

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

EQZ

Support person present: No

1. My name is EQZ I was known as EQZ as a child. My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. My mother was and my father was She was born in 1927 and he was in 1925.
3. My earliest memory is of being in Stockbridge. We lived in a basement flat in My memory before children's homes is that we didn't have a lot but we were fine. We used to just go out and play all the time. I lived with my mother, siblings and my Auntie My auntie stayed with us until she joined the RAF in 1953. It was my mum and two aunts, Auntie and Auntie who really brought us up, they all loved us. We got Christmas presents and peanuts and oranges at Halloween. After dinner, we would watch Robin Hood and my mother would put the wee ones to bed.
4. My dad was away at sea. I think my dad ran away to the trawlers when he was fourteen so he was guaranteed to become an alcoholic. He worked as bosun in the Merchant Navy. We weren't frightened of my dad because he wasn't a danger to children.
5. My sister was born on 1948. So there were thirteen months between us. My sister was born in 1952. Then there was

my brothers, █████ in 1955, █████ in 1956, █████ in 1960, my sister █████ in 1964, my brother █████ in 1965 and my brother █████ in 1970. My mother had another baby who died before my sister, █████. I think my mother was badly depressed following his death.

6. My mother was compassionate and she loved us. She was also artistic. My father was paid fortnightly. I think it was nine pounds. My mother had a full fortnight to look after us with no money. I can remember her always having to borrow money and, sometimes, having to go to the headmaster at the school to ask for free dinners. I think she was in a difficult situation whereby she didn't have any money and wasn't able to feed us.

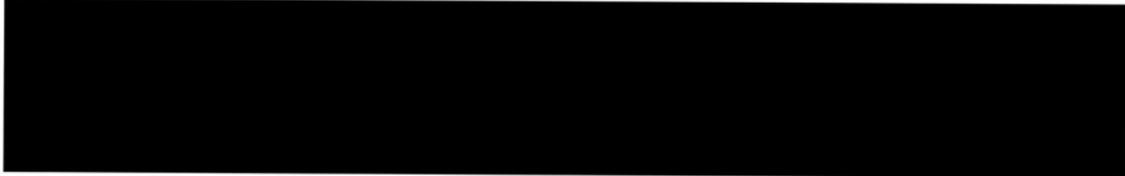
Polworth Children's Home, Edinburgh

7. I read years later that it said in my 'care package' that it was 'desertion' which led to us going into the first children's home. At the time, my mum had three wee girls. There was me, █████ and █████. She was pregnant with my brother, █████. I think she just needed some help. I don't think it was 'desertion'.
8. I can remember playing with some wee bricks, with my sister, while we waited to leave. I found out years later that it was a policeman who took us from our house to the children's home. How was that desertion? Why would my mother have been waiting for a policeman to come for us? I can also remember reading in my 'care package' notes that it said the house was a "mess".
9. We were taken to a children's home in Edinburgh. I can't remember where it was, or much about it but I've read in my notes, it was called Polworth. I was four or five. I think we arrived there at night time. When we first arrived the staff checked our hair for nits. I can't remember anything particularly bad happening there. I remember my sister, █████, was in a big, old fashioned pram.
10. I can remember two things, one of which is being shoved into a corner by someone. I can remember it because it was so rough. I also remember being in a nursery and

joining in with the other children to play. I had a wee drink of juice and a biscuit. I can't remember any names of staff or faces.

11. There was a big gap between Polworth and the next home. However, when I was eight or nine, my mother started having an affair with another man. My father was at sea and when he was home he was drunk. Anyway, it wasn't a good move because he turned out not to be a nice man.
12. When I was ten, I came home from school one day to find my mother lying at the bottom of the stairs in the close. She was unconscious with blood coming out of her head. I saw my father at the top of the stairs. He had nearly killed her. I couldn't even recognise her face. The police came and mother was taken to hospital. At the time, I made the assumption that my father had thrown her over the bannister onto the stairs. I don't know if my father had come home and found out that she was having an affair, but there had been some sort of argument.

13.



14. For some reason, my mother always had some compassion for my dad. Although, it must have been a difficult marriage. He was quite a principled man.
15. It was after this incident that we were taken to Lagarie Children's Home in 1961. I was ten. I think, because my mother had almost been murdered. I think my mum had a broken skull. I can remember my Uncle [redacted] crying when we left.

