REDACTED] used to do was to shower but leave the window slightly open so as he could be seen by those passing. I am sure he did it deliberately and liked to be watched as he showered. The window was opaque but he always left it open by between six and twelve inches. I used to wonder why he was doing that and why nobody questioned him. This was a regular occurrence.
32. Some of the other kids commented on being able to see him in the shower and the girls would giggle when they saw him. I raised the subject once but got told to "shut it". I also remember telling Betty Cameron that I had "seen PQQ [REDACTED] s willie". We had various names for the staff and he was called "PQQ [REDACTED]".
33. One of the things PQQ [REDACTED] used to do was in the girl's dorm. Because the routine was boring you would get up to mischief at night having pillow fights or you would hide. Because I was an inquisitive child I established his routine and noticed that he had what I suppose you would call a modus operandi.

34. I became obvious that his M.O. was that he would be on a late shift with another staff member who he would send away probably on the pretence that it was quiet. They would have been in the main office which was the first thing you saw when you came into the building. Adjoining this was the girl's dorm and the boy's dorm was on the other side of the girl's dorm.
35. PQQ [REDACTED] used to lock the door between his office and the girl's dorm and also lock the door between the girl's and boy's dorm. Thereafter he would cavort with the four girls. He had his clothes on but his behaviour was what I would call salacious, abusive and treating these girls in a way that they shouldn't have been treated. One of the girls was from Edinburgh called [REDACTED] who was fifteen and her face was horrendously burned after an accident. She had no nose, no mouth and no ears. She was mature looking for her age and seemed to be his favourite and he would spend a lot of time lying on top of her.
36. Another of the girls was called [REDACTED] but I can't remember the names of the other two girls. PQQ [REDACTED] would be on one of the beds and encourage the girls to be on the same bed with him. They would be in their nighties and he would be tickling them and touching them all over. It was very sexually inappropriate. I saw him putting his hands up their nighties. He would be on his back and the girls would be giggling and jumping on top of him. They didn't appear to be frightened by him.
37. This was a regular occurrence that I saw over a period of about eighteen months. It would always happen at about 8 pm or 9 pm and would happen after he had sent the other staff member away and before the night staff came on duty at 10 pm. I was able to see it because, as I said, I was a nosy child and watched it through the keyhole in the door between the girl's and boy's dorm. Other boys heard it as well but we were told to stay in our beds.
38. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would tell us that he had tickled them and that he was a good laugh. None of the girls saw it as salacious, they saw it as fun and I don't recall any of them being upset about it. However, it was as if he had two separate

personalities because during the day PGO was always very soberly focused and certainly wasn't tactile.

39. He once chastised me and I said to him "I know what you do with the girls". He got very angry and about a day later I got called in to the office and accused of stealing a lot of files and dumping them in a field. It wasn't me who did that but I got the blame and put to bed for a week. I wasn't allowed to go to school and my mother used to send packages with chocolate and comics and stuff and I wasn't allowed to touch any of it for a week. I am sure this happened because of what I had said to PGO. He was probably middle to late forties.
40. I used to go swimming in the main hospital which had a pool. One time I was taken there by two student nurses. On the way there they pushed me into a bush, punched and kicked me and called me a poof and said that if I said anything to anybody it would happen again. This happened right out of the blue. I was about ten years old and I would say they were about nineteen.
41. I had never met them before and I assume they were on some sort of placement at Ladyfield. I went swimming after it happened but was bewildered by what had happened. I didn't tell anybody about it except maybe my mother. It was a boy and a girl who did it. I was sore but otherwise uninjured.
42. At Ladyfield West, if I didn't go home, we would be taken to the cinema but would be mocked by the other children maybe because unlike them we didn't have to wait in the queue.
43. One boy at Ladyfield West, he was Caribbean, had a penchant for stabbing rabbits with his affro comb. I had never seen violence like that.
44. There were three houses these being Ladyfield West, Ladyfield East and Hannahfield. Ladyfield East had the most difficult and extremely violent kids therein. We were sent there for a while and the violence was off the scale. These were kids that had to be managed to a great degree. We had routines

and rules in Ladyfield West but in Ladyfield East it was punitive. I remember being scared there and fortunately I was only there for a matter of weeks.

