

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PFK

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is PFK. My date of birth is 1977. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born and raised in the Ruchill area of Glasgow. I stayed there with my mum, . My mum and dad, , had split up, and he stayed in his own house. My older sister stayed with her natural dad. My dad previously worked as a butcher but became addicted to alcohol. Mum worked in different pubs. Later there was my younger sisters, , , and .
3. I don't remember much about my life growing up except to start with there were no issues. The first school I attended was Ruchill Primary School. When I was about ten years old, perhaps a bit younger, we moved to the , and I moved school to Balornock Primary. That was where I was staying when I went on both occasions to Fornethy. I really enjoyed being at school and I was a member of the school netball team. That all disappeared after Fornethy.
4. Home life was good with mum. There was not a lot of money in the house, and we could not afford to go away on any family holiday. Through the school they had offered my mum, a place for the summer, for me to go to. She believed it would be like a holiday for us. I was told I would be going to Fornethy House. I ended up going to Fornethy two summers in a row with my sister .

Fornethy House, Alyth

5. Fornethy House was built in the countryside and was very isolated from the nearby towns and villages. It was a big white house and reminded me of a Princess Castle. To get there I was dropped off by mum at Buchanan Street Bus Station. I think I was then taken from there, along with some other girls, in a minibus. Other than ■■■■, I did not know any of the other girls there.
6. The minibus was driven by a male, but I did not know his name. I don't remember there being any other staff on the bus. When I was in Fornethy I can only remember the names of a couple of the staff. There was Mrs Pearl Fletcher, who was the Head Teacher. She was an older woman with white hair, big, horrible teeth and she may have worn glasses. I have been told that she is now deceased. The only other staff member whose name I can remember is Mrs Reid. She was a much younger woman with permed hair, and she was the fun one. Other than the driver of the minibus the only other male member of staff was the handyman.
7. I remember as we were arriving and came through the trees I could see a lot of pheasants.

Routine at Fornethy House, Alyth

First day

8. As soon as we arrived at the house, there were a group of girls ready to go home. As they left I realised that everything was not going to be as good as I thought. Right away the staff were very regimented and as we entered the house we were all made to go into the main hall and to line up in rows.
9. We were then separated into groups and allocated our respective dormitories. I was separated from my sister ■■■■, and no one would tell me why we could not be together. I was allocated to Reekie Lin dormitory, I think it was named after a nearby bridge. All the dormitories were on the upper floor. I think there were possibly four

maybe five other dorms. Other than one of the dorms being called Isla I am not sure of the other names. On the ground floor was the dining room, where a lot of my nightmares come from, and some bathrooms.

10. We were told to take all our bags to the dorms and to put our clothes and things away into the small cabinet by the side of the bed. There were maybe six or eight beds in my dorm, three or four on one side of the room and the same on the opposite side. I am not sure if they were the same size as the other dorms. I think the girls in my dorm were all of a similar age to myself. I am not sure how many girls there were in total at Fornethy. Once we got our stuff put away we were to back down to the big room.

Mornings and bedtime

11. Each morning Mrs Fletcher or another member of staff would come into the dormitory and pull the covers off our beds to wake us up. If we did not get out of bed quick enough for them we would be given a slap. We would then get washed, dressed and head down to the dining room for breakfast. Mrs Fletcher did her rounds in different dorms each day, so other staff would repeat what she was doing. I know it was early in the morning, but I am not sure about the exact time.
12. One of the things I can remember about being in the dorm at night was a blue light being on in the ceiling. When I went to bed I was not allowed a nightdress and had to sleep wearing just my underpants. All the girls in my dorm had to do the same.
13. If anyone wanted to go to the toilet during the night, you might get a fright as you stepped out of the room, because one of staff would appear and be shouting and asking what we were doing out of bed. I became too scared to get up at night.