Lagarie Children's Home, Rhu, Helensburgh

First day

16. I can remember approaching it in the car. It was a big white mansion. It was a beautiful place. It was [redacted], me, [redacted], [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted]. There was a girl coming

down the stairs and my sister asked her how long she had been there. She replied, "twelve years". My sister and I just sank. My sister said, "This isn't a holiday, this is a home". I think someone had told us we were going on a holiday. According to the care package, I was there from [REDACTED] 1961 to [REDACTED] 1962. I don't know who paid for Rhu.

17. A woman, called Miss Miller, who was the matron seemed to be in charge. She was a large stout lady with grey hair. I don't think she was of retiring age. Miss Miller took our clothes and gave us second hand clothes out of a box. We had a bath with carbolic soap. She cut my hair. I can remember [REDACTED] saying "you're not cutting my hair". I don't think she cut her hair. My sister was swearing, I won't repeat the language but we did come from a housing scheme. I reckon Miss Miller was frightened of my sister.
18. There was a tower room which was a dormitory. It was a beautiful place but it's so sad when you think about what happened there. There was an opportunity to make a difference in vulnerable children's lives.
19. There was a cook in the kitchen. I can remember catching a glimpse of her once. She looked a lovely, big, friendly woman. There was another a very nice woman called Miss Ferguson who came to the home once a week. She wore a coat so I think she must have been a doctor.

Mornings and bedtime

20. We got up in the morning and went to the dining room for porridge and toast. I can't remember if it was all girls in my dorm. I was quite focussed on my own bed. The dormitory itself was nice and the bedding was nice too.

Mealtimes/Food

21. The food was alright. We had porridge in the morning and macaroni cheese and cauliflower cheese at tea time. I hadn't heard of that before. I think it was alright. I can remember one instance where a wee girl came into the dining room. I don't know why

but Miss Miller punched her in the face, on the nose. The blood went all over her t-shirt. There were a lot of kids there at the time. That was such a trauma in my mind.

Washing/bathing

22. There was no door on the bathroom. There was a younger woman with ginger hair who used to be like an attendant when we were having a bath. Not long after we arrived, my sister was in the next cubicle to me. I could hear her kicking and screaming, saying "get your hands off me." I thought it was a bit creepy because I wasn't used to having anyone there while I got washed. The bathroom reminded me of the smell of disinfectant which they used on the stairs.

Clothing/uniform

23. I can remember getting a grey pleated skirt for school. There was a room in the home with lots of new clothes in it but we never got any of them. There must have been cleaners but I can't remember seeing any. I don't know if they maybe came when we were at school.

Leisure time

24. We went downstairs into the lounge after tea. Miss Miller once asked me to take the younger children outside onto a wee grassy area. I didn't know what to do with them. I would tried to tell them to play a game in a circle but she shouted at me from the window, "stop going round in a circle". I can remember thinking, "what do I do now?" so I just told them to chase each other.
25. I can't remember much about what we did at night. We always went to bed quite early. I was always being glad to get to bed. It was quiet in the dorm. I think we were too frightened to make any noise. I was relieved to be there to get away from Miss Miller. I used to try to avoid going where she was. Most of my time was spent trying to avoid her.

26. We didn't get pocket money. My Auntie [REDACTED] and Auntie [REDACTED] brought us a big bag of sweets once but we didn't get them.

Trips and holidays

27. My sister and I once got to see Pollyanna in the picture house. My sister had written to the pictorial paper. I don't know if that's why they took us out. My sister had beautiful handwriting. After that, my sister ran away. She must have given a story but I often wonder if the bus driver knew about the home because the bus stop was right outside it.

Schooling

28. We went to St Joseph's in Helensburgh. Helensburgh and Rhu are right next to one another. The school was fine but I felt quite disconnected from people. I just felt detached. The school itself was alright but I probably wasn't alright. I didn't really make pals. My sister was at Notre Dame.

Healthcare

29. I can't remember getting a medical examination when I arrived at Rhu. I once had a poisonous finger which the matron stuck a needle in. There was a wee place in the home where you went when you weren't well.

Religious instruction

30. I think we said a prayer, thanking God for the food. It wasn't a Catholic place.

Work

31. I can remember a brush which had a big pole. Miss Miller put me in the dining room and told me to polish the floor. It was the heaviest thing like a boulder. I don't think I

was punished for not being able to do it, unless a cleaner had come in and cleaned it after me.

32. The matron used to send my sister [REDACTED] and me out by ourselves to houses behind the home with a tin collecting money.