45. Mr Gunn the schoolteacher encouraged me to start up a wee magazine which I called [REDACTED]. We would put wee pictures in it and that was as stimulating as it got.
46. I can't say that I have any happy memories of Ladyfield. I was always happier leaving it and I always dreaded going back. Listening to my radio was the total stimulation I got.
47. John Powell's interrogations were what I dreaded most. He was later described as being a Maverick in the field of child psychiatry and he was certainly flamboyant. He died about ten years ago. A staff member, [REDACTED], wrote a book called [REDACTED]. It wasn't really a book but one hundred pages describing how the hospital helped children. I know that it did have a lot of successes but not for me. It credits part of its excellence to PQQ [REDACTED]. Nonsense, he fiddled with little girls.
48. Because the building is listed and part of the Hannahfield estate it is a historically important building. It has its own website but a lot of people use the website to say how bad their time there was though that's not the purpose of the site. The hospital had been in operation since the fifties and one woman on the website tells how she had an eating disorder that they sorted out for her and that she went on to go to university. That is marvellous for her but it wasn't for me or others.
49. Ladyfield was closed in the mid-nineties but had been considered a centre of excellence for child psychiatric needs.

Visitors

50. My mother would come and visit me occasionally. I think she enjoyed it because it got her away from the humdrum of life. She came maybe quarterly and paid for it with a travel warrant. It was always very upsetting when she had to go and the image of her walking away each time is something that has endured to this day. That image was probably more upsetting than anything else because she was walking away from the place and not taking me with her. My dad never visited me nor did my brothers or sister. I don't recall any of the other kids having visitors.

51. I don't recall if any inspectors ever came to Ladyfield. I did see unknown faces but wouldn't know who they were.

Bedwetting

52. I never wet the bed but other kids did. We had rubber sheets. The night nurse was usually the same person. She would go along the beds every morning checking if anybody had wet their bed. If they had then they would be got up and changed and the sheets would also be changed. The kids were never chastised for wetting the bed.

Outings

53. We got taken to both Parkhead and Ibrox and we met Sandy Jardine of Rangers but I hated football and all it did was remind me how close I was to home when we visited Ibrox.

54. One Friday I wasn't allowed home as I had picked up a bug. Betty and another nurse took me out for lunch because they felt sorry for me.

Leaving Ladyfield West

55. When I left Ladyfield West and went back to school nothing was put in place to help me. I found it difficult to cope. I spoke differently from the other kids. I recognised some of the kids in the school from having been to the same primary school as them. Some knew I had been somewhere different from them for the previous few years and knew it had something to do with the Mental Health Act and teased me.

56. I quickly found my own friends and integrated to a healthy degree but initially it was a strange transition and there was certainly nothing put in place and I struggled with the work. English was okay but Maths was difficult for me. I struggled with the curriculum.

57. Nothing had changed at home. It was still as fraught as ever and my brothers were obviously older. I shared a bed with my brother who was a year older than me and I was always close to him. He was at the same school as me which was comforting to me and he was a bit of a bruiser and was always looking out for me. Certain people would know he was my brother and would leave me alone.

58. When I joined the school my sister had already left and my twin older brothers were in the process of leaving and were going into the world of work.

59. I left home at nineteen and got a flat but I couldn't afford it and moved back into the family home. I was married at 21.

Impact

60. It impacted on my life immensely. I went on to become a psychiatric nurse but left when I had a nervous breakdown. I felt that I didn't get the support you would have expected to get. I also worked in juvenile justice and was a children's panel member. Having been in Ladyfield West didn't impact on my

abilities to do things but it did impact on my abilities to maintain continuity in my life, especially in jobs. I just think that what prejudices me is that in later life being involved in a system that had changed and I don't think that at that time children's rights were relevant or respected and in my later working life I saw how things had changed for the better.

61. In those days you were hidden away. When I look back on it I see how it affected me especially with my siblings. Because we were so close together in ages they went to secondary school together which I didn't. I missed out on all the familial bonding and socialising. We're not a close family. I was close to my immediate older brother but he died a few years ago. My oldest brother died [REDACTED] ago.

62. My mother was intelligent and forceful. I used to have sessions with a psychiatrist called John Powell. For some reason he took a personal interest in me and the sessions were confrontational and I was scared of him. Betty Cameron would tell me not to talk to him and I took that literally. One day when I was in seeing him I took the key out of the door and threw it out the sky window and said to him "Now we're both locked in and now you know what it's like".

63. He was setting up an adolescence psychiatry unit and wanted me to go into this special unit but my mother, thank God, said "no, enough is enough. I want him to go into mainstream and be with his peers". I think I would have been institutionalised if I had gone into that special unit. I am to blame for many bad choices I made in my life but being in the system at that age really fucked up my life. Intrinsically, being there did a hell of a lot more harm to me than it did good. I may not have been abused by an individual as such but I was certainly abused by the system.