Mealtimes/Food

14. I don't remember much about the food and mealtimes. There might have been some sort of cereal for breakfast, but I can't remember if that is the case. The thing I do

remember was when I was given prunes. I did not like prunes and did not want to eat them. Mrs Fletcher would force me to eat them. As I was eating them I would be sick. She made me eat that and the prunes until I had cleared my plate. Each night, despite knowing that I did not like prunes, she made sure I was fed them every day. Apart from Mrs Fletcher trying to force feed me, I would be crying, and she would slap me about the head. Because I was having so much trouble eating the food, I was never allowed to get anything from the tuck shop. This happened every single day I was there.

15. At night, before going to bed, we sometimes got a biscuit and some milk.

Washing/bathing

16. There were bathrooms on our floor and some more on the ground floor. The showers were on our floor, and they were all communal and open to view. We would have a shower each night.
17. When we came back from our morning walks we were often allowed to have another shower. Mrs Fletcher took great pride in helping us get washed. She would use a brown scrubbing brush to scrub our legs red raw, causing even more pain. Again, there were other staff, who did this to us.
18. Each night when we were having our showers we would have to stand naked in front of the other girls waiting our turn. The female staff would also be there watching us.

Clothing/uniform

19. I don't remember having to wear any uniform. I seem to remember we wore our own clothes. I think one of the girls, who would have been a favourite of Mrs Fletcher, was made a monitor, and she may have worn a yellow sash. She would be tasked with helping out with the tuck shop.

Leisure time

20. Most mornings there was no work in any classes, but we were made to go for long walks. When we were going on the walk we had to put the wellies on that Fornethy supplied. They never fitted properly and were so tight, they would rub me red raw on my calf's. The walks were out into the forest areas, and it would be for around four or five miles.
21. It did not matter what the weather was like because we went on the walks every day. It was every girl from the home that went on the walks. It seemed like we walked in circles, because we went out one side of the house and came back on other side. If we fell behind the main group whatever staff member was with us, would push us up the line to make sure we could make up some of the ground. It was usually two members of staff that went with us. After the walk we were back into Fornethy for lunch.
22. During the rest of the day, if we had any free time we would spend it in the grounds or write our letters. I don't remember there being any swings or anything to play on. I have since returned to look at the house and there are swings now in the back garden.

Schooling

23. We were never given any schooling or lessons when we were at Fornethy. I am not sure if this was because we were on our normal summer leave.

Healthcare

24. I never saw a doctor or a dentist at either of the times I was at Fornethy. During my second stay there, I had my first period. It was at night, and I was lying in bed panicking. Mrs Fletcher came in and dragged me out of my bed, which had blood on it. She took me to the bathroom and pulled down my pants to check them and then pulled them back up. She would not let me get myself cleaned up and I had to keep

wearing the same pants. She sent me back to my bed but made me lie on the bed with no sheets or covers. She was so angry with me, and I didn't know what had happened.

25. In the morning when it came time to get up she took me to the bathroom to get cleaned up. She handed me a big pad, but she did not tell me what I was supposed to do with it. She never explained to me what was happening. All she said to me was when the pad was too dirty I was to tell her, and I would get another one.

Religious instruction

26. Some girls were allowed to go to the local church on a Sunday. I never attended.

Trips and holidays

27. I don't have any specific memories of being taken out on any trips or visits. Sometime after I joined the [REDACTED] group I was shown some photographs of a building with a turret, and I had faint memories of being in the garden there. I could even remember there was a spiral staircase at the rear, not in the photographs. When I visited Fornethy I was able to find my way to this house and had such a creepy feeling as I walked around the grounds.

Work

28. Other than having to keep your bed tidy and the area around your bed clean, there were no chores that we would have to carry out. In the mornings we would just make our beds and make sure our cleaned clothes were put away in the cabinet. I think there must have been staff that carried out the laundry.

Birthdays and Christmas

29. I was not there during any Christmas period. On neither occasion I was at Fornethy can I remember anyone's birthday being celebrated.

