

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister Rosemary KEAN

1. My name is Rosemary Kean, I am a Sister of the Good Shepherd Order. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1945. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. I have previously given evidence to the Inquiry on 15th June 2017 in relation to the Good Shepherd Order.

Background/Qualifications

2. I have had various roles during my career, but I can't remember exact dates. I undertook studies in Child Care around 1965 and later studied Social Work Administration and Management at Glasgow University. At a later stage I did further training in human development, counselling, addiction counselling and treatment programmes and directed a Primary Treatment Centre for many years.
3. After my initial course in childcare, I was employed as a residential care worker. During child-care studies I went on a placement to Ladymary school in Edinburgh for two or three months. I was working with the children and the staff team during that time. It was just beginning to develop into a school, I believe it had been a children's home before becoming a school. My understanding is that when it was a home they realised that the children couldn't cope with mainstream school and so it was then that Sister Therese Welch, who was in charge and who was a teacher, decided that these children needed more and so it developed into a residential school for maladjusted children.
4. Following my studies and some work with children in residential care I then undertook International Voluntary Service with the National Council for Child Welfare in Sri Lanka. They asked for someone to help set up care establishments as there were

many children abandoned in the country suffering from malnutrition, tuberculosis, those that were destitute and dying, or those with physical or mental disabilities. I was instrumental in setting up six such establishments, developing services and training the staff. I spent about two years doing this work.

5. On my return I was offered a role of unit leader in Ladymary school.

Ladymary School, Woodhall Road, Colinton, Edinburgh

6. Although I am a Sister now, when I worked at Ladymary school I was a lay person.
7. The school belonged to the Good Shepherd religious order, but I think was governed by the education department.
8. Ladymary School was for children with special needs, with average or below average intelligence. The children were emotionally very disturbed. They acted out behaviourally and very often they were violent and out of their own control. I think the children's behaviour often came from fear and emotional insecurity.
9. Children were placed there by Local Authority social services and/or education. They had been through psychiatric services before being referred to us. Most had been in care previously, though some came directly from their own homes. If they had come from home, then they came to us because they were excluded from school or were very problematic in their families. Some of the children, even though they were young, may have committed serious offences.
10. When the children came to us, they had previously been reviewed by a selection panel from the school. The selection panel included the consultant psychiatrist Doctor Rodgers who was from Edinburgh Sick Children's Hospital, the headmistress, the school social worker Mrs Mitchell, known as Mitch and an educational psychologist. I believe the lead in the panel was the psychiatrist and as such, the results from those assessments would have remained with the Sick Children's Hospital.

11. Once the panel decided they were accepting the child, the headmistress and the school social worker would go to the family home and visit the family. This always happened no matter how far away it was. It was to get an idea of what their home life was like. It was also to see if the environment the child would go home to was suitable. Children went home every second week from the school.
12. Children would come to us from about the ages of six to eight years old and they could stay with us until they were twelve years old or until the end of primary school.
13. By the time the child got to eleven and a half years old and if they were suitable, they would go to a local primary school for a few months with a view to possibly returning to mainstream school and their home. Some however had to move onto other residential establishments.
14. The school took twenty-seven children. There was a unit for ten, a unit for eleven and the small unit could take six children. This was the reception unit and had the same number of staff as the other units. There was a lot of one-to-one attention for the children.
15. In the eleven years the school existed there were about one hundred and twenty admissions. There were about ten admissions in a year. This meant that the children got to know their unit staff and teachers very well and would become more emotionally secure which in turn helped their development at all levels.
16. The consultant psychiatrist saw children either weekly or fortnightly if staff had referred them. He also attended general staff meetings every fortnight at the school where we would discuss individual children or anything we were having an issue with, in respect of the children in general.

