

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PKR

Support person present: No

1. My name is PKR. My date of birth is 1964. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh. I have two sisters, who is seven years older than me, and who is one year younger than me. I don't really have many memories from when I was really young. I am not sure why I can't remember earlier memories before I was seven years old. I can't remember my mother, so I don't have any memories before I was four years old.
3. My father worked at sea. My mother died when I was four years old and we went to stay with my grandmother, my father's mother. My other three grandparents had all died from flu. I think I was five years old and I came home from nursery one day and my father told me that my grandmother had died. I was very upset. I can remember coming home from school and people saying, "We have landed on the moon." So she

must have died around that time. That's the only memory I have of that. That is my earliest memory.

4. We then went to live with my aunt, one of my father's sisters. She had Multiple Sclerosis and I stayed there until I was seven years old, but I can't remember her. When she died [REDACTED] and I were at another aunt's and we had to stay there because of the funeral. After that we went to stay at Lagarie.
5. I didn't understand why I was going to Lagarie. To be honest, I still don't because we had aunts and uncles we could have stayed with. I don't know why we didn't go to stay with them. We had visited them before and they had plenty of spare bedrooms. I think they pretended we just didn't exist.

Lagarie Children's home, Rhu 1972 to 1974

6. When we went there first, Mrs Smith was the matron. She was nice and very kind. My sister [REDACTED] got on well with her. I can't remember how long Mrs Smith was there for. There were other members of staff I remember from when Mrs Smith was in charge. They all seemed to be general staff, they didn't cook but they would supervise children and get us up in the morning. Then Mrs Smith retired and the Barries took over. A lot of the staff left when they took over.
7. I never thought Reverend Barrie was a real minister. I don't know why he dressed up like that. I don't think there is any chance he studied divinity at any UK university, he must have got a qualification from somewhere else. He always had this horrible grin on his face. I don't know if it's a thing that children just have, but when I was younger, I would sometimes know not to go near a person. Reverend Barrie was one of those people.
8. Mr Barrie would go around with his dog collar on and that grin on his face. It wasn't a nice grin. I don't know if it is a false memory, because sometimes you question if something has really happened, but I have visions of Mr Barrie sitting in the hall with

children sitting in his lap. I knew I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to go near him. I don't know if it was a trust thing.

9. It was a bit more obvious with Mrs Barrie because she was always shouting at people, grabbing people, and being really nasty. You knew not to go near her. I used to go up the staircase to a tiny room that was crammed with linen. I don't know if it was called the sewing room but nobody went up there so I used to hide there and just stay out of the way so I could avoid Mrs Barrie because I was terrified of her.
10. Regarding the other staff, there was Heather Skead who became a good friend of [REDACTED]. There was a girl called Edith who was nice. Carol Willis was nice but she left shortly after the Barries took over. RDM [REDACTED] wasn't nice. I think there were some people who wanted to work with children and there were some people who maybe couldn't get a job elsewhere. Some people should work with children and some shouldn't. RDM [REDACTED] was one who shouldn't have worked with children. She didn't have a caring attitude.
11. There was a cook, Mrs Cotterel, but we didn't have much to do with her, we just saw her in the kitchen. The kitchen was big but very sparse. It had big, clean work surfaces. Mr Skelton was the gardener but I didn't go near him, he was scary. He lived in the cottage at [REDACTED]. At the age I was he seemed really old.
12. I don't know why I found Mr Skelton scary. He never smiled at anyone, he just walked around with a lawnmower. I see how people act with children nowadays, if someone is leading a group of children in an activity and a child's shoelace is undone they will rush up to the supervisor and they will tie the child's shoelace. It is all as it should be. You wouldn't have done that with Mr Skelton, you would just avoid him. It was a very different way of treating people.

