

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

██████████
PTE

Support person present: No

1. My name is ██████████^{PTE} and I like to be known as ██████████^{PTE}. My maiden name was ██████████^{PTE} and I have had the surname ██████████^{PTE} in the past. My date of birth is ██████████ 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My parents were ██████████ and ██████████. I have a brother ██████████, who is about a year younger than me and a sister ██████████, who is about seven years younger.
3. I was born in Dumbarton and grew up there. I stayed in the house my parents moved to before my brother was born until I left home as a young adult.
4. My parents had a very violent relationship. As I came to understand when I got older, my mum had an awful upbringing. Apparently my grandad was a nice person, but my older cousins told me that my gran was an evil person and that my mum and some of her siblings had a lot of issues.
5. Dad was an electrician in the shipyards and in those days he earned good money, but there were a lot of issues between he and my mum and bills weren't getting paid. They often clashed and I remember all the violence.
6. It tended to be that my brother ██████████ was always with my mum and I was always with my dad. I remember going with dad when he did 'homers' and when he played football.

7. I started going to school at Aitkenbar Primary in Dumbarton and I enjoyed it. I made good friends and despite everything that was going on at home, I did well at school.
8. When I was seven my dad left and joined the merchant navy and basically never came back. My sister [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED] 1970 and dad left in [REDACTED] that same year.
9. We were always down at dad's sister's house, my aunt [REDACTED], but all of a sudden when he left mum didn't want us to see any of his family. I was a stubborn wee girl though and I'd still go and see her and her daughter [REDACTED] who is very close in age to me and who I went through school with. Academically [REDACTED] and I were very much on a par and we are still close friends.
10. I was always very strong-minded and although I never did anything bad as such, I was always getting into trouble for opening my mouth and speaking up if I didn't think something was right. I suppose I was a challenging wee girl. I was very confrontational in the house, although I wasn't like that outside.
11. Over the years mum had all sorts of people in and out of the house. She drank and she took overdoses and I used to have a lot of fights with her.
12. Eventually a social worker called Miss Mary Paterson from the social work offices at Glencairn House in Dumbarton was appointed to us. I understood that she became involved with us because my mum couldn't cope, but then mum was turning my dad's family away who might have been able to help.
13. I think Miss Paterson was only in our house a couple of times initially, but I got to know her more over the years. We were never involved with the Children's Panel system, but Miss Paterson was in our lives a lot. She was our social worker right up until I was in secondary school.

14. Mum had psoriasis and was periodically in and out of hospital throughout her life. In those days she would be covered from head to toe in tar and she'd be in hospital for a couple of weeks at a time.
15. Just before [REDACTED] 1970, mum was going into hospital for more treatment so it was decided that [REDACTED] and I should go into Lagarie House at Rhu. [REDACTED] went to Crosslet House in Dumbarton, which was for younger children at that time. Nothing was explained properly to us, we were just told it was happening.

Lagarie House, Rhu, Dunbartonshire

16. [REDACTED] and I were in and out of Lagarie a few times over the next four years, every time our mum had to go into hospital or if she couldn't cope. Each time we would stay for a week or two although sometimes I was in on my own and [REDACTED] stayed at home if mum felt that she couldn't cope.
17. I think the last time we were in Lagarie was when I was about eleven, before I started primary seven. I would say that from the age of seven until I was eleven I was probably in Lagarie a couple of times a year roughly.
18. My sister [REDACTED] was only in Lagarie once when she was just a wee toddler. Friends would always take [REDACTED] for our mum, but they didn't on that occasion for some reason.
19. Lagarie House is next to the Ardencaple Hotel in Rhu and just across the road from a stone beach at the side of the loch. I can still see it in my mind's eye.
20. It was a big old house set in its own grounds, where there were swings and a small white stone building, like a Wendy house. There were windows and an opening into the Wendy house, but no door.
21. When you went in the front door of Lagarie House itself a hall led straight up to a big playroom at the back of the building. Inside the playroom was a carnival roundabout,

although the roundabout never worked in all the time I was there. A set of stairs led up from the right hand side of the hall to dormitories upstairs and there was a room for wee tots on the ground floor to the left. Also on the ground floor was a big dining room where we all ate and a kitchen, although I can't remember where they were.