Staffing

17. Sister Therese Welch was the headmistress and my line manager, she was a wonderful pioneer in work with maladjusted children. I would go so far as to say that she was an exceptional woman, and she was an inspiration. It was because of her that I later entered the Good Shepherd Order. I thought the approach to children at Ladymary was very special and I wanted to be a part of this kind of culture of care.
18. Under Sister Therese Welch were the unit leaders, teachers and a play therapist. There was always a minimum of three staff on duty in a unit at one time. As a unit leader I would be included in the three at times but at other times was an extra.

Volunteers/Students

19. We also had volunteers who came in to help. These people were vetted and would sometimes stay with us for years. They could be university students for instance and would come for the duration of their course. They tended to come in at the weekends or if there was something particular happening during the week.
20. The volunteers remained with the unit to which they were first allocated so that there was continuity for the children. The volunteers worked with the girls and the boys. If they went out on weekend trips the volunteers would only take a maximum of two children out – on these occasions the boys would be with a male and the girls with a female.
21. We also had students who would come to the school on placement. Their studies were usually related to social work or special education.
22. The volunteers and students had to stay for a long period. There was no 'in and out' of new people as these children were already insecure with the people in their lives.

My role and recruitment at Ladymary school

23. I was employed as a unit leader at the school from 1969 until 1972. I was responsible for the smooth running of the unit. That included staff, children, supervision of students and volunteers and arranging activities. It was all about creating a warm nurturing atmosphere in the unit and at the same time supporting staff as well as children. The unit staff worked closely with the teachers.
24. I cannot recall how I was recruited, and it certainly wasn't as formal as it is now. I do know you had to have two good references. I would have been interviewed but I cannot recall that.
25. I did not receive a formal induction as such when I started possibly because I had worked at the school earlier as a student. In general, there was a lot of talking about the children, about their care and management. As well as formal meetings there was a lot of informal communication between staff.

Culture

26. One of the reasons I wanted to go back to Ladymary after my placement was because for the first time in my work with children, I encountered an establishment where there was a culture that was nurturing, respectful of the children and one where they were given their dignity. It was a loving establishment. No matter what the children did, or how difficult their behaviour, they were never diminished, they were never chastised in such a way that reduced their confidence or their self-esteem. That is the first and only place I ever experienced that kind of culture. It was quite special and different.
27. The culture came from the top down and Sister Therese set the standards. I never ever experienced any member of staff who was negative, or who got angry with children. It just wasn't part of the culture. It wouldn't have been acceptable. Everybody was patient, the expectation was that even if a child was acting out or fighting you

would go in and separate them, but you wouldn't get angry with them. There was always a reason why these children would be acting out. Very often it was from an inner fear they had. Many of them had been in care for years in different establishments and had no sense of who they were or their own identity or worth.

28. I remember one child who had a brother and a sister saying to me at some point, "Ken, Rosemary, when I knew a brother was a brother and a sister was a sister, I didn't know what that meant". Those children had been brought up together, but he didn't know the relationship with even his own brother and sister, he didn't know what it meant to belong to a family. Children were helped to understand relationships and build on that understanding.
29. Another example was when I went into the unit one evening after school and I found all of the staff and children hovering around the walls in shock as there was a little boy shouting and swearing, throwing things around and smashing the budgie cage which was in the middle of the floor. The budgie was dead and there he was battering the cage and everything around him. I stood and observed the scene for a moment and knowing what I knew about the child the answer was not to go over and grab him as that would likely make it worse. I had learned alternative approaches from Sister Therese and often we had to think on our feet. On this occasion I quickly decided that as storytelling was a favourite, it was worth a try. Seeming to ignore the chaos, I asked the shocked group if anyone would like a story. The children all looked baffled, so I went over to the sofa and sat down. He was still smashing things including the bird cage. I began to read a story aloud. Somebody came and sat beside me then another and another. Gradually the others joined. After a few minutes, the noise stopped and the young lad who had been causing all the commotion crept over on all fours and sat at my legs and leant on my knee. He began to listen to the story and the situation was defused. Later, after his anger had subsided, I asked what happened to the budgie. He told me it was dead, and he had killed it. He was distressed as he really liked the budgie.
30. I learned from Sister Therese how to defuse a situation gently and in that situation, it worked very well.

