

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KYH

Support person present: No

1. My name is KYH. My date of birth is 1975. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was brought up in the Penrith area of Cumbria. I stayed with my mother, father and my older brother. When was born he was starved of oxygen and this led to difficulties in life and with my father. He had a stammer and a strange way of walking, along with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder tendencies. These issues would get to my dad and he would lash out and hit. My mother and I would try to intervene but my father would then hit us. As a child I would blame my brother saying if he did not have those problems we would not get hit. Now, being older, and a mother I see things differently. No matter how much my own children may misbehave I know I would not treat them in the same way my father treated us.
3. When I was about eight years old and my brother was eleven, he was placed into care at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East), Dumfries. It was never explained to me why he had disappeared. At the time he was placed in care my life was a bit better, as, when was home, would take some of his temper out on me and hit me. That stopped when he was in Ladyfield and my life at home improved. He stayed in care there for about fourteen months. We would go there for family visits and during group sessions it was discussed how we could make family life better.
4. Near the time when was due to come home I began to have issues with eating and suffered from Anorexia. This condition worsened when was back home and I was eventually placed in care at Infirmary. While I was resident there I

was force fed as part of their treatment to make me better. I spent four months in that hospital before I returned to the family home. I was then home for about five weeks but still struggling with eating and was transferred to Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) . I then spent about eight months in care at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East). My mother and father made me feel that both [REDACTED] and I had brought shame to the family by needing to go into care for our different mental health issues.

5. Because of his illness [REDACTED] has never worked. He stays with my parents and was diagnosed with schizophrenia when he was twenty.

Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) , Dumfries

6. Ladyfield Children's Hospital was run by the National Health and I was sent to the East wing. When I was sent there I was not given any information as to how long I would spend with them, it was specific to whether I made improvements in their opinion.
7. At Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) I had a nurse named Tricia who was the main person looking after my care. There was also a psychiatrist called Edith. [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] I think was a man named [REDACTED] KCN [REDACTED]. There was also a type of school within the hospital and there were two teachers there. There were a few other nurses who came in now and again during my treatment, I can't recall all the names.
8. Initially when I arrived at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) I was in a room on my own because I needed bed rest. At that time I was not allowed to talk to any of the other residents. I was then placed into a room which I shared with two other girls. I am still friends on Facebook with one of those girls. There were boys in the hospital as well and they had their separate rooms. I think there were a maximum of twelve within the hospital. There was a mix of boys and girls, probably aged between eleven and eighteen, mainly high school children. There was another building as part of Ladyfield Children's Hospital named Ladyfield West and that housed younger children.
9. Although I had my own bed space, there was nowhere for you to secure any of your own things. When I first arrived I was not allowed anything of my own, but as I made

improvements I was slowly allowed to bring things in. To begin with and being on bed rest I was given regular bed baths to prevent bed sores.

10. During my time in hospitals I have experienced different methods of treatment for Anorexia. In [REDACTED] Infirmary I was force fed and this continued until I would eat on my own accord. At Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) it was similar to a contract. You were restricted to begin with, but when you made improvements on your own, then you were given more privileges. If you gained so much weight you were allowed phone calls, gain more weight and you were allowed books and when you gained even more weight you were allowed to get dressed out of your nightwear. There was still a threat of being sent to the Infirmary to be force fed if you did not eat. It happened to one girl, I am not sure of her name, while I was there, but not to me.

Routine at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) , Dumfries

11. When I first arrived I was given a booklet giving me a guide as to what was expected of me during my stay there. I have this at home if it is required. There was a weekly schedule showing routines of when someone would be expected to take part in cooking.
12. Another was Tuesday group where we would be expected to discuss issues together. It was during one of those session that one of the girls in the group disclosed that she had been sexually abused by her father. Staff were always looking for the one thing that may have been a reason for each of us being admitted to the hospital. They took that to be her reason for being there. I remember at the time most of us disbelieving her and that she had found an excuse for her being treated at the hospital. Now, later in life, I think she was telling the truth. That girl died when she was only twenty five. One of the staff also came out with a quote that they had just as bad a life as the rest of us but just dealt with it better than we did. That was so inappropriate.
13. Another day of the week we would be allowed to go to the swimming pool, which was part of the Crichton Royal Hospital.

14. Some of the staff knew my brother from his time in care with them. They would also compare me to him saying that I wasn't starved of oxygen and saw no reason for me to be having issues. I remember attending when [REDACTED] was in the hospital and we were there for the family sessions, one of staff made comments that I was really fat. That stayed with me for a long time. They were so insensitive in the way they dealt with some of our illnesses. They were much more inclined to pin a biological cause or family dynamics as the reasons for our having the mental issues.
15. At night when we were sent to bed there was no strict supervision but we could not go to each other's rooms for chat, we had to stay in our allocated rooms.
16. While I stayed at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) there was a lot of camaraderie among the residents. There was some tension between the kids and the staff, but that would be normal between young people and people in authority.