22. The only staff I remember are one woman who was nice and the ones who were horrible, who were the two people in charge, a woman with dark hair and the gardener. I don't remember the rest of the staff or how many there were and I can't remember the names of any of them. I think there was the odd member of staff that helped out during the night, but most of the time it was just the woman in charge and the man in charge that were there at night.
23. One of the people in charge was a man who I think was some sort of minister. He sometimes wore a dog collar. The other person in charge was an older woman with light hair, but I can't describe them or the gardener any more than that. The woman who was nice was older and had glasses and a purple rinse in her hair. I think she was a local woman who came in during the day sometimes to help look after the children.
24. There seemed to be quite a lot of children and some of them were from the same families. I remember there must have been about five children in one of the families that were there. I don't know if any of the other children were there for just a short time like [REDACTED] and I, I never asked. There were some children that always seemed to be there every time we went, however we never made pals with anyone, because we were only there for a short time.
25. Lagarie was not a happy place. I have no recollection of kids running about enjoying themselves at any time. It was horrible. I went from being out playing with my pals, going to school and enjoying myself to having to keep out of the road and being very unhappy. Every time we were sent there I thought we were being punished and my heart sunk whenever we were told we were going back.

Routine at Lagarie House

First day

26. I remember Miss Paterson arriving in a car and taking us away and my brother [REDACTED] crying when we arrived at Lagarie House. Some lady told me to “get him to shut up” and I tried to console him.

Daily routine

27. I slept in a big dormitory upstairs with other girls. I don't know where [REDACTED] slept because I was never with him at night. When I would see [REDACTED] the following morning he would tell me he had been crying during the night.
28. Everybody got up at the same time and we all went for breakfast in one big dining room. I don't know what time we were woken and although I suppose we must have washed and dressed ourselves beforehand, I don't recall. I don't remember any staff ever helping.
29. I probably just got myself up, washed and dressed and tried to keep out of the road of everyone.
30. After breakfast a bus would take all the other children to school and [REDACTED] and I would be left. The staff would tell us to keep out of their way and we would go outside and either walk into Helensburgh and back or sit in the Wendy house. Sometimes I would sit on the swing outside, but [REDACTED] always sat in the corner inside the Wendy house.
31. When the other kids came back from school we would all get our dinner and then we would all go into the playroom for a wee while before bed.

Mealtimes

32. We all ate in the dining room at the same time, but I don't remember what any of the food was like except that breakfast was porridge or cornflakes. I do recall we ate off coloured plastic dishes and drank from plastic cups.

33. I was a fussy eater and no matter what I was given I would probably have turned my nose up at it. I don't remember what happened if I didn't eat anything, I certainly don't remember being punished. I think that if we left anything the plates were just taken away and we didn't get anything else.

Washing/bathing

34. All I remember of the washing facilities is sinks. I don't remember there being showers or baths. There were a few sinks in one room and we would all wash ourselves at the same time.

Clothing/uniform

35. I have no recollection of ever packing a bag to take with me whenever I went to stay at Lagarie, but I don't remember the home supplying anything either.

Leisure time

36. Every time [REDACTED] and I were at Lagarie, the other kids were at school. We were told that we wouldn't be going to school because we were only there for a week or two and instead we had to stay at Lagarie. It was never explained why, but it was as if they were trying to alienate us from the other children.
37. We were told to keep out of the way of the staff during the day and we were sent outside. We were very rarely allowed to stay inside, whatever the weather was like. We would just sit in the Wendy house or walk into Helensburgh and back on our own. We never had any money to spend, the home never gave us pocket money, so we'd just walk into town, wander around and walk back again.
38. We never really mixed with the other children when they came home from school either, which was totally abnormal for both [REDACTED] and I. We are both very sociable people.

39. I liked reading and I remember helping some of the other children to read when they came home from school. I was caught by the woman in charge though and I got in trouble for that and told I was a “wee madam”.