Routine at Lagarie

First day

13. Myself, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] all went to Lagarie together. I must have been seven years old but it is all a bit vague. I didn't keep a diary. I would estimate that there were about twenty boys and girls at Lagarie.
14. The only thing I can remember about going to Lagarie was being in a minibus and someone said to me, "It's just like boarding school." I don't know why that phrase stuck in my mind. That's the only thing I can remember about the first day. I don't remember arriving at Lagarie in the minibus. It's strange, but I just don't have many memories from then. There are some things I can remember as clear as day, but there are things my sister [REDACTED] expects me to remember but I can't.
15. Lagarie was a large house with a big drive going into the gardens. There was a gardener's cottage at [REDACTED]. There were fire escapes on the house. It had a large vestibule with wood panelling and a large entrance hall. I only remember certain bits of the house. There was a large playroom with a television and a large sofa. There were some toilets towards the back door. There were small staircases with rooms off for staff rooms and a sewing room. I used to hide on those stairs. I would hide to avoid Mrs Barrie because I was terrified of her.

Mornings and bedtime

16. I remember being in a dormitory at the start but I don't know how many children shared the dormitory, I just remember there being beds. I remember being in a bed by the door and one day I was there by myself, I must have been off school sick, and a man came in. He stood between me and the door. I presume he was a doctor.
17. I didn't spend much time in the dormitory because then [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and I had a room to ourselves with two bunk beds for [REDACTED] and I. I can't remember the routine at bedtime.

Mealtimes/Food

18. I can't remember much about the routine at Lagarie. I can't remember having meals there. I remember the kitchen and my sister [REDACTED] remembers the dining room but I can't.

Washing/bathing

19. I can't remember the arrangements for bathing, or brushing our teeth. I remember that there were toilets at the back door. There was a passage from the kitchen to the toilets at the back door.

Clothing/uniform

20. I remember I didn't have my own clothes. Various clothes were washed and handed out based upon your age and size. Tops and things were handed out when you needed clean clothes.
21. There must have been a wardrobe but because one of the assistants would bring us clothes on a day-to-day basis, we had everything that we needed. I can't remember there being a chest of drawers in the room with the bunk beds. I don't even think there were any seats in the room so that you could go back there and read.

Leisure time

22. I had a Tiny Tears doll but I played outside a lot and I hid a lot. The house had huge gardens and there was a wall that ran along the main road. There were bushes along the side of the wall and you could run along between the wall and the bushes. There were also large Rhododendron bushes and other bushes you could hide inside.

23. There were woods which were also part of the grounds. There was an old abandoned car in the woods. It was pale blue, like a Tiffany blue, and it didn't have any doors. It was covered in leaves and greenfly. We used to play there a lot.
24. I played with [REDACTED] and various people like the [REDACTED] girls. There was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think they had two or three brothers but we didn't play with the brothers much.
25. There was [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] used to keep themselves to themselves which I thought was strange at the time because they were the same age as us, but it makes more sense to me now that I have seen the BBC documentary on Lagarie which disclosed the abuse that they had suffered.
26. During the Barries time we were told to watch television in the play room. It would be one of the staff who would tell us but I didn't want to watch television and I didn't like being told to just watch television. I would rather go and read a book. I still don't really like watching television. Although I liked reading there weren't really books available.
27. I couldn't take friends back to Lagarie and I wouldn't have wanted to admit that I lived in a home. I can't remember anyone bringing friends back to Lagarie. It would have been a combination of not being allowed to bring friends back, and not wanting to anyway. I don't remember any other children at Lagarie being able to bring friends back either.

Schooling

28. I went to Rhu primary school and I was put in the wrong class. I remember sitting there and not knowing what they were talking about. I must have been there for a couple of weeks then somebody came and took me to another class. I don't remember much else about school. I remember I had a friend at school called [REDACTED]. I went to her house for tea after school and her mother gave me a dress. I can't remember any other friends at school, I was very shy.

29. I don't remember having time to do homework in Lagarie. I know [REDACTED] struggled because she was trying to revise for exams but there was nowhere for her to study. Mrs Barrie told her to go and study in the playroom, which was not conducive to study. Mrs Barrie was so nasty to [REDACTED], she would go out of her way to stop her from studying.