31. Once everything had calmed down and the children were in bed, Sister came in and I told her what had happened and advised her I wasn't sure of the next step with the young lad. We thought about it, and she suggested that we look for something for him, that was his and his alone. She suggested the young ornithologists club, something I had never heard of. Later, I spoke with the lad and suggested we find a way of learning how to care for creatures and not hurting them when feeling angry. Long story short he became the only young ornithologist in the school and became the authority on birds.
32. When the ospreys were re-introduced to Scotland, a small group who could not go home for holidays, including this boy, went on a trip to Nethy Bridge and we stayed in a bed and breakfast farm. We went to see the ospreys and that little boy was able to tell the staff and others who were on the trip all about the ospreys. I share this story as an example of how some of these behavioural problems were dealt with.
33. I was very fortunate to be in a learning situation under the leadership of such an exceptional person as Sister Therese Welch. She was outside of the box in her thinking but inside the child's mind and behaviour. Because of her experience at Ladymary, she often gave talks at the Conferences of the Association of Workers with Maladjusted children about the work at the school. She embodied the philosophy, spirit and ethos of the Good Shepherd Congregation which is that 'one person is more precious than the whole world'.
34. Some of those children were traumatised. I remember one little girl who was adopted and she wet the bed in her adopted home. Her adoptive mother used to stuff the sheets into her mouth and as a result the child's front teeth were pulled out. You can then appreciate the need for this nurturing culture of care because these children needed to feel safe.

Recruitment of staff

- 35. I don't remember a policy on recruitment, but I was involved in the process when new staff were interviewed as they spent time in the units, met staff and children, after which, our comments were considered. I know that we looked into the background of staff. I am not sure how that was done as I did not undertake those checks. It was not part of my role.
- 36. I don't know if police checks were undertaken. It wouldn't have occurred to me in those days.
- 37. It was the same with the volunteers, I don't know how the checks were carried out, but they were checked.
- 38. References were obtained for staff and volunteers but again I took no part in that, so I do not know the process. That was not part of my role.

Training

- 39. As unit staff we received ongoing training on an evening, either weekly or every two weeks. This was input from a professional, for instance it might be the play therapist or Dr Rogers the psychiatrist.

Supervision / appraisal / evaluation

- 40. I was appraised on the job. It was an ongoing process rather than a formal appraisal with someone sitting down at specific times. That said, I do recall meeting with the psychiatrist on occasion and with the headmistress and discussing my work with the children. Any difficulties and how I was managing.
- 41. There was also group appraisal where staff shared and supported each other, a form of group supervision.

42. In addition, each evening the head mistress went round every unit, had a cup of tea and spoke to the unit leaders.

Policy

43. I don't remember seeing any policy documents, there may well have been.

Children / Routine at Ladymary, Edinburgh

Mealtimes / Food

44. The children were fed the best quality food. It was home cooked by Mrs Grady who was the cook, she was a lovely warm-hearted woman with a family of her own.
45. They had breakfast in their own units after which they would get ready for school.
46. For the main meal everyone had dinner together in the dining room. The younger staff would usually be off duty by then, but the unit leaders, teachers and headmistress would all eat together with the children. All members of staff who were available also came together for mid-morning break. The evening meal was prepared by care staff in the house units, and they ate with the children.
47. There were not many rules at the school but some expectations. One was, if a child said they didn't like a particular food they at least had to try a teaspoonful. Adults were expected to do so as well. It meant that everyone learnt to at least try new things.
48. If the children didn't like the food after they had tried it, they just didn't have anymore, it was accepted.

Sleeping Arrangements

49. The children slept in their units. I believe there were four bedrooms in each unit. The bedrooms had three beds within and one of the bedrooms was a single room. The single room was kept for a child who needed it. Maybe a girl getting older or a child who wasn't managing.
50. The rooms were for boys only or girls only.
51. If we had a little family, they would be kept to one unit, but the boys would be in a bedroom together and the girl in another, with girls.
52. The unit leader slept in the unit, and they had their own bathroom, bedroom and a little area to relax in.