Mealtimes/Food

17. I was only there for about a week before I began to eat the food. The food would involve a lot of Complan, which was a supplement to build you up. There was what would be considered to be normal food available as well. The food in my case was sufficient for my needs at that time. Later as I was eating on my own and without the Complan, I lost some weight. This resulted in a loss of some of my privileges, but I had not stopped eating, it was just the change in the food regime.

Washing/bathing

18. When I first arrived at the hospital, washing and bathing was bed baths. They also applied some sort of oil to prevent any sores. Bathing later was supervised by female staff. They were just checking to make sure that I was not getting rid of food. When they did run a bath it was often too hot. I tried to complain and they thought I was just being fussy. They did not cool it in any way. They also stood over you to make sure that you washed your genitals properly. They even mentioned in the handover reports, read out in front of everybody, that one day I had not done this to their satisfaction. I

found it really odd about their fascination of this practice and the need for it to be included in my notes. The baths were separated by cubicles and not open planned.

Leisure time

19. Leisure time would involve lots of television. When we had been there for some time and built sufficient privileges we were allowed to go into town for shopping. Sometimes SNR [REDACTED] KCN [REDACTED] would bring in his guitar and we would have a sing along. The occupational therapy was quite nice. They always seemed to be calming. Even when the medication was being distributed some of the staff would sing the theme song from record breakers, but change the wording to medication.

Trips and holidays

20. I remember about Christmas time we were taken up to Glasgow to see a pantomime. Another time, shortly before I left, we were taken to Forest of Ae for a week of residential care there. Although I was allowed to go to the residence there I was not allowed out on the walks as I had lost some weight. During my day there I was involved in a lot of cooking.

School

21. There was a schooling area in an annexe attached to the hospital. All of us within the unit went to the school. I don't think we were separated in any way, I think we were all there together. It wasn't a strict curriculum that you would expect at a High School.

Birthdays and Christmas

22. At Christmas we did secret Santa among the kids. One of the staff took us out Carol singing to the local area. Sometimes the residents would give as some money. It was supposed to be for Ladyfield East but we sometimes kept the money for ourselves and bought some treats.

23. I wasn't there during my own birthday but I think the staff did make an effort when it was one of the residents birthday. Cooking was allowed by the kids so we could make a cake.

Family contact

24. I was able to see my family as they were expected to come to the hospital for group family sessions with the psychiatrist. Every other weekend, when I built up privileges, I was allowed home to stay with my family.
25. I did have discussions at one stage with a male member of staff. After our talk he came to the conclusion that a lot of the issues that both [REDACTED] and I suffered from related to my parents relationship. For a little while they were attending the hospital for discussions with the staff without with me being present. That did not last long.
26. There was a pay phone at the hospital that we were permitted to use if we wanted to telephone our family. But those calls and any letter writing was again dependant on you having sufficient privileges.

Running away

27. Some of the kids in the hospital often considered trying to leave and get a train back to their family homes. Anyone who was identified by staff as likely to abscond would be made to wear their nightwear during the day. Occasionally I thought of running away but realised it was so far away it was pointless trying to leave. By wearing their nightwear it was a loss of dignity. Although this was seen as a means of stopping people running away, this was something that was overused by staff, as they would use this as a loss of privilege for things staff deemed to be wrong.

Abuse at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East), Dumfries

28. One of things that happened was a staff handover. The difference between other hospitals and Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) was that we had to sit and listen to

what was being said about each of us. This would happen in the mornings and again in the evenings at the change of shifts. One of the times they were discussing my day the staff member, I can't remember their name, stated I spent a lot of time staring at the curtains, but I was just sitting quietly having my own thoughts.

29. We were also made aware that one staff member was making comments about another resident, [REDACTED], who had not washed properly. These were quite humiliating comments being discussed in front of us. Any comments being made you were not permitted to state it was wrong and be able to give your side of their observations. Perhaps if they discussed their thoughts with you beforehand and sought your side, they may have entered something into your records which was more accurate. We would be in each other's rooms and discuss some of the comments and it built up a bit of resentment among the residents.
30. Some of the things that prompted me to come to the Inquiry was around the November when I was there. At that time I was now allowed to be out of bed and along with the other kids I would sit and watch television. There were often nights when there were boys, not residents at the hospital, who were allowed to sit with us in the television room. They were a bit older and from the local area. I found this really disturbing that outsiders were allowed to sit in a psychiatric unit with patients, and also why would they want to.
31. There was a girl called [REDACTED] in our unit who was about fourteen. She told me that the boys were there and they would go and have sex with her and another girl [REDACTED] in the small wooded area just outside our building. At first I did not believe her. Later she told me that one of the boys fancied me. The situation I was in at that time, I was glad to have someone give me attention, especially from someone out with the care environment. I agreed and one evening we spent some time together. The staff were present in the television room and were aware that those outsiders were going away for a time with the girls. There was also a quiet room where we went with the boys and again the staff were aware of this. I did not see any of the staff making attempts to prevent the boys coming in and no one stopped the boys going away with the girls. It

was strange that certain restrictions were placed on us whilst there were no restrictions about those boys coming in and going out with girls there.