64. I think the biggest impact was the overwhelming sense of anxiety created by separation from my parents, my home and everything I was used to and especially my first day introduction to it. I still have nightmares about that and I still see that first day in the office as if in a film. I have always struggled with

anxiety and depression and haven't been out on my own in the last three years. I will only go out with somebody I trust.

65. I've not been able to work for a long time. I was medically retired from the Civil Service and prior to that I was medically retired from Scotrail. Twenty odd years ago I gave up nursing because I was working in an acute receiving unit and was probably more ill than some of the patients. I didn't go to university until I was 29 when I studied nursing. Prior to that I had trained in catering and also worked in industry. I concentrated on bettering myself and totally embraced university. I was an A student but I basically just finished my nursing training when I had to give it up. Maybe I just took on too much and burnt myself out.

66. After you finished your finals the guidelines were that you had to do several hours. I was incredibly depressed. I found it hard to do the day to day things and couldn't even lift my head off the pillow. I turned day into night and was self-medicating.

67. I left the Civil Service because of depression. Wherever I applied for work I never hid my medical history or depression. I worked for Job Centre Plus who helped people on long term unemployment get back into work. I had been in that position myself and told my manager I was finding it hard to cope with my work because of my background. I ended up on long-term sick and they paid me off calling it medical retirement.

68. I also worked for Scotrail which I enjoyed. It was a good job with good money and I enjoyed working with the people there. But depression set in again. They tried to find me other work but I was too depressed to care. I could have taken them to the cleaners but I was too far gone to care. I look back now and wish I had fought more for my job, fought for my right to earn money.

69. The Civil Service was my last job and that was ten years ago. I am now on long term health benefits and am stuck with the all the hoops you have to go through just to maintain your status quo.

70. Having been in Ladyfield West left me as a very needy person and I was limited in my capacity to deal with my own stuff. My depression has always been linked to that time in my life. It's something I've always tried to understand and rationalize. My GP put it quite well when she says I was a poor thing and that nowadays the whole family would have been involved and it was as if the system blame the child then and that I shouldn't blame myself.
71. It maybe made me a better parent. I have two sons and am divorced. I am gay which was a very hard thing to come to grips with but I've been incredibly fortunate. My ex is remarried but still one of my best friends and my relationship with my sons hasn't been affected at all and my sons are amazing young men.
72. It's a combination of having felt abandoned and the whole environment and regime. If the care was there then it was perfunctory. I don't think it helped or improved my health. It destroyed my potential and left me not being able to really function. I've lost a lot in my life through not being able to enjoy things and not being able to take advantage of the simple things in life.
73. I worked on the trains yet now I won't even travel on them if I am on my own.
74. The sessions with Dr John Powell left me thinking "What have I done?" I always felt I was being punished for something. I've never got an answer as to why I was placed there. What was the clinical diagnosis that got me put there? I tried to find out through Freedom of Information but all I got from my psychologist was an A4 piece of paper about my discharge which told me nothing. I wasn't even allowed to keep it and had to read it while in the room. Apparently I can find out nothing about my records perhaps because it would be detrimental to my health.
75. I would like to forensically know why it happened and why I was put where I was. I'll never understand the interaction between me and the psychiatrists and don't know what sort of help they were supposed to be to me. If anything they

never understand why I felt I was being accused of something. Nowadays you wouldn't do it; you wouldn't send your child eighty miles from his family.

76. I was a wee boy but every second Monday I would be having a tearful farewell leaving my mother again. It was the system that caused that. Regardless of my behaviour I don't see how that was supposed to help. I think they took me out of the house because of the dynamics there but when I returned every second week the dynamics were just the same. Nothing had changed. My father was still drunk and still hitting my mother. It was a pointless exercise that helped nobody.

77. I had input from an Irish psychologist called Dr Perry Lydon. I enjoyed his company and he used to take me out on walks instead of being in an office. I once asked him "If you were mental, would you know?" because I was in a mental hospital so must have been mental but I didn't feel mental. He basically reassured me that I wasn't mental which meant a lot to me.

78. Things have moved on but there's still a lot wrong and a lot of ignorance about mental health, there's still a lot of "wee PQN [REDACTED]" out there that have been left with a lot of debris that was outwith their control.