Trips and holidays

40. Sometimes, I suppose it must have been at the weekends, we’d be taken to the swimming baths. There was an outdoor pool on the pier at Helensburgh and some of the staff would take a big group of us children there.
41. Other times we were taken to a public park at the back of the Ardencaple Hotel or down onto the beach. I don’t remember there being any organised activity on these trips, we would just play on the swings or swim in the baths.

School

42. I remained at Aitkenbar primary school throughout the four years we were sent to Lagarie and I still have my report cards from there. Despite missing out on several weeks of school every time I was sent away, it clearly didn’t affect me academically. I obviously managed fine, although my brother and sister didn’t do so well.

Healthcare

43. I suppose because [REDACTED] and I were only in Lagarie for short periods we would never have been sent to the doctor or the dentist and I have no recollection of going. The only injuries I had were bruises and I never got any medical treatment for them.
44. One time all the other kids were told by one of the women who worked there that [REDACTED] and I had brought nits into Lagarie. Everybody had to get treated and all the other kids were calling us names. I don’t know whether we had nits or not, but to be fair to my mum, our house was generally clean enough and we bathed regularly.

Religious instruction

45. I've never taken to church, but the man and woman who run Lagarie were quite church-orientated. The man wore a dog collar sometimes and I remember him often quoting the bible and leading prayers.
46. [REDACTED] and I went to Sunday school while we were at home, but we never went when we were at Lagarie.

Birthdays and Christmas

47. I don't recall being at Lagarie when it was either [REDACTED] or my birthday and I don't remember any other child's birthday being celebrated.
48. It must have been coming up to Christmas [REDACTED] we stayed at Lagarie House because we all got taken in a bus to a Christmas party that I think was possibly at Faslane naval base. That was the only outing we ever had in all the times I stayed at Lagarie.
49. I remember Santa was there and we all got a wee present. When we got back to Lagarie we were all told to put our presents in the playroom, we weren't allowed to keep them for ourselves. When Miss Paterson arrived to take [REDACTED] and I home that time I asked if I could keep my present, but the woman in charge just said she didn't know what I was talking about.

Visits/Inspections

50. Miss Paterson, our social worker, visited me at Lagarie a couple of times. One time she came with another lady, one of her colleagues, and took [REDACTED] and I out for a picnic. I don't know where it was, but we were sitting by water and I remember it was sunny.
51. None of our family ever came to see us. My aunt [REDACTED] has since said that she never knew where we were.
52. There were definitely never any official people inspecting the place while I was there. Nobody ever came and asked me how I was.

Sibling contact

53. [REDACTED] and I were pretty much together all the time we were in Lagarie, except when we were sleeping. There was never a problem with us seeing each other and I know that other kids from the same families were allowed to be together too.

Personal possessions

54. I have always liked reading books, but I was never allowed to bring any in with me. All there was to read was what was there and I don't remember having any personal possessions.

Running away

55. A couple of the times that [REDACTED] and I walked into Helensburgh while the other kids were at school, we jumped on a train to Dumbarton, but we always went straight back. I suppose we were scared we would get into trouble and our understanding was that our mum wasn't at home anyway. In retrospect I wish I'd had the sense to go to my gran's or somebody.

Discipline

56. All the staff at Lagarie were very strict. I would sometimes see kids sitting on a chair outside different rooms, obviously being punished for something.

Bed Wetting

57. I never wet the bed, but I remember there were people who did and they got in a lot of trouble. If a member of staff came to wake us in the morning and found that a child had wet their bed, they were taken out of the dormitory. I don't know what their punishment was, but I remember hearing them screaming.

Abuse at Lagarie House

58. All the staff were strict, I heard all of them shouting at kids and I saw different staff pulling kids by the arm, but the woman that ran the place was the worst. She was

always hitting me and all the other kids for the slightest thing. One time she used a stick or something, but usually it was her open hands across the arms and legs and one time she hit me on the back.

