

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PSN [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is PSN [REDACTED] or PSN [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to Fornethy

2. I was born and raised in the Blackhill area in Glasgow. In the house were my mum, [REDACTED], dad, [REDACTED], and my older sister [REDACTED], younger brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
3. As far as I was concerned, I had a great childhood within the family home. I was enjoying going to school at Riddrie Primary and had lots of friends there.
4. My dad worked as a buyer for a road construction business and was away from home for long periods.
5. When my brother [REDACTED] was born, my mother started drinking. I think she was already suffering from post-natal depression, but not much was known about that in those days. By the time [REDACTED] was born, a few later, she was an alcoholic. When dad was home from work there were lots of arguments in the house.
6. I think I remember there were visits to the house from what we used to call 'the green lady', an early version of the welfare officer. I am not sure if it was for mum and her ongoing issues or for my brothers.

7. I am not sure how it came to be that my sister and I were going to be spending some time at Fornethy House in Alyth. I don't know if it was through the school, or the social work department. It could even have been through her doctor. I think in hindsight it was to give mum some respite from looking after all the children with her ongoing issues.
8. When mum told us we were going to Fornethy, we were told we were going on a holiday to the countryside. I am not certain about the exact years we went, but I think it was 1961 and again in 1962, although there might be a chance I am a year out.
9. Before I went to Fornethy, my sister and I had to go to Glen Bath Street Clinic for a medical. I am not sure how long it was before we went to Fornethy, when that medical was conducted. We must have passed the medical for us to be able to go.

Fornethy House, Alyth

10. My sister and I were at Fornethy House on two separate occasions. The first occasion was supposed to be for six weeks but was cut short as a result of illness. The second occasion was for six weeks. I cannot recall the exact dates we were there. My memory is a little mixed as to during which visit specific incidents of abuse took place.
11. On both visits we went to Fornethy House, I cannot remember anything about the journey there. I am thinking the first occasion I was there I would have been around seven years old, but I am not sure what time of the year it was.
12. There were many members of staff but the one I can remember by name was Miss Fletcher. That was because she was the one that was cruel to us all. I can only remember she had a long face and had big teeth.
13. ██████ thinks Miss Rigg, who was a teacher at my primary school was also at Fornethy. She was a nice woman, but I did not have much contact with her.

Routine at Fornethy House, Alyth

First day

14. When we arrived at Fornethy I can remember it was a big house. There was a small door separate from the main front door. We went in that smaller entrance and were put in a room. We were then told to strip out of our clothes and we were put into a bath.
15. The dormitories were at the top of a set of stairs, but I cannot remember how many of us were there. The only thing I can remember about the dorms was we had a bed and a single wardrobe. The only light available at night was the blue emergency light in the ceiling. It was still so dark I was always scared.
16. I do remember that during the night we were not allowed to talk or have a laugh. One night a friend and I were giggling in our beds. Miss Fletcher came in and dragged me out of my bed. She took me onto the landing and told me I was to sleep on the floor there. I was not even given a pillow or a blanket.

Mornings and bedtime

17. I remember very little about the day-to-day routine when I was at Fornethy on either occasion.

Mealtimes/Food

18. When it came to our meals, we all sat at round tables in the dining room. I was never allowed to sit with my sister. At night, before going to bed, we might have been given some milk in a plastic cup and a biscuit. The rest of the food must have been okay as I have no other bad memories other than the force feeding.

Washing/bathing

19. The room on the ground floor where we were bathed on arrival was the only place there for any baths. There were two big tin baths there. This was also where I was sent if I had wet the bed. I don't remember there being showers at Fornethy.

Clothing/uniform

20. I remember we had a brown case which contained all our clothes. I don't remember being given any clothes to wear by the staff at Fornethy, it was just our own clothes.

Leisure time

21. I think there was a children's roundabout in the grounds that we were allowed to play on. When I went back later in life, I got a really bad feeling when I was near the roundabout. I just kept thinking there was something bad about it, but the full memory would not come back.

Schooling

22. There was no schooling of any kind when I was at Fornethy.

Healthcare

23. The only time I remember having to see any medic on the first occasion was because I had been feeling ill and was diagnosed with mumps. I did have to see her a couple of times on my second time there as I fell regularly and had to have some cuts looked at.

Religious instruction

24. My sister has told me that on Sundays we would go for a walk to the local church, but that is not something that I remember.

Bed wetting

25. When I was at Fornethy I started having a problem with bed wetting. I think it was because of all the stress and fear. Whenever any of the staff found that I had wet the bed I was given a back handed slap. This could have been any of the domestic staff that hit me, but I can't remember any of the names.

External Inspections

26. I don't remember any people coming into Fornethy to check we were being looked after properly.

Family contact

27. The only contact I had with my parents was once a week we had to write a letter home. The staff wrote on a blackboard what we were to include in the letter. You were not allowed to put anything bad into those letters.
28. After the first visit to Fornethy we told mum about some of the bad things that were happening to us. She brought up that this was not what we were saying in our letters. We explained what the teachers made us do with the copying. Mum came up with a plan that if we added a sentence saying we were asking after Auntie [REDACTED], then she would know we were being hurt, and she would come and collect us. On the second occasion at Fornethy, after again being abused, my sister [REDACTED], did add this to our letters, but unfortunately mum never appeared.

Running away

29. We often thought about running away but we never followed it up. I don't know if anyone else ran away while we were there.