Bed Wetting

30. I did not suffer from bed wetting but there was one girl in my dorm who did have that problem. She tried to hide the sheet, but Mrs Fletcher found out and she dragged the girl out of the room. I did not see what she did to the girl, but she was crying when she came back.

Visitors

31. There were no visits from anyone in my family.

Review of care

32. I don't remember there being anyone from any authority coming into Fornethy to check on the home or to check on the welfare of the girls there.

Family contact

33. Several times a week we were put into the classroom, and we were to write letters home. The problem was Mrs Fletcher would have the wording for the letters written on the blackboard. I remember I ignored that and wrote about some of the abuse. I was not aware at that time that Mrs Fletcher was censoring each letter. She saw what I had written and hit me over the head. She ripped the letter up and made me copy what was on the board. It concentrated on how things were supposed to be so nice there and we were all enjoying our stay there. Nothing like the reality. She wasn't the only one, as other staff would do the same thing.
34. Mum did write to us when we were at Fornethy and she would tell us she had put a postal order in it, so we would be able to get something from the tuck shop. When we eventually got the letter from Mrs Fletcher, we never saw that money and I got nothing from the tuck shop. Mrs Fletcher kept all the money from mum.

Sibling Contact

35. One day as I was walking in general in the corridor I saw my sister. I tried to approach her to try and speak with her. Mrs Fletcher saw this and grabbed me by the hair and dragged me away. She told me there was to be no communication with my sister while I was at Fornethy.

Discipline

36. One of the ways we might be disciplined was if we were noisy at night we might be told to go and sit in the corridor. None of us liked that as we were half naked and it was freezing in the corridor. After being there for a few minutes we were sent back to bed. I soon learned to be quiet in bed.

Abuse at Fornethy House, Alyth

37. Mrs Fletcher was the worst of all the staff and apart from her hitting and slapping us, there were many other teachers who did the same. I cannot recall the names of those teachers who were hitting us.
38. I was starting to develop as a young girl and one night when I was lying in bed, I am not sure what we did wrong, but Mrs Fletcher made all of us get out of bed and stand in the corridor, just in our underwear. I tried to use my hands to cover my chest, but she slapped my hands down and told me to keep them by my side. I am not sure how long we were stood there, it felt like hours, but it could also have been about ten minutes.
39. As I was standing in the corridor I could see there was another female member of staff at the other end of the corridor watching what was happening. As I stood there I looked to the other side and I saw the shadow of a man with wavy hair, hiding in the dark. He was standing there watching as I stood there. After we had been standing for a little while Mrs Fletcher sent us back to bed. I don't know why we had to do that, but I have learned later, that other things were happening.

40. There were some nights that girls were taken from their beds and when they came back they were crying. None of them ever said what was happening to them when they came back, but you could see they were distraught.
41. I was always a big built girl as I was growing up and Mrs Fletcher constantly made comments about my size and would make comments about how fat I was.

Reporting of abuse at Fornethy House, Alyth

42. When I was home after the first visit to Fornethy House I told my mum about Mrs Fletcher force feeding me the prunes, and that Fletcher had made me eat my sick. When I found out I was going back the next year I asked mum to write to them and tell them about my dislike for prunes and that I had been sick and made to eat it. She did write to Fornethy, and I gave it to Mrs Fletcher when I arrived the second time. It made no difference and I was fed them again by her throughout most of the second time I was there.

Leaving Fornethy House, Alyth

43. The day before we were due to go home on each occasion from Fornethy we would be told to pack our things. The night before we were going home, I think the second time, there was a party. I can even remember that my sister [REDACTED] was there, but I still wasn't allowed to have contact with her. Mrs Reid had organised the party and would be dancing with us, but there was no Mrs Fletcher at the party. In reality I think Fornethy were trying to manipulate us into having some fun to try and hide all the terrible things that happened during our time there. I can still remember the Billy Ocean song "The going gets tough" being played at the party. Now any time I hear that song I go right back to Fornethy.