Quiet Room

53. We had a quiet room in the school. The room only had a bed type settee which was fixed to the floor. The bed was cushioned with soft furnishings. The purpose of the room was to de-escalate a situation and help the children if they had a 'blow up'. It was to give them a safe space. A member of staff would be in the room when the child was there. The member of staff was there to support the child and not to be negative. We would often read a story to the child or hold on to the child in an embrace until they calmed down. The door on the quiet room was never closed.
54. I want to be clear, the quiet room wasn't a punishment, it was a place the children and staff looked upon as a place of safety. When the children started to recognise their behaviour and they knew they were getting out of control, they learnt that this room was where they could safely shout and scream and swear until they got out of their system whatever they were feeling without upsetting others and eventually were able to quieten down. In this way their behaviour was managed.

55. There was no maximum time a child would spend there, it took as long as it took. There was no record kept of when a child went into the quiet room. Nor was there any cap on the number of times a child could go there.
56. There was one time that I was with a child in the quiet room and someone passed by and we had both fallen asleep. It could be exhausting for both parties. It could also develop into a positive experience for a child.

Washing and Bathing

57. There were showers and baths in each of the units along with separate toilet cubicles. Children could shower every day.
58. A bath might sometimes be used to help to calm a child down. If a child was particularly angry or upset, or alternatively if a child needed space from others who were upset, we would fill the bath, put the boats in and sometimes bubbles and they could spend some time playing and relaxing. That very often defused things.

Trips / Holidays

59. The children went out in groups every week to Craiglockhart college swimming pool where they all learned to swim. They were taught personal survival and gained certificates and medals for swimming. As well as learning skills they also enjoyed playtime in the pool, and it was a very popular sport. I was trained as a swimming instructor while I was at the school.
60. When we had a group for swimming it was only ever as many children as the minibus could take. We would take extra staff with us.
61. The Good Shepherd Order bought a house in Aberdour, Fife, about a year after I started. The house was used as a holiday house, particularly for children who could

not go home. We used the minibus to get there. We went with four children and three staff at any one time.

Activities at Ladymary school

62. We had a big playground in the school for the children to play in. Within that was a swing park and a little wooded area.
63. There was an expectation that children would go to ballet one evening every week. The classes lasted about an hour. They had proper ballet clothes and ballet shoes to participate, and they changed in the units before they went to the class. There may have been a couple of classes as I don't think the young ones did ballet with the older children. I believe there were up to ten children in a class. The children enjoyed ballet and there were no complaints about them going. If a child was acting up before the class, they wouldn't be able to participate.
64. There were two teachers who came in to give the ballet lessons, a male and a female, they worked together to take the class. The male, whose name I cannot recall but it was maybe Mr PRU [REDACTED], taught at a ballet school in Edinburgh.
65. The children went into the class with the two ballet teachers only. That said, the room had glass doors, and a member of staff would remain in the vicinity if they were required for any reason. There were no big issues that I was aware of in the ballet class.
66. The children did an end of year show for us all. These children had issues standing still, behavioural issues and yet it was wonderful to see what they could achieve.
67. Some of the children went to local Brownies and Cubs.

68. Sometimes we took the children up to Bonaly woods with torches in the dark and we would look for bugs. The children loved it.

Healthcare

69. I don't remember there being a nurse at the school. If a doctor was required, the local GP was just down the road and, in those days, they did house visits.
70. If a child was on medication the unit leader would administer medication. Where parents were involved with their child, approval would be sought from them.

Schooling

71. There were three classrooms and a playroom in the school.
72. The teachers were Sister Camilus, a young teacher, Liz, I can't remember her surname, Jean Borthwick and Mrs Sloss the play therapist. At least one teacher had additional training in Montessori methods.
73. It was fascinating watching the children in the playroom. The play therapist, Mrs Sloss, who the children loved, would sit like a statue and sometimes they would take a doll to her or sit on her lap. She never directed them; she was just kindly. You would then see things in the sand play or the water area where the child was acting out, expressing feelings, through dolls or through other forms of play. It was a real insight into the fear or other concerns that those children were working through and what was going on in their heads.