32. At that stage I could not understand why those boys would come into our unit to go out with girls from there. As an adult I can see that we were all in a vulnerable state and easily taken advantage of.
33. Although I had passed through puberty at an earlier stage I was not interested in boys in that way. I did go out with this boy. I did not know his proper name, only that he was called "██████". All the boys had nicknames. I did go to the woods and I heard ██████ and ██████ were having sex with other boys. "██████" did try to take my clothes off and tried to push me. I ran away back into the unit as this was not something I wanted. I may have been seeking affection but not to that extent. The next day his older brother came to the home and was shouting and ranting about me leading "██████" on. One of the staff responded by saying I should not lead boys on. "██████" never came back to the hospital while I was there.
34. It was shortly after the "██████" incidents that the school split us into groups of girls and a separate groups of boys. It was almost as though the staff were reacting to what was going on. The boys told us they were encouraged by the staff to bring in pornographic magazines. They would have their discussions in their class and afterwards they would show us the content of the magazines. It seemed a totally inappropriate method of dealing with sex education. The lessons for the girls was centred around contraception. It gave the impression that staff were teaching us that males were the sexual beings. I tried not to allow what happened to affect me and the treatment I was receiving at the hospital.

Leaving Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East), Dumfries

35. I think my time was coming to an end as I had managed to reach a target weight that the staff deemed to be healthy. There were no discussions prior to me being released about what would happen if I reached a target weight.

36. I did feel that they never dealt with the underlying cause for my Anorexia, just that they managed to persuade me to eat more regularly and that was sufficient for me to go home. On one hand they did not want me to talk about food and weight in case that would be something I would concentrate on and nothing else, but on the other hand getting me to eat regularly and gain some weight was their reason for sending me home. No one ever dealt with the cause.
37. When I had gained sufficient weight and was deemed to be more stable, I was sent to the local school which was St Joseph's, in Dumfries. This was a Catholic School and I wasn't even a Catholic. I would not tell anyone at the school where I was going back to after school. It was the hospital's way of trying to integrate me back for when I would be going home.
38. When I went home from Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East) after my eight months there, my father was quite angry a lot of the time. I think he believed that with my brother and I had brought shame to the family because we'd been in care there. My father would have more temper tantrums when we were in our teenage years. I did lose some weight and the illness was beginning to take hold on me again. I did not have to be re-admitted but my father did occasionally send me to stay with other family members. Other times he would take me to my room and make me pack a bag and threaten that he was going to put me in care.

Life after being in care

39. There were still some difficulties with my father later in life. I can remember him calling at the work place of my partner and telling him that I had mental health issues.
40. I did quite well at school, rather than spending time socialising with friends I spent my time studying. I managed to get into Oxford where I studied French and German. The first year I was there I struggled with Bulimia but managed to get through. In the second year I stopped eating and dropped out for a year. I then admitted myself on a voluntary basis to the Warneford Psychiatric Hospital. They helped me get the Anorexia under control again.

41. I have a Doctorate in languages and work with the Oxford University Press. I make decisions around what should be published and used in teaching foreign languages to students in High Schools and further education.
42. I live with my partner and have my three children aged four, ten and twelve. I started drinking at quite a young age and I was using this to replace my issues with eating. This took over a large part of my life. Having my children has helped me get it under control as I don't want to see me struggling with alcohol. Through them I get a lot of encouragement not to go back to drinking. I stopped for short periods but I only stopped properly about two and a half years ago.
43. I have a necklace engraved to show the date I stopped, 25th November 2017. There is even an app available on the phone I use where you can check in each day to say that you have not had a drink and you can press "like" when someone else checks in. That gives people encouragement with their addiction.

Impact

44. It is difficult to say that there has been specific impact on my life as a result of my time at Ladyfield Children's Hospital (East). I think there has been a large impact from the force feeding whilst in [REDACTED] Infirmary and living with my father. There was impact from my illness and dealing with the Anorexia. When you are given that label as a child it stays with you throughout your life and affects how people interact with you.

Lessons to be Learned

45. I think staff dealing with children with mental health issues need to take care about labelling someone at an early age as this can follow them throughout the rest of their lives. I think there should be better safeguarding by staff especially when they are looking after young girls. They need to understand whether they are in danger of being sexually exploited. They need to challenge people who want to hang around children

in care or hospital and question their motives for being friendly with them. Staff need to speak more with the children and when the children do speak with you, believe what they are telling you.

Other information

46. I started seeing a therapist last year to talk about the issues with my family. This is an ongoing thing in my life. With my parents in their seventies I'm having to think about how I will look after my brother. Seeing the therapist is so expensive.
47. I think there needs to be clear and concise guidelines in place so children in their care know where they stand. I would like to see that blame be taken away when they are labelled with disabilities or illnesses as a young child.
48. 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..... KYH

Dated..... 01 October 2020