Abuse at Fornethy House, Alyth

30. I never liked turnip as a child and still don't to this day. The first time it came as part of a meal there was a girl sitting next to me who enjoyed it. I just scraped it over onto her plate. Miss Fletcher saw what I did. She took my plate away and returned with it full of turnip. I told her I did not like it, but she was not interested. She then scooped a pile onto a spoon and then force fed it to me. She never stopped until I was sick..
31. I brought the turnip back up and she was even more annoyed. As I was covered in sick, she dragged me by the hair from the dining room to the toilet to get cleaned up.
32. After this I tried to eat the turnip to avoid the force feeding. I also had the same problem when we were fed tapioca. Although I can't remember if I needed to go to the toilet to get cleaned up. The force feeding continued with other foods during both times I was at Fornethy.
33. One of the chores we might be tasked with was to clean a small room which was used when we were visited by the local minister. When it was cleaned the chairs would be lined up in rows. There was one day when me and a friend were running about and messed up the lines of chairs.
34. Miss Fletcher caught us and took us to a side room. She made us take our pants down and then smacked us so hard with her hand on my bare backside. All this for just moving a couple of chairs.


Reporting of abuse at Fornethy House, Alyth

35. We could not report anything while we were in Fornethy House as there was no one apart from the staff who were abusing us.

Leaving Fornethy House, Alyth

36. On the first time at Fornethy we were part way through our time there when I was diagnosed with mumps. As a result, we were sent home. I don't remember anything about the journey home, other than it was a train with no teacher with us. I presume mum picked us up at the other end. I am unsure how long we were home after having the mumps before we were sent back to Fornethy.
37. When we were back home, we told mum about some of the bad things that were happening to us. I am not sure how much mum took in, with her drinking.
38. After our six weeks were up on the second visit to Fornethy we were all sent home.
39. I was not back long before I was sent to a home somewhere in the Kilmarnock area. My sister was sent to Castle Toward.

Unknown Children's Home, Kilmarnock

40. I have very little recollection of this place. I think I had been sent there for six weeks,
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

41. I have no recollection of leaving but ended up back at home with mum. I was glad not to be going anywhere else after that as I knew I was not going to be abused again.

Reporting of abuse at Fornethy House, Alyth

42. After our second time at Fornethy ended, we told mum again what had been happening. She went to social work offices at John Street to report it. I don't know if anything ever happened as a result.

Life after being in care

43. Around 2022, I went back to Fornethy House with two MP's and some of the [REDACTED] group. When I arrived at the big house, I could immediately remember the small door to the side. When I was there, I started to remember a wee burn where I spent some good times at Fornethy, but I could not find the burn. Some others from the group had also remembered the burn, which helped confirm to me it was not just my imagination.

Impact

44. As an adult I now suffer from Achalasia, which is where the muscles in the throat tighten when I get stressed. I never had any issue before I went to Fornethy, and I believe all the force feeding by Miss Fletcher is the main cause of this problem.
45. As a result of the dark dormitories at Fornethy, I am still scared of the dark. I have to sleep with my bedroom door open and a light kept on in the hall.
46. Whenever I see a television programme involving any kind of abuse it brings back the memories of Fornethy and I have some flashbacks at night.

Treatment/support

47. In 2021 I joined the Fornethy [REDACTED] Group, and they have been a big help in me coping with some of the bad memories. I had always been of the belief that I was the only person who had been abused. It was only after joining them I learned about all the others who had also been force fed, among other types of abuse.
48. I remember going to meet some of them at a church near to The Barra's in Glasgow. At that same meeting there were some [REDACTED] also present. As soon as they put a picture up on the screen of Fornethy I broke down. I was back to being that seven-year-old being abused.

49. Once a week I also attend a Wellbeing clinic, and they are providing help for me dealing with the bad memories. That had been recommended by another woman in the [REDACTED] group. The woman who hosts the sessions has left and we are just waiting on a replacement being found.

Reporting of Abuse

50. In 2021 I reported the abuse to the police. They came to see me twice at my house. I think it was on the second occasion that I got upset with something one of the officers said. He told me that unfortunately in those days this was allowed. I tried telling him that I had never been physically punished by my dad and if my mother had to smack us, she never took our pants off.
51. After noting all the information, they told me they were passing the details onto the police in Dundee as they covered Fornethy. I have no idea what happened to any investigations that were carried out.

Records

52. I did try to get my records. I made contact with the NHS, but they told me that any records from then would have been destroyed. I thought there might have been something retained as there was an outbreak of mumps and I am sure the local authority would have had to be made aware of that.
53. I really want to find confirmation of why we were sent to Fornethy and who arranged it. I would also like to fill in some of the gaps in my memories as to the dates I was there and the dates I went to Kilmarnock.

Lessons to be learned

- 54. Our time at Fornethy should have been a time where kids were being helped and given respite for their family. It was not to be used as a facility to abuse children they were looking after. We were all told this was to be a holiday, and it certainly was not that.
- 55. I would like to know if the staff at Fornethy were trained in looking after children and were they ever vetted for those positions. There should have been someone coming in to keep a close eye on the staff who were dealing with children. Each child should have been dealt with as a unique individual. Don't let what happened to me, happen to other children.

Other information

- 56. I hope by coming forward it helps other people who were also abused when they were at Fornethy. I hope the Inquiry can go some way to prevent it happening to any other kids in care.
- 57. 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.. PSN

Dated... 7.5 - 25