79. I remember reading on Ladyfield. The writer was talking about the same age and time that I had been there. He was there because he had been [REDACTED] and left with a [REDACTED] injury that obviously affected his behaviour. When I read his book I realised his experiences there matched my own. He went on to be a recidivist criminal and I think it was the system that did that to him. I was able to have the mile stones in life, to a degree, but that kid didn't.

80. I feel cheated and frustrated by the lack of opportunity to learn about my time there. I have been deeply short changed by the experience.

81. It has left a dreadful void as to what I perceive as reality. The questions I have now are probably the same ones I had as a child but now I can articulate them better. There were things then that were hard and still are and it's difficult to reconcile.
82. I read about this Inquiry. I was pleased to see that part of the Inquiry takes in these avenues. Also I wanted to report the abuse I had seen, and be able to put over other affects that can occur because of simply being placed in that system. I'm not saying the abuse isn't important, of course it is but while I'm not sure that what I saw traumatised me the other things have and are pertinent. They have shaped who I am and how I have coped with things in life and how I react to certain things.
83. I think the impact that my experiences have had on my later relationships goes hand in hand with my anxiety and depression. It wasn't however responsible for the breakdown of my marriage, that was because I had come to terms with my sexuality and that probably worked out for the best.
84. I have an understanding partner who I have been with for seven years but he has to be accommodating with my state of mind sometimes.
85. My biggest regret is that I can't do the things I want to do. I can't go out and that is very debilitating. I have an eighteen month old grandson who I can't take out the way I would want to. I can't blame everything on the hospital but it has affected me and I think it did the exact opposite of what it was intended to do in the first place, though I don't know what that was.
86. I think about my time there three or four times a week, generally at night. I don't focus on it but I can be watching or reading something and it immediately comes to mind.
87. I have visited Ladyfield West as an adult. It's now in ruins. I've been there three times to sort of face up to my demons I suppose but I wouldn't now feel the

need to go back. While I was in care Betty Cameron introduced me to her family which was nice and I kept in touch with her occasionally for a few years after I left.. If it wasn't for her, Morag and Mary the whole experience of Ladyfield would have been so cold. I couldn't relate to any of the other kids there and I did feel really lonely in there. I felt there was nobody there who I could have considered my peer.

88. To come out of an environment like that into a very unforgiving environment like a big secondary school. Well, I suppose that was just the way it was.

89. I've been on anti-depressants. They've helped me in the past but not so much now. When I worked for Scotrail for three years I enjoyed a sense of normality which I don't have now.

90. I've had a few sessions over the years with various psychologists. They would get me to look at negative feelings and try to get good out of it. Now I just get support from friends and family and anti-depressants. My doctor has retired and I don't bother going to see another one. I just feel that if I have to go, they look at my records and just see depression and that's it.

91. What might help is to get access to my records to perhaps understand what was going on. I think I was in a worse position when I came out than I was when I went in.

92. People in those days took medical advice as Gospel. You simply didn't challenge it. I did speak to my mother to a certain extent and she was quite candid. I blamed my dad but found out years later that he had had to stop off on the way back from dropping me off on the first day because he was so upset. That was not the father I recall.

93. I am not close to my brothers and sister. I don't talk to them about my time in Ladyfield because they just don't get it. They weren't there.

94. The Mental Health Service have short-changed me over the years. I've never been interested in compensation but I want to find out what happened to me.

Records

95. I have not been able to access my records. I don't know if it's because they don't exist or if I am not getting them because it would be detrimental to my health.

96. There have to be records that exist to explain the reason for my admission to Ladyfield and the diagnosis that led to it. I've spoken to my mum in part about it but I am none the wiser. Most of my peers also grew up in a poor area or grew up in a haphazard household so it couldn't have been because of that. It's never been explained to me.

Disclosure

97. My wife was the first person I spoke to and I told her everything. I also told both my sons and my partner. I have never spoken to anybody official about it or the police.

Lessons for the Inquiry

98. Things have moved on, particularly in child care. You have to have a more holistic approach. One size doesn't fit all and each child has to be looked at individually.

99. I don't know how child psychology works today but I hope it has moved on. I hope they don't drug children and certainly hope they don't abuse them. The

seventies were rife with it and while I'm sure it still goes on a lot of lessons can be learned.

100. Then they didn't give a shit about the effects on a child being ripped away from their family. The premis for taking me away may have been good but did it really make sense to send me back every two weeks to a situation that hadn't changed?

101. 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... PQN

Dated... 20. APRIL 2017.