Healthcare

30. There was one time I had to go to the dentist to get a tooth taken out. It was very traumatic. Mrs Smith took me but she had to wait outside, there was nobody with me in the dental surgery. Nowadays there is no way a child would have to go to the dentist without a parent being there. I was terrified and running around the room screaming, "I want my daddy! I want my daddy!" They managed to get me in the chair and tried to put the gas mask on me but I started kicking the dentist. The dentist got the tooth out and Mrs Smith was very kind and took me to a gift shop and bought me a necklace with an enamel anchor on it. That situation left me with a fear of oxygen masks. A few years ago I was in hospital and they tried to put an oxygen mask on me before I went into theatre. I panicked and the anaesthetist had to wait until I was unconscious. I am sure that stems from my experience at Lagarie.
31. I don't remember any other medical treatment. I can't remember being ill and I can't remember any check-ups. I don't know if we got our inoculations. I presume that I would have remembered if I had got them because it is the kind of thing that would have stood out. I had chickenpox after Lagarie.
32. Although I don't remember being ill, I remember [REDACTED] and ending up with a cut. It was a strange thing to do and I don't know what caused me to do it. I must have been anxious about something. Years later I thought about it and considered that it was a form of self-harm. I never did anything like that again. Growing up, later in life after Lagarie, I did know girls who cut themselves but I didn't do that.

Religious instruction

33. Some people like the Barries made a big thing about going to church every Sunday. We sat at the front so everyone could see us but it was all show. There are some people who don't go to church but they are the kindest people. When the Barries took us to church, they would come across as trying to be very well meaning, as if they adored children. In reality, Mrs Barrie was very nasty.
34. One of the horrible things was that we always seemed to be going out to churches and places like churches. Groups of us had to stand and sing for the congregations. It was always done to raise money and I remember watching people donating money. I was very shy when I was young and I hated it. I even hated some of the songs. There was one in particular called Count your Blessings. I just can't even think about it because it brings back memories of having to stand in front of congregations and sing.
35. One of the things that makes me really angry was that we were being used to collect money for them. There was no choice about doing it, no-one ever asked me if I wanted to do it.

Trips and holidays

36. I'm not sure if it was with Mrs Smith or with the Barries but we went to a theme park like Butlin's or something but I didn't like it. I have a problem with my balance so I couldn't go on any of the rides. I think it was a day trip.
37. At the very end before leaving Lagarie, [REDACTED] and I went on a trip up to Arbroath when I was about nine or ten years old. [REDACTED] would have been eight or nine years old. We went round churches again, singing. I've never been back to Arbroath, I wouldn't go back.
38. I remember we went to a church in Arbroath and [REDACTED] and I had to stand up in front of the congregation. Mr Barrie started talking to the congregation about us. He started talking about [REDACTED] who was seventeen years old and was going to be looking after

us. He referred to her as being a minor and I thought he meant someone who worked in a coal mine. I didn't understand what he meant and that has always stuck in my memory. I remember feeling absolutely humiliated standing in front of the whole congregation while they were all looking at us and he was smiling and talking about us before they did a collection. I was mortified, I wanted the ground to open and swallow me up. That is one of the things that made me want to talk to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry because future children in care should not be used like that. It is totally wrong.

Work

39. The children didn't have to help out with any chores, as far as I can remember. There was always a lot of cleaning work going on, being done by the staff. The place was always very clean and smelled of disinfectant.

Birthdays and Christmas

40. I remember being given some toys at Christmas and thinking that they were not new toys. I presume that was in the Barries' time. Years later, when people were collecting things to give out to children at Christmas I would think that they should buy new toys because children do realise the difference.
41. I can't remember anything else about Christmas, or my birthdays. Nothing ever happened on my birthday.

Personal possessions

42. I don't think we had anywhere to keep personal possessions. I don't remember if we took anything with us from home to Lagarie.

Bed Wetting

43. One time █████ told me that a little boy had wet the bed and Mrs Barrie hit him.

Visitors

44. My father used to come and visit us but I don't know how often he came. From what I can remember we saw my father in the playroom. There would have been other people milling around. I remember he brought us presents. I can remember sitting on a sofa and he was sitting next to me and gave me a present. I think he brought me a pen that I had asked for and knitting wool. I can't remember being taken out for the day or anything like that.
45. █████ remembers Lagarie a lot more than I do. I remember her telling me years later that she did warn our father that the Barries were not nice people but he thought they seemed to be very nice and pleasant. I think the Barries were very good at putting on a show, spinning people along.