Chores

74. The children did not do chores in the units or school. They had to learn to play first and foremost.

Bed wetting

75. We had children who wet the bed and staff were trained to be very discreet about taking the sheets to the laundry room and getting the child to the showers.

Visitors

76. Social workers visited the children in the home/school, also parents or other family members.
77. Most of the children went home at every second weekend and they would be returned by their parents. Those parents would invariably come into the home for a meeting with unit staff or the headmistress. They would let us know of any issues during the visit home. We got to know the parents very well.
78. I remember one family in particular. The parents were absent quite a lot and only appeared in the children's lives every now and again. At one point in time things seemed to be settling and I would go to the house in Edinburgh with the children to try to assist the children to build a relationship with the mother. Just as they were building a bond, we learnt she had terminal cancer. I sought Dr Rodger's advice, and he said I should not hide anything from the children. I wanted to protect them, but he said they should be exposed to everything the family were experiencing, and they would be helped through the process.

79. I then took them to hospital to visit her, making the most of those special moments and finally I had to tell them she wasn't going to live. When she passed away, I took them to the house so they could see her in the coffin and then to the crematorium for the service. It was distressing for all at the time, but I remember much later how helpful this shared grieving process was for them. Also, the children were now able to appreciate that, unlike in previous times when they had no idea if their mother cared, because they rarely saw her, they now had an opportunity to build a positive relationship and their final memories of her were good and positive.

Review of care/placement

80. Every two weeks we had a staff meeting in the evening where we would review the children. The psychiatrist and psychologist would be there and all of the other staff. We would review three or four children on that evening. There was always good sharing and awareness of each other's roles and challenges as well as the additional knowledge gained about the children.
81. The teachers also had their own meetings with the headmistress. After discussion with the unit staff, I think it was they along with the selection panel who would decide when a child moved on.
82. Children were discharged around their twelfth birthday or at the end of primary school. I cannot recall the discharge process but there was a good lead up to it where a child might attend a local primary for a few months while still living at Ladymary. Children went on to other residential establishments or perhaps back home following discharge.
83. I recall there was one family where the child was coming up for discharge and he already had two older brothers who were in other residential establishments. I remember going to a house in Edinburgh to see if it was suitable for the Order to purchase with a view to having the young boy and his brothers accommodated together with staff from the school. The house was purchased, and the boys went there to live with a husband and wife who had been on the care staff of Ladymary for

a few years. Later, those brothers moved on and another family of siblings, in a similar situation moved in with the staff.

Living Arrangements

84. All of the unit staff lived in the school, the unit leaders stayed in the units with the children. There was a residential area for other staff on the first floor. As a unit leader, if I was away, another female member of staff slept in the unit with the children.

Discipline and Punishment

85. There was discipline in the school, in that there were times the children would be told "No, you cannot do that or no you cannot hurt others," but there was no punishment that I was aware of.

Restraint

86. In my experience there was no restraint used at the school. The only thing you might do if a child was kicking or hitting out, was to put your arms around them as in an embrace. This was only to stop them hurting themselves or others. It could be a firm embrace if it was required.

Concerns about the institution

87. I was never aware of anything that concerned me about the institution while I was there. I did hear of an issue a few years after I had left about a male member of staff. I am led to believe the way the child verbalised what had allegedly happened did not give too much cause for concern. The headmistress none the less, rang the consultant psychiatrist who came immediately to the school to hear from the parents and the child concerned. This was on a Sunday afternoon after a home visit.