59. Once when [REDACTED] and I were meant to be outside, I was sitting on the carnival roundabout in the playroom and the woman in charge found us. She yanked me off it by the hair and hit me several times across the head and body and I had a lot of bruises.
60. The day after the Christmas party the woman that ran Lagarie took me down to a laundry room because apparently I hadn't wiped my bottom properly and my pants had pooh on them. I was told I was a dirty little girl and she smacked me.
61. After that, I was always getting checked by the man who I thought was a minister. He would take me aside, away from the other children and pull my pants down to check they were clean. He didn't do anything sexual or touch me inappropriately, but it's only in later life that I thought how questionable his behaviour was.
62. Every time I returned to Lagarie after that, right up till I was eleven years old, I was the dirty wee girl that pooped her pants and the man was always checking them. He never did it in front of anyone else, but he would always pull my pants down and check. It was inappropriate, but he never actually did anything else to me that I remember.
63. I have a terrible phobia of snakes and worms and creatures like that and I remember several times being told to go and pick gooseberries with the gardener. I was always reluctant to go because of my fear of worms and things and I got battered by the woman in charge for that as well.
64. My brother [REDACTED] told me that one time the gardener took him into the garden shed and, in [REDACTED]'s words, "touched his wee man". I don't think this was the first time we were at Lagarie, but [REDACTED] was still young when it happened. I think I was still too young to really understand what had happened.

65. I've since spoken to [REDACTED] about that, but he doesn't remember it and I don't know any more than that about what happened, however I don't think it happened again.

Reporting of abuse at Lagarie House

66. I told Miss Paterson our social worker about getting hit by the woman and about [REDACTED] being touched by the gardener, but all that happened was I got battered later on by the woman in charge.
67. I showed Miss Paterson my bruises, but she obviously never believed, perhaps she just thought they had been caused by my being clumsy, however when we got back later on I was hauled into one of the rooms downstairs by the woman in charge. The man was there as well and he never hit me, but she did. She called me a "lying, horrible little girl" and "defiant" and slapped me with her open hand across the face several times.

Leaving Lagarie House

68. Our last time at Lagarie House was over the [REDACTED] holidays, after we had been in for a week or two. A family came and picked us up and we were told we were being fostered by them.
69. Apparently mum had been in hospital again and couldn't cope and needed to convalesce. I don't know who decided or how it was decided that [REDACTED] and I would go into foster care and not stay longer at Lagarie. Nothing was explained to us.

Foster care with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] at Larkfield, Greenock

70. The family we were fostered by were Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] and they had four sons. I don't know the address they stayed at, just that their house was somewhere in Larkfield in Greenock.

71. Obviously [REDACTED] and I just wanted to go home, but we had a good time with the [REDACTED] family. They hadn't had a wee girl in the house for years and they were all kind. [REDACTED] and I had to share a room, but then we'd grown up in a two-bedroomed flat, so that was just normal for us.
72. We were looked after well and included as part of the family. Our shoes weren't in a very good condition when we got there and we were taken to the shops and a new pair of sand shoes was bought for us. They took us to see our mum in the Southern General Hospital and they took us swimming to the outdoor pool at Gourrock. They also took us to see other members of their family and we were introduced to one of their nieces who was much the same age as me.
73. It was almost as if we were living at home, except my friends weren't there. Life was normal and very different from Lagarie. I look back on it and feel that if kids have to be placed anywhere, that was the kind of environment you would want them in.
74. After about four weeks, we were told we would be going home the next day and Miss Paterson came to pick us up. We had never seen Miss Paterson in all the time we were staying with the [REDACTED].

Life after being in care

75. I was happy to be going home and life continued pretty much the same. We were never in care again after that, but it was the usual chaos and fighting with my mum who was drinking more.
76. I continued at Aitkenbar Primary school for my last year and then went into secondary at Dumbarton Academy. I was in decent classes and I always had nice pals and I did quite well at school.
77. Miss Paterson, our social worker, continued to be involved with us until secondary school when Alistair Baird took over. He was lovely. [REDACTED] and I went to a youth group that he ran that was for young people that maybe had difficult home lives.