External Inspections

46. I can't remember anyone else visiting. I think there were adults in the background who came to visit, but not to visit me specifically. I think they were just looking round the place. I think I would have been in the woods or in the sewing room as much as possible.

Family contact

47. Our extended family never came to see us. My aunts and uncles all went to church but they wouldn't help us and we were ignored. One of my aunts was a great cook and made clothes. She made things for charity events that she supported but despite being only an hour or so away from Lagarie, she never came to visit us. She did all that work for charity, but she never did anything for us.

Sibling contact

48. I think it was Mrs Smith who instigated [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and I going into a separate room. She was quite supportive of us being together. Mrs Barrie would have liked to have split us up. At night, when we were sound asleep, Mrs Barrie would come into the room to shout at [REDACTED]. It must have happened quite a few times. I found that really upsetting and distressing because I had never experienced young people being treated like that before. Sometimes [REDACTED] and I would wake up but we would still pretend to be asleep. [REDACTED] stood up to Mrs Barrie and would have answered her back.
49. When Mrs Barrie came in and shouted at [REDACTED] it wasn't from a place of concern, or to tell [REDACTED] to do something differently or check with her about the way [REDACTED] did something, it was a really nasty and full of hatred. Looking back it was like being in a Grimm's fairy tale. There were characters you didn't want to be with or go near.
50. I think Mrs Smith got on really well with [REDACTED]. After Mrs Smith retired, and I think after we left Lagarie, we went up to visit her in Cruden Bay. We stayed with her for a few days. I don't know what [REDACTED] and Mrs Smith talked about.
51. My relationship with my sisters was difficult because [REDACTED] started looking after [REDACTED] and I when [REDACTED] was seventeen years old. [REDACTED] was quite determined to take us away but it caused a lot of problems. We got no help, no advice, and no support. I think that's what upsets me the most. We had to leave because it was such a toxic environment. I'm glad we did leave because god knows what would have happened if we had stayed. On the other hand, [REDACTED] was looking after two children while trying to put herself through university. I feel guilty about ruining her life because we got no help.

Discipline

52. In dealing with discipline I think Mrs Barrie would be violent. I don't think you should use violence against children, or people in general. If you bring up a child properly, if they are naughty, a stern word should be enough.

Running away

53. I didn't run away from Lagarie, I didn't think about it. I don't know if [REDACTED] thought about it. Where we were, there was part of a naval base across the road. They had a big hangar that they used to take hovercrafts to. I was really scared of the noise at night. I think the dormitory was near the road. If I saw them it would freak me out, they were huge black hovercrafts.
54. I didn't even know that the [REDACTED] had tried to run away, I wasn't aware, at the time, of other children running away.

Abuse at Lagarie

55. I used to hide on the small staircase or in the grounds because I was afraid of the Barries. In contrast to Mr Barrie, Mrs Barrie was never smiling, she was in a constant bad mood.
56. [REDACTED] was one of the oldest children at Lagarie, if not the oldest. [REDACTED] was very bright but she didn't realise the extent of the sexual abuse going on. I think that's why she feels really guilty. If the [REDACTED] had confided in her, she would have said something. The [REDACTED] were the same age as us but they kept themselves to themselves, whereas the [REDACTED] would always be playing with us.
57. Mrs Barrie smiled in pictures but that wasn't what she was like in real life. I remember her grabbing a boy in the kitchen. It wasn't a grab to protect him from harm, it was a vicious grab. I just knew to stay out of her way. She was a really horrible, vicious character. I think that's why a lot of staff left. I think she made it difficult for a lot of the nice staff to stay.
58. Mrs Barrie would snarl at [REDACTED]. She put on a front. Apart from seeing Mrs Barrie grab a boy in the kitchen, I can't remember her physically abusing other children.

59. I watched the BBC documentary on allegations of abuse at Lagarie. I didn't know how bad things were until I watched the programme. I was horrified, I couldn't sleep. It made sense as to why [REDACTED] avoided us and maybe why Mrs Barrie was so angry all the time. She obviously knew what was going on.