Life after being in Fornethy House, Alyth

44. When I was back at home I was due to start at High School and therefore I was too old to go back. Prior to going to Fornethy I really enjoyed my education at primary school but when I went to the Albert Secondary and later Woodside Secondary, that all changed, and I was skipping school on a regular basis. I never sat any of my exams at school.
45. I moved out of mum's house as soon as I could and with the help of the social work department I had my own flat when I was sixteen. Because I had been attempting suicide so often, they had also allocated me a befriender.
46. I met the father of my two older children when I was seventeen and he was twenty-five. My oldest child was born two years later, followed later with my second child. We are no longer together. I was then living with a new partner, and we have had a child together. Unfortunately, we are not together anymore. His aunt has been a great help with my daughter, and she takes her for some overnight stays, which gives me a chance to recharge my batteries.
47. My first job was working in a chip shop, and I did other jobs usually in the takeaway business. When I was a bit older I worked as a carer and was happy working very long hours, which helped provide for my family. I was helping people, through Community Lifestyles, who suffered with physical and learning disabilities. I did this for over ten years but after the birth of my third child I had to give that up. I tried to go back after that, but it never worked out financially.
48. Whilst I was working with the care job, I was selected out of 18,000 other people to be given an award. This was in recognition of overcoming my health issues, getting my job and going on to help others. The award was called the [REDACTED] Award.

49. Later in my life I was always trying to do research about Fornethy House but for many years I could find nothing and was even starting to think that the nightmares I was having, were all in my imagination.
50. Only last year did I see something [REDACTED], and it related to an article in the media about abuse in Fornethy. I put a comment [REDACTED] and soon after, I got a [REDACTED] message from a lady. She was asking some questions about my time there, in an effort to ensure that I was a previous resident, and not some fake person. I then received an invite to join the [REDACTED] group. It was only then that I was able to get more information and was able to find more on the Internet about Fornethy. It felt great that I found out I was not alone in being abused there.
51. I found out it had opened in the 1960's and abuse had been ongoing for a number of years. After finding out all this information all the memories and nightmares I had been having growing up, all fell into place. I felt so angry that no one seems to have done anything about all the abuse.

Impact

52. My time in Fornethy has had a massive impact on everything of my life. I have little trust of anyone in authority. It affected my mental health and there were several times when I have attempted to commit suicide. I would do anything to try and get rid of the memories of all the slapping and force feeding.
53. I always lived with the impression that I must have done something wrong and therefore I deserved what was happening to me.
54. My sister [REDACTED] and I have never talked about our time at Fornethy House. Even to this day we don't talk to each other. I have beaten myself up mentally because I have never been able to find out if anything happened to her and if it did, did she blame me for not protecting her. This unknown still leaves me feeling guilty.

55. When I had my own family I think I became overprotective. I never allowed them to go to school on their own, right up to they left and began working. They were never allowed to go on any school trips or to stay overnight with their friends. If they wanted to spend any time indoors with friends, then they had to have them at our house. On one occasion I can remember there was as many as nineteen people in the house.
56. Even when it came to food I was protective. If any of my kids said they did not like the food I gave them, I assured them it was not a problem. They were never forced in any way to eat things they hated.
57. I could never even let myself leave the kids with my mum. If I went out to work then my ex-partner had to look after them.
58. Recently I felt able to tell my older daughter, who is now twenty-eight years old, about the things that happened to me at Fornethy and being made to eat my sick. She told me that hearing all this made sense to her and she understood why she was never allowed out.
59. Prior to going to Fornethy I had a really good relationship with my mother. When I finished with Fornethy that all changed. In my mind I had told her about the force feeding after the first stay there, and she allowed me to go back a second time. Even to this day we have a difficult relationship.
60. Even when I was with my ex-partner for over twenty years I put up with many bouts of emotional abuse because throughout my life I had been made to feel that I deserved this.