78. I would only rarely see my dad when he came up to Dumbarton. When he came out of the merchant navy he moved to Barrow-in-Furness and got a job in the shipyard there, where a lot of other guys from the Clyde shipyards went. He remained in Barrow-in-Furness and eventually had his own family there.
79. My cousin [REDACTED] would always tell me when dad was coming up to Dumbarton and I would see him at my gran's. I think mum gave up trying to keep me away from them and I suppose it was peace for her. We were allowed to go down to Barrow-in-Furness for short holidays. Dad would either come up and take us down on the train or our uncle [REDACTED] would take us down.
80. I did well at school and passed three Highers and seven O-grades. I wanted to go to college to do teaching or something, but by then mum wasn't working and the drink had taken a hold. I got the chance of a [REDACTED] job with Strathclyde Regional Council in Dumbarton and I took it.
81. Over the years I worked my way up within the council and became a [REDACTED] manager before I went into [REDACTED]. My job had changed over the years and so I decided to take early retirement in September 2019 after thirty-nine years with the council.
82. I was in an abusive marriage for fifteen years until I finally walked out a few years ago. I had known my husband [REDACTED] since I was seventeen but it was a mother he wanted, not a wife. He was always off work sick and we got into a lot of debt and eventually there was one punch too many.
83. I married my second husband [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] last year and I am now working part time as a football safety officer. [REDACTED] and I are both now at a stage where we appreciate all we have got and don't take anything for granted.
84. I was involved with the Children's Panel for about fifteen years and only gave it up four years ago. I had always wanted to do something like that and volunteered for the

Panel because I thought I maybe had a better understanding of what it was like for children who come from chaotic backgrounds.

85. I never had children myself and I suppose I wanted to do something that might make a difference. I think it's sad that adults often don't realise the impact their own problems can have on their children. I thought I could understand it a bit better and understand how young people might be feeling.

Impact

86. We all have our own personalities and I know that as a child I often spoke before thinking. I grew up with a terrible temper and would often smash things up. As I've got older I suppose I've learned how to speak up honestly, but in a more positive way and managed to control my temper.
87. I was such a control freak and had terrible obsessive compulsive disorder. I lived on my nerves and was highly strung and it's only been in the last five or six years that I've noticed I am different now.
88. For years I had terrible nightmares and I think all that has been a combination of both my time at Lagarie and life at home with my mum, which were not very nice at times.
89. I've always been someone who has felt the need to sort out everybody else's problems. It may be that because I had no control over my life as a child and no control over being sent to Lagarie, I need to have control now.
90. I took very ill twenty years ago when my bowel perforated and I was given an ileostomy. Over nine years I ended up with a lot of surgery and from where I was at the start to the end of my surgery, I started to think more about trying to live more calmly. I'm now in a support group and a trustee on the national board for the [REDACTED] charity.

91. My brother [REDACTED] has had quite a chaotic life. He has been engaged about eleven times and married twice. He has a daughter that he doesn't have anything to do with. I think that's his way of coping and dealing with the experiences of his childhood, including his times at Lagarie.

Treatment/support

92. I've tended to deal with things myself and never thought of getting counselling, however I was diagnosed with cancer four years ago and received counselling and support from Maggie's Centre following that. I still get checked regularly and I'm still under review, however with all that happening I started to feel grateful for still being here.
93. Rather than the counselling being about my cancer, it became all about the issues I had from my childhood. I only started speaking about my childhood with the woman from Maggie's and it was after that I decided to contact the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. I've never spoken about what happened or reported it to anybody else.

Records

94. I never thought there would still be records of my childhood. I thought everything would have been destroyed, but I would be interested to see whatever records there might be.

Lessons to be Learned/hopes for the Inquiry

95. Things are so different now from what they were forty and fifty years ago. I know that disclosure checks are only good for checking whether people have been caught doing something and won't pick up those who have never been caught, but things are much better.
96. I know from my knowledge of the system that children are heard nowadays. I know there are various organisations such as 'Who Cares' and that people can act as

advocates for young people. I also know that young people can say things that aren't true, just as adults can, but if somebody does raise a concern it is now listened to and dealt with. I think it is important that all young people know and are reassured that there is somebody they can talk to.

97. I think that foster care is much better for a child than getting put into a unit, although I am aware there are not enough people prepared to do it.

Other information

98. I would like to get these people who ran Lagarie in a room now and ask them why they behaved as they did. Surely some of them must have had their own kids. I would like to know why they treated children as they did.

99. 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..... 20 January 2021