Birthdays and Christmas

33. I turned eleven in there. I didn't get a card or a cake. I didn't expect anything. My dad sent me a manicure set with a ballerina on it. He could be alright a lot of the time.
34. At Christmas time, we got to go to a party on a submarine. The sailors were all dressed up. We had lovely food there. I don't know the name of the place, or where the place was but it was quite nearby Rhu. It was a joy going somewhere where people were normal.
35. In the home, we got a pillowcase with some things in it. I remember getting an underskirt with rainbows on it and some sweeties. I liked going to the party with the smaller children. I can't remember a tree or decorations in the home but there might have been. I can't remember a Christmas dinner.

Visitors/Family Contact

36. I just waited for visiting time when my mother would come to visit us. She came to visit us regularly. I think it was once a month. The matron wouldn't say "it's visiting day", or anything. You wouldn't know what day, she wouldn't tell you if or when she was coming. It was horrible. I don't know if my mum had to let her know in advance or if there was a set visiting day. We would all be so excited when we saw her coming up the drive. She used to bring us Milky Way chocolate bars and crisps.
37. I was worried about my brothers and sisters. The babies were in the nursery. There wasn't much contact with my siblings apart from [REDACTED] because she was older.

38. I think my mother needed my dad to be able to get a house and to get us back. I didn't ever see anything too bad happen between them. I certainly wasn't afraid of my dad. There is a letter that my mother wrote to him which was along the lines of "we'll need to try to get the bairns back".

Running away

39. I can remember hearing that after my sister, [REDACTED], ran away with the wee Glasgow girl, [REDACTED] that the matron stripped all her clothes off and made her lie on the floor in her room. Somebody told me that, I don't have any evidence of that. My sister went to my auntie's in Edinburgh. After my sister ran away, the matron stuck to me like glue.
40. I tried to run away once but I was caught straight away. I had gone with another girl to the beach but someone must have known we were from the home and reported us. I wanted to go home to my mother.
41. There had been a few occasions over the years where I had been away from my mother. I have learned that, with trauma, people were so glad to be back with the people they love.

Inspections

42. I don't think there were any inspections of the home. Miss Miller seemed to be the 'be all and end all' of the running of the place.
43. I've been told that it's difficult to put things into words when you've been traumatised. I have often thought about why didn't I tell my mother anything. I think it was also because it all happened over a short space of time.

Discipline

44. The matron asked us where we learned our manners and my sister told her it was from our mother. My mother had always set the table for tea and lit a coal fire. I think the matron was shocked that [REDACTED] could stand up for herself.
45. When I wasn't at school, or sleeping, I spent my time avoiding the matron. The matron demonstrated how she treated children when she punched the girl or when she asked how we learned our manners. There was no love or affection. We weren't even allowed to be children. I can't ever remember seeing any of the wee girls holding hands and chatting to each other.

Abuse at Lagarie

46. There are two main incidents which I think best describe Miss Miller's treatment of children. When we first arrived in the home, I think it was my second day there, I heard a wee girl with a Glaswegian accent saying, "there's nae hot water". I replied, "I'm not having a cold bath." The next thing, the matron appeared and just grabbed hold of me. She didn't say anything but she choked me against the wall. That was just the start of the incident. She had her full hand around my neck so that I couldn't breathe. I was terrified. I hadn't heard her coming because of the carpet under her feet so it was as if she'd come from nowhere.
47. My sister, [REDACTED], was a lot braver than me. I think I had angered her by the cheeky wee answer I'd given. I thought I was going to die. I just couldn't breathe. I was choking.
48. The second incident involved my brother, [REDACTED]. He was only five and was still at an age when he needed looking after. He was a lively wee lad with dimples. I'm not sure how much time passed between this and the first incident.
49. [REDACTED] had been jumping on the bed upstairs with another wee boy. Miss Miller summoned me to the sitting room, [REDACTED] was already there. She locked us in. She put him over her knee and hit him with a shoe with a hard sole. She hit him and hit him

and hit him, over and over. She wouldn't stop. His wee bottom was red raw. He didn't cry at first. By the end, his bottom looked like a road map.

50. I realise now that she was taking her anger out on us because my sister [REDACTED] had run away. She forced me to see that. She was either a psychopath or she was punishing me for [REDACTED] running away. I can't understand why anyone would force a child to watch that. I've carried the guilt with me all of my life. I used to dream about it, I should have jumped on her but I couldn't, I was rooted to the spot.
51. Another incident was when Miss Miller locked my younger brother, [REDACTED], in a room on his own all day, overnight and into the next day. He was only three or four. It was alien to me that someone could leave a toddler in a room on his own. She was cruel. [REDACTED] told me about it when we were in there. I don't know if he was given any food or water.
52. One day, Miss Miller put my other brother, [REDACTED], in a room on his own. I could see him through the window. He was only a baby. He managed to get himself onto a window seat. Miss Miller said that he had to learn to walk. It broke my heart to see him like that.
53. It was a terrifying place to be because you never knew if the matron was in, or if she would be coming round a corner. I always felt anxious and on edge. She made a favourite out of a wee girl called [REDACTED]. I don't think she really was her favourite but it was a way of making the other children feel bad. She was never reprimanded. She was treated like the 'special one'.