88. I believe the psychiatrist got information from the family and later he met with the member of staff on a couple of occasions. He came to the conclusion there was nothing in it, but I understand now that that may have been flawed.
89. The male member of staff was employed in the school a couple of years after I left. He was employed as care staff. The Sister who was in charge of the unit where he worked died recently and she was horrified when she heard the allegations about him.
90. I remember meeting this man when I visited some years after I had left. He was by all accounts a pillar of the church and of society. I think all of the adults who worked with him thought he was wonderful.
91. I did see him a second time at a conference, and he was there with Ladymary staff. Again, he was very courteous and gracious.
92. When I was gathering information for the Inquiry, I learnt more about this man. Knowing what I know now and seeing that he abused people wherever he went, then the chances are that he was responsible for the incident I have spoken about above. I don't think we had a particular process for dealing with things like abuse as it wasn't part of our thinking then.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

93. I never heard a complaint from a child, ever. Had I heard of one I would have gone to Sister Therese.
94. I would say it was a therapeutic community before we even knew what a therapeutic community was. The staff were all very open and everyone worked together, if they heard anything it would be put on the table to speak about it.

Trusted adult/confidante

95. The children appeared to trust all of the staff. I believe the most trusted person would have been Mrs Sloss the play therapist. She was a lovely woman, silent in her role but very loving.
96. In my experience there were no secrets in that establishment. It was an open, trusting environment with easy interaction between children and staff and between staff members.

Abuse

97. There was no definition of abuse in the school, it never came into our thinking.
98. I don't think there was abuse going on at Ladymary when I was there. I never heard anything and there was nothing I saw that made me suspicious.
99. There was an understanding in the school that a male member of staff did not bathe a little girl.

Child protection arrangements

100. There were no formal arrangements regarding child protection while I was there. However, if a child had come home from a visit and told a member of staff something untoward had occurred in the family home, then staff would know to go to the headmistress and psychiatrist. An example of this, after my time there, was that we had a young girl who was severely autistic. In the playroom it was identified she was acting out sexually. Through enquiries it was discovered that the mother had males

staying in her house when the child was home at weekends. That was picked up very quickly and dealt with by social work. I am unsure if the police were contacted in that case.

101. I would go so far as to say the children were very protected in Ladymary. Sister MHT, who Sister as SNR of the school, when abuse was reported to her went immediately to the psychiatrist who was advisor to the school. There was no policy that I am aware of, but it shows she dealt with it as best she could by going to the most experienced person who she expected would assist her to deal with it appropriately.
102. I don't really feel abuse was a police matter all these years ago – more than fifty-five years ago. I had occasion to contact the police about another incident in a local authority establishment, not at Ladymary and they didn't know what to do.

Record-keeping

103. While I was at Ladymary, records were kept about children, and they were stored in the office. I don't know how or by whom they were updated but I think it would be by the headmistress or the child's social worker.
104. I went looking for the records from the school when I was Provincial leader, and the Inquiry was looking for information. This was many years after the school closed down. I went to the Sick Children's hospital in Edinburgh where the files were sent after the closure, but they told me their procedure was to destroy things after so many years and by now these children were adults. I had thought they would digitise files, but they said they hadn't.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

105. After I gave evidence for the Inquiry, I became aware of a criminal enquiry about the male member of staff mentioned earlier who had worked at the school. I became aware of this from Lady Smith. When the advocate was summing up at the end of my evidence, Lady Smith asked if what he was saying was still the case even after the court case. Our legal team didn't know anything about any court case. Police Scotland did not contact us at any time while their investigations were underway to check if this man had been employed by us or if any of the victims had been in our care. I took this up with the Inquiry and Police Scotland were asked to appear at the Inquiry when they confirmed this serious omission.
106. After the Inquiry, I was in Manchester and Police Scotland approached the Order about another allegation involving the same man and a little girl. I remember that girl and she was very vulnerable. I was so angry when I heard that she too had suffered.
107. I never gave a statement as such at that time, but I liaised with the police during this new enquiry. That was around six years ago, and we have not heard anything more about it.
108. I know that this man was convicted of sexual offences but that has only been known to me in recent years. I did not work with him, and he was not at Ladymary while I was there.