Reporting of abuse at Lagarie

60. There was no-one I could have confided in at Lagarie.

Leaving Lagarie

61. I don't remember anything about the lead up to leaving Lagarie, other than Mr Barrie referring to it in Arbroath. I don't remember leaving Rhu primary school, which seems strange because I must have been nine or ten years old. I can't understand why I remember so little about the routine at Lagarie. I think part of me has just blocked off the memories because it was such an unhappy time.

Life after being in care

62. After Lagarie, we moved into a flat in Helensburgh but I don't remember moving into the flat. My father had sent [REDACTED] money for the flat. [REDACTED] had a place in Glasgow University. She was trying to look after [REDACTED] and I and go to university. It was very difficult, with no help or support.
63. I started a new school, in primary five. I was very quiet, I wasn't disruptive but my teacher, Mrs [REDACTED], disliked me. I remember being made to stand outside because I couldn't say the word loch properly. Another time she called me up to her desk and asked me, "Why don't you have a mummy? Is she dead or are your parents divorced?" which was a really nasty thing to do. I think that some teachers are bullies.

People think of children being bullies but some teachers can be bullies too. Again, there was no-one I could say anything to.

64. There was another teacher who [REDACTED] said she knew from Lagarie, so she must have worked there too. She failed [REDACTED] on a basic swimming test, but [REDACTED] could swim like a fish. It was just a power thing.
65. My elder sister was a teenager and struggled to manage money. Sometimes there was no money available to pay bills. We had no electricity sometimes and were occasionally short of food. We had a paraffin heater and one time that went on fire.
66. I finished school when I was seventeen years old. I feel my schooling was a bit disjointed. My father died just before I sat my Highers. I didn't have anyone to say to me to do my homework and things like that. Everything was disjointed. I have often felt that time was wasted. I feel we weren't allowed to reach our potential.
67. [REDACTED] didn't complete her degree. I remember her crying in her bed. She had been to the university asking for help but no-one would help her. Some of [REDACTED]'s friends bought us food and took us out to the circus or to dances, to give [REDACTED] a break. In contrast one of our cousins just came over to borrow [REDACTED]'s clothes, she didn't seem interested in [REDACTED] or I.
68. Other relatives just didn't bother, they stopped talking to us. It was as if we didn't exist. I think they thought we would just end up in the gutter somewhere. It was decades after Lagarie that one of my aunts, on my mother's side, started speaking to us again. On my father's side we had an aunt and uncle in New Zealand but we never heard from them. We visited a cousin a few years ago. I didn't know him but [REDACTED] had always sent Christmas cards. That cousin is in his seventies now and he had no idea what happened to us when we were children.
69. There was no support, no advice given, so we were really on our own. I think that this has had an impact on all our lives.

70. I didn't know what I wanted to do after school, we got no career's advice. Because I failed at school I feel I had to push myself and I am constantly studying things. I just feel as if I didn't reach my potential. It is the same for my sisters as well.

Impact

71. I try not to think about my experiences at Lagarie, I just get upset. Sometimes I wish I had a boring life. My childhood is not something I want to share with other people. I have never been able to trust people that much, it is difficult.
72. Lagarie was an atmosphere of fear. Everyone was afraid of stepping out of line with Mrs Barrie. I didn't enjoy my time there, I just remember having to hide all the time. The main thing was being really scared of Mrs Barrie. I was just frightened.
73. I have always felt difficulty in asking for help because no-one helped us at Lagarie. I like helping other people but I find it difficult to accept help from others. Because of earlier financial hardship, I can't see food wasted. If I am going out for a meal I will eat everything on my plate and I get quite anxious if people leave anything or throw food out.
74. I didn't carry on going to church after I left Lagarie. I don't have anything against religion, I think it can be a great thing if it is done the right way and people want friendship or comfort from it but I think that Mr Barrie was a fake. I get annoyed by that, I don't think anyone checked his background. Nowadays you have to jump through hoops but Mr Barrie was a man working with children and there were clearly no checks done whatsoever.
75. I do get stressed sometimes. Since the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry came about and I saw the adverts, I have had trouble sleeping. Part of it is the stress about what happened to the [REDACTED] girls and feelings of guilt. Part of it is about things being made public, because I don't talk about it. I don't want people to know about my situation.