Treatment/support

61. Since visiting Fornethy and the house with the turret. I can remember there were days we were given some strange tasting diluting orange juice. After drinking the juice I have little memories of what I did or where I went. I do have some recollection

of being at the turret house. I don't have any memories of being touched sexually, but I do recall Mrs Fletcher was there. I don't even remember getting back to Fornethy. It is secluded, like Fornethy and about 15 to 20 minutes drive away from Fornethy.

62. I have been seeing a psychiatrist as for about six months I have been having nightmares. The nightmares are I am in Fornethy, in a room I don't recognise. I am sitting on a chair and there is man wearing old style chino's standing in front of me. I can see he has ginger hair. As I am sat there he stands right in front of my face and pulls his zip down but that is as far as the nightmares reach. I am remembering more and more about that incident.
63. I wake up and sometimes my six-year-old daughter is with me to try and comfort me. The psychiatrist says that it is more than likely it is my brain having shut out the bad memories and they are slowly coming back. I have been diagnosed as suffering from PTSD. All the psychiatric treatment I am receiving was arranged through my GP.
64. I am also being given help through the Moira Anderson Foundation and I see a counsellor each Tuesday, through them. They have also helped me get complementary aromatherapy, on a Friday. I have tried Future Pathways, but their waiting lists was too long to be able to give me the support I need.

Reporting of Abuse

65. Through advice from the [REDACTED] group, I did report my abuse to the police. This was around April 2023. I spoke with officers from Dundee, and I was given an update that as Mrs Fletcher is deceased then they could not take the case any further. They did let me know that there is an ongoing investigation into another member of staff. I have since found out her name, and although I know she was there at the time I was at Fornethy, I could not name her as one of the people who abused me.

Records

66. I have tried to get access for my records to my time at Fornethy House. I submitted a Freedom of Information request to Glasgow Council, but I was told they did not hold any records for Fornethy. I have also tried through the Education Department, as they had organised the trips, but again they say they have no records.
67. When I lived with mum and was having all the issues with suicidal thoughts, the social work allocated me a social worker and a befriender. I am now going to be contacting them to see what records they may hold. I do have my medical records, which I received after submitting a request to the surgery.

Lessons to be learned

68. I have since been made aware that there was abuse at Fornethy being reported as far back as 1961 and right up to 1991. If someone had listened and believed the children then, and thereafter taken the appropriate action, then many later children could have been protected from the abuse they subsequently suffered.

Other information

69. I don't want any compensation for what happened to me. I can remember the first time I told my mum about Fornethy she asked me if there is money in it. I told her I don't want any money. I said if there was a million pounds in it, it would not interest me. I just want acknowledgment.
70. I do want to see Glasgow Council give an apology for the lack of supervision they should have carried out at Fornethy. I am having legal assistance to try and retrieve any records held. I initially tried through Digby Brown but as Mrs Fletcher had passed away they said they could not help me. I am now getting advice from a Human Rights lawyer, Megan Lafferty, and she is trying to help me, although I have not spoken to her for a while.

71. I think people in authority should listen to the victims of abuse. Today there is too much reliance on whether paper records exist of people in care. I cannot find any of such records and feel that is holding people back from believing the abuse that took place at Fornethy. Listening to victims should be the start point and they should be believed as well. When making reports of abuse it should not be so difficult to make people aware of it and the systems should not be so complicated to make such reports. I am still left with the belief that the many hoops we have to go through to try and report the abuse, leads me to think that people are just trying their best to cover things up.
72. I think there is still a cover up by senior police officers, a former Lord Provost and people from the legal authority. There were many reports made to the police, for which there are crime reference numbers but the PF's office denies any allegations were reported to them.
73. There are also cover ups from doctors. I can see from my medical records that the periods I was at Fornethy are missing. This is the same for many of the women who had been at Fornethy.
74. I have recently been watching a serial on Netflix called "The Programme." This showed what life was like in a place that was very similar to Fornethy.
75. 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..... PFK

Dated..... 24/5/24