Other Staff

Sister MHT

109. Before I left the school in 1972, Sister MHT who was also known as MHT as a lay person, arrived and took up a position as SNR. She was there to learn from Sister

110. She was lovely with the children. I never saw Sister MHT abuse any child. Sister MHT died in 2024.

Male Ballet Teacher

111. I think his name may have been Mr PRU. He was lovely with the children. He was a gentleman, so respectful and courteous, he was someone the children listened to. I never saw him discipline or abuse a child. He was never on his own with the children, he worked with a lady.

Leaving Ladymary

112. I left Ladymary in 1972 and went to the convent of the Good Shepherd Order in London for initial formation. In 1974 I went to university to study Social Work Administration and Management. I then worked in various residential establishments in England for teenagers with problems and then spent many years in primary treatment for women suffering from addictions. I was a Sister by that stage. After a sabbatical in Australia, I also worked in Burma, now known as Myanmar, with our Sisters. I returned to the United Kingdom and worked in management of care of the elderly Sisters and then later became a prison chaplain in Edinburgh.
113. In 2014 I became the Leader of the British Province of the Good Shepherd Sisters. I finished my term of office in this role in 2020.

Helping the Inquiry

114. At the time when I was at Ladymary, I was in my twenties and there wasn't any real awareness of abuse. I was not aware of policies or procedures in relation to abuse as it didn't really enter our minds. Nowadays, we have so many procedures and it is in everybody's mind. No one is ever allowed to be alone with a child now which is sad but will hopefully prevent some abuse happening in the future.

115. I think one of the basic things we need to do to prevent any future abuse is to ensure that everyone working with children or vulnerable people has ongoing training in safeguarding.
116. We also need to create a culture of care and respect so that any child or anybody else can have confidence and feel safe enough to go to carers when they have concerns. I experienced a culture of care in Ladymary that I have never experienced anywhere else, where children really were respected and cherished.
117. The first thing we need to do with people in care is build their confidence. In any situation whether it is children, adults or teenagers, we need to build self-esteem and confidence and help them to appreciate their sense of worth as a human being. I feel that doesn't happen in many places. When that does happen, people begin to open up, there is an honesty and trust. I firmly believe we must cultivate that culture in any care situation. This is something I try to do wherever I work.
118. I was in some awful care situations as a student, cold, harsh, Dickensian ones. That was almost sixty years ago. People in charge had power and control and, in some establishments, there was no sense of care or warmth and not much understanding of the children's needs. But as training became more of a priority in the 1960's, a better awareness and understanding began to develop and new standards of care were introduced. Thankfully, over the years, I have also known good residential establishments providing a high standard of care for children.
119. Much has been highlighted of the abuse that went on in care establishments over the years, but a lot of good went on as well. I've seen on Facebook recently, women who have said their experience in care as teenagers saved their life, that it was the first time they had felt loved and cared for. Although this is not everyone's experience, I know of many others who are now adults who would echo these comments about their time in care. I think there has not been enough emphasis on the good that was done and the positive outcomes for so many. I know people who have made positive statements to the Inquiry but were sad that there appeared to be little interest in their good experiences.

120. Now that care is in the community for the most part, it would appear there haven't been adequate resources and funding to provide for those people who need it. There are no adequate financial resources for any essential services at the moment. I am concerned about the amount of money that is being spent on this Inquiry into 'historical abuse', while little or no resources seem to be available for care and protection of young people in care or in the community, where the current incidence of abuse seems to be increasing all the time. I think it is dreadful and short sighted, that when children in care reach eighteen years old there is nothing more available for them. That they are sent out of care, on their own, with little or more often, no support. I know from my work in the prison that many of them end up there or become homeless on the streets or in prostitution.
121. In our society now, many people are far worse off than fifty or sixty years ago when we were so poor. There is a different kind of poverty, it's a poverty of spirit and that concerns me very much.

Other information

122. 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.....

16th May 2025