Leaving Lagarie

54. One day they just told us to get ready. I got my own stuff back when I left. I think [REDACTED] and I left first. I think the smaller ones left the following day. Nobody told us we were leaving. They didn't tell us anything, they just gave us our stuff and a car came to take us away. When we realised the car was coming for us we were really excited.

55. I think the nice woman, Miss Ferguson, had said something, either that, or Miss Miller had felt threatened by [REDACTED] running away. I think [REDACTED] ran away and told my Aunties what had been happening. Something led to us going home. I left in [REDACTED] 1962. I thought we got back to my mother after about seven months. I was so glad to get out of the place.

Home

56. When I went home, my dad was at sea. We lived at [REDACTED]. My mother's boyfriend, [REDACTED] was there. I think he was in his early thirties. I can remember wishing he wasn't there. I think I was used to my dad and he felt like a real intrusion to me. I suppose, in a way, it also felt like he was taking my mother's attention away from us.

57. [REDACTED] was quiet and plausible. My mother didn't see his deviance. She didn't know what he was really like. When I was twelve, [REDACTED] sexually assaulted me. I don't feel able to speak about it. I became pregnant as a result. I had no idea I was pregnant, I was totally oblivious. It was noticed in the gym hall at school. There had been a couple of incidents prior to it where I had to get away from [REDACTED]

58. The only reason people knew about it was because I became pregnant. The school sent me home, and an appointment was made for me at the family doctor. I didn't tell anyone who it was, my mother asked me but I wouldn't tell her. I completely shut down. I was scared that I would be sent to jail.

59. I went to a mother and baby home in Tollcross in Edinburgh. The social worker didn't speak to me on the way there. When I was in the home, two, tall, policewomen came to see me. They asked me questions and according to the care package, [REDACTED] admitted it right away. He got eighteen months in prison.

60. The baby was born on [REDACTED] 1963. I didn't know if I'd had a boy or a girl. The doctors and nurses wouldn't let me see the baby for ages. I was crying and shouting

for them to let me see him. Eventually, a nurse wheeled him in and when I saw him, I thought he was lovely. He was a big, beautiful baby boy. I just couldn't feel anything. I can remember thinking this isn't anything to do with me. I can remember looking down at him and saying, "I'm sorry, I can't keep you."

61. He was adopted by a Catholic family who lived in Dundee. The adoption was arranged by the St Andrew's Adoption Agency. There was no consultation. His parents told him he had been adopted when he was thirteen.
62. The council evicted us from our house. My mother lost her house and I was fostered. After I'd had the baby, nobody told me what was happening. They just came and got me from the mother and baby home.
63. I don't know if [REDACTED] abused any of my siblings. I have since learned that people who do that kind of thing can be crafty. My mother probably thought he was helping her. My mother loved us and tried her best. I don't think he assaulted my sister, [REDACTED], because she seemed to have more gall than I had. I think if I hadn't been so terrified in that children's home, I might have been able to stand up for myself. I might have been able to tell my mother but instead I just went about in wandering shock. I often wonder if the strangling incident with Miss Miller affected my ability to speak, every time I tried to speak, I couldn't find the words.

Mrs [REDACTED] Foster Care, Brechin

64. No one told me where I was going. I was only thirteen. The social worker didn't speak to me at all. I was taken to a house in Brechin. The woman, Mrs [REDACTED], was quite old. When I first arrived, I didn't know what was happening. When the social worker was there, Mrs [REDACTED] showed me to my room. It had a big, beautiful bedspread on it but as soon, as the social worker left, the bedspread came right off. There was an eight year old girl and a seventeen year old girl there too. I can't remember either of their names.