76. I lack trust in other people. I can't imagine being dependent on someone. The idea of that is totally alien to me. I feel my time at Lagarie has affected my confidence. I have never had any confidence. I don't have the confidence to ask for promotion at work.
77. I have never gone back to Lagarie but I have driven past it and I just want to get past it as quickly as possible. It has been turned into flats now. I have occasionally seen flats up for sale. God knows how anyone could live in a place like that.

Treatment/support

78. I have never had any treatment or support about my experiences. I just think it is too late at my age. It is not just Lagarie, I had trauma before Lagarie with my parents dying and I had a lot of problems afterwards. In a way the things that happened before Lagarie didn't affect me as much as the things afterwards. Part of me thinks that there are people who are worse off than me but I worry that talking about it might make things worse.
79. People can hold things against people or misuse that information. I think that is one of the reason I don't talk about things. I don't want people to have information about me to hold against me.
80. Maybe if we were given support at Lagarie and if it hadn't been so bad there, my older sister might have left my younger sister and I there knowing that we were safe. She could have had a chance at university to make a better life for us. We had to leave because Lagarie was so bad but we weren't prepared for life outside. We go no support whatsoever. We just had to bumble along.
81. I have been made aware of Future Pathways but I don't want to talk about my experiences any more. The Barriers are dead now and I feel that justice can't be achieved.

Reporting of Abuse

82. I have never made a report to the police about Lagarie.

Records

83. I haven't tried to obtain my records myself but my sisters have made a request for paperwork from the Sailor's Society. From what I have heard, the Sailor's Society have said that the paperwork was destroyed in a fire. Their attitude seems to be that it happened a long time ago and while they are very sorry, it is nothing to do with anyone who is there now, and it won't happen again.

Lessons to be learned

84. I think people should be very careful when children are in a care situation. Children in care should be given privacy. Sometimes children at that age don't know what decisions to make. I was reading an article in the paper the other day about Ukrainian orphans coming to Scotland. They were photographed. I thought it was great that they weren't being split up but if you take a picture of a child it is constantly there, you can't make it disappear, especially now with the internet. And again, no doubt those pictures will be used to raise funds.
85. Children shouldn't be used for raising money. I think that is despicable. Children shouldn't have to do things they don't want to do. They should be treated as individuals. In Lagarie they lumped everyone together. If the television was on, everyone had to watch it. If they were going out for a walk, everyone had to go out as a group. There was no taking into account individual personalities and needs. I also think that the idea of taking photographs of vulnerable children which allows them to be identified is wrong. Even if children seem quite happy to have their photograph taken I don't think it is right.

86. I think they should do thorough background checks on anyone working in a children's home. I think they have to ask why do people want to work in a children's home, what are their motives? It is more than just checking to see if they have a criminal record. I think they have to check people's backgrounds and experience of working with children as well as asking them why they want to do it, because I don't think everyone has the right motives for wanting to work with children. Those children are vulnerable and need extra care.
87. They not only have to be very careful about who works with children, they have to monitor them constantly. With children like me, we were put there and nobody checked back to see how we were doing over a period of years, which is incredible.
88. I think that so much of these awful situations that have happened shouldn't have happened. People have to be very conscious of how children are brought up in care. There should be safeguarding with people monitoring that. There was nobody monitoring The Sailor's Society. Lagarie was obviously a cash-cow for them. Nobody asked me how I was coping or how things were being dealt with. Nobody asked us anything when we left. You can't just say to a child, "You're seventeen, go out into the world with no family and no support."
89. Children in care should be given help and support to learn how to cope with finance, even simple things like how to do laundry, how to get a job, or apply for a mortgage. They should be given a lot more support when they leave care. We were put in risky situations when we left.

Hopes for the Inquiry

90. I hope the Sailor's Society admit what happened and that they are sorry. I hope that people, like the [REDACTED], who were abused are finally going to be believed and given a lot of support because their lives have been totally ruined. You never recover

from things like that. That is one of the things that I find so upsetting. Maybe if we, or more likely [REDACTED] had known about it at the time, we could have helped.

91. The Barries were just so evil. Sometimes you think there would be no point in telling people because they wouldn't believe how bad things were. It may have assumed that I would have got some sort of support when I left care but I didn't.

Other information

92. 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... [REDACTED] PKR

Dated... 20 May 2022