65. On my first day, Mrs zEKD left me alone in the living room with a young man who had a severe facial disfigurement or disability. He lived there too. I can remember feeling very scared. However, once I got to know him, he was a 'big, gentle giant'.
66. I can remember getting mince with an egg in it and lentil soup. In the mornings, I got a buttered roll and cornflakes.
67. The wee school I went to was old fashioned but it was alright. I would come home and get soup and bread. I was supposed to get pocket money, four shillings, but Mrs zEKD didn't give me it. I would say that she wasn't very interested in me. She was doing the job for the money.
68. The older girl who lived there slapped me in the face once. I did 'tattie picking' during the holidays. I hadn't heard of it so I asked the teacher what it meant. I enjoyed it because I got away from Mrs zEKD.
69. I never had any change of clothing. I used to have to wash my things in the sink. Mrs zEKD didn't buy me clothes even though she was given money for them. I can remember people not talking to me. It was as if I didn't exist.
70. Brechin was a small 'backwater' compared to Edinburgh. I can remember missing the colours of the buses in Edinburgh. I must have been homesick. Mrs zEKD wrote in my care package that I wrote three letters home every day and that I cried a lot. I think I was there for about ten months.
71. I came back from Brechin and went straight to my Auntie s. I can remember my cousin opening the door to me and letting out a yell. She put on a record and made us a cup of tea.
72. My mother was still homeless at the time so she was moving around between various rental properties. It took three years for my mother to get a house after the incident with . She was separated from my dad but they weren't divorced. My Auntie

█████ fostered me but I spent so much time at my mum's. My Auntie let me stay with her until my mum got a house.

73. Prior to leaving my Auntie █████'s, I got a job in a hairdresser. I left my mother's in late 1967.

Life after being in care

74. I met someone when I was a sixteen. We got married. I thought getting married would be a 'normal' thing to do. I lived on █████ I stayed with him and tried to make things work. We were together for fifteen years but it was a nightmare. I was terrified to leave because I didn't want my children growing up in a children's home.

75. After my mother died in 1984, I started drinking too much. I left my husband around the same time, so I went into a real depression. I went to the doctor for help. It had been very difficult getting away from my husband. I got divorced and moved to a house in █████.

76. I went to Rape Crisis a few years ago. I received a letter out of the blue from my son, █████. His parents had emigrated to Australia. I was so excited. He came to visit me in January this year. He's six foot, one. He was a professional █████ █████ He was such a gentleman but I think he found it difficult. He's happy and has a good life. I've got three grown up children.

77. My son, █████ told me that he felt the pain and loss every day after he had been told that he adopted. I told him that he had been in my mind every day. I think he started to look for me when he was eighteen. He didn't find me for a long time. It was a miracle that he found me. He knows what happened to me, and it made him want to find me even more.

Impact

78. I have two other children. My son, [REDACTED] is 52 and my daughter, [REDACTED] is almost 51. I think they were both affected by being afraid in the house. My daughter lost her son about eight years ago. He drowned at [REDACTED]. She's had a problem with alcohol and had a bit of a breakdown recently. My son is a nice man. He gelled well with my son, [REDACTED] when they met.
79. None of my family have been able to have a relationship or to keep a job. I think it's due to the amount of trauma in the family. My brothers were compassionate laddies.
80. Every single one of my brothers and sisters were involved in either drugs or alcohol. It was the seventies and eighties, there was no work and drugs were everywhere. My sister [REDACTED] and my brother [REDACTED] both died of AIDS. One night I was at home with some of my family. My brother, [REDACTED], came to the door. If he hadn't been my brother I wouldn't have allowed him to come in based on his appearance. He seriously assaulted my other brother [REDACTED] and he died. [REDACTED] was on drugs when he did it. He hanged himself in jail.
81. I think my time in care has impacted on me massively. One doctor told me that I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I'm on a permanent anti-depressant. I just live a really quiet life. I've realised as far as my son and daughter are concerned, I can't fix everything. If they need me I am there.
82. I have this thing where I can be standing in a queue and I can hardly breathe. It's a bit like a panic attack. I've got a problem with waiting and I have wondered if it is because I waited and waited on my mother and she wasn't coming. Other times, I see people out and about who look like Miss Miller.

Treatment/support

83. I went back to Rhu once. The mansion isn't there anymore. A letter was sent to my niece from Birth Link. I phoned them and received my care package. The care package gave me information about Polworth, the sexual assault and stuff about Rhu.

Reporting of Abuse

84. I have never reported any of the abuse to the police.

Records

85. I have received my care package which dates back to 1955.

Lessons to be Learned

86. Institutions aren't the best places but if they are used for children, they should be run by people who have been vetted heavily. I think that people from outside should come in to speak to the children. Children will be open to someone if they're kind to them. It should be someone who would arrive at the home unexpectedly and speak to the children on a one-to-one basis. There should be better communication with children. I think the worst thing was wondering if my mother was coming to visit or not.

Other information

87. 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.....EQZ.....

Dated.....7/12/2020.....

