

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Norma HOWES

Support person present: No

1. My name is Norma Howes. My name at birth was Norma MacPhee. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. When I left school, I went to Italy and taught English to Italian children. I came back to Scotland when I was nineteen or twenty and I had no idea what I wanted to do at university. I went to the Labour Exchange and a man got me to fill in a form. He said I had to become a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, or a social worker. I was accepted on all the courses and decided on social work.
3. I had a job in Greenock as a 'trainee' social worker for 6 months before going to college. Bob Winter was my manager. I was at Jordanhill College for two years, from 1971 till 1973. As a student I had placements in Glasgow City Social Work Department and was employed there on qualifying, first as a social worker in Govan and then as manager of the Homeless Families Team until 1978, when I married and moved to live in England. I worked for Windsor and Maidenhead Social Services until 1986 when I became a self-employed social worker and safeguarding consultant.
4. My role as a safeguarding consultant came about because a child on my caseload disclosed that they, she and her sisters, had been sexually assaulted by their uncle. I asked at the office what to do and got some advice which I acted on. I was thinking about what was going on for children who have been sexually assaulted. In the 1980s,

I did some training in America because my friend there knew more than I did, and more than people here did as well. I also did training on working with sex offenders and my understanding on what went on with victims went way up, by doing that piece of work. I have gone back to America four or five times, to continue with my training. Harvard University do some excellent training in summer and winter schools. I was last there in 2003 and then arranged for two lecturers to come to England in 2006.

5. The I-SEARCH (Illinois State Enforcement Agencies to Recover Children) program in Chicago Police Department was a joint investigative program. They only employed the best detectives to work on exploited, sexually abused, and missing children. They were doing joint investigations with psychologists and social workers. That was what we needed to be doing here. On my return to Maidenhead, I contacted a police officer I knew from her dealing with police investigations involving rape. She agreed joint investigations would be an excellent idea and, with the agreement of senior staff in both departments, we set up one of the first joint investigation teams with Thames Valley Police. The team included the local forensic medical examiner, known as the police surgeon at that time.
6. Joint investigation programs were being set up around the country. My colleague and I had been doing joint investigations resulting in high rates of success in terms of prosecutions. We were asked to do training on it and we were going all over the country. That took me into focussing on safeguarding. I fell out with social services because social services were changing and I became self-employed in 1986. I worked part-time in a child trauma team with Kent Health Authority in Canterbury. The rest of the time I did court work, doing assessments, and therapy with children. My qualifications increased over time to enable me to do that. I provided training, consultation and assessments for all agencies, including charities, the military, and court staff, both in the UK and elsewhere. I decided to retire in 2025, although I am still asked for consultations on complex cases.
7. I met Janina Fisher who was working with Bessel van der Kolk. They were both talking about Sensorimotor Psychotherapy. They trained experienced, qualified therapists on this developing, excellent psychotherapy. It joined up body and mind. You could help

to heal people's brains but they needed to do the work on their body at the same time. It's very effective. My colleague and I asked them to come to England to do the training here. I did the training and we were involved in setting up that form of psychotherapy in England. That is running well, although I am not involved in that. I then did training on EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing). EMDR is for people who have experienced simple trauma. For complex trauma, it's contra-indicated.

Social work training at Jordanhill College, Glasgow

8. I have been asked whether my training at Jordanhill adequately prepared me for the work I was going to do. I don't know if I knew the work I was going to do and I'd not done any of that kind of training before. At the time, I would have thought the course prepared me for the work I did because I wouldn't have known any better. A lot of it relied on the placements and the quality of the supervisor that you had. I learned more in practice than I did in the theory.
9. The woman I shared a flat with and I were the youngest people on the course because we were in our early twenties. Most people were in their late twenties or thirties. I was surprised that nine out of ten of the people who were married when they joined the course were divorced at the end of it. People were changing, learning a lot, and doing a lot of thinking and self-development.
10. We had to choose a character from history and write a study on their child development and parenting, that had led them to be the person they were as an adult. I chose Hitler and found out a lot about him that was interesting. It was suspected that he had been sexually abused by his sister, increasing my interest in sexual abuse for me, in many ways at many levels.
11. I do not know whether any courses, other than social work, were available at Jordanhill for people wishing to train specifically for roles in residential childcare. There were a couple of people on the course who were residential care workers but they were going on to be social workers.

Training in child abuse

12. We had one afternoon lecture on child abuse by Christine Cooper, she is the person who came up with the phrase 'good enough parenting' and she was our lecturer on child protection. She showed us photographs of children who had been severely injured. One of the students sitting next to me couldn't look. The lecturer shouted at him and said to look at the photograph because he was going to have to look at something like that later. It was brutal and didn't teach us anything. I was shocked because, if I saw something like that, I would know it was child abuse. There was no doubt it was child abuse. I wasn't seeing injuries like that on my placements. I was seeing injuries that were much more subtle, something that didn't feel right. She was not having that and that was disappointing.
13. There was no definition of 'abuse'. The lecturer said abuse was physical and emotional. Somebody asked about sexual abuse. She said it wasn't called sexual abuse but was called incest. The lecturer said we wouldn't have to worry about that because that only happened in the Islands and Highlands and, if we'd read 'Cider with Rosie', we'd know Laurie Lee said incest thrived where the roads are bad. The lecturer said, given we were going to be working in Edinburgh and Glasgow, we'd never come across any incest.
14. The course did not cover residential childcare or issues around residential childcare, including abuse. Abuse would be by strangers or parents who were psychopaths.
15. I have been asked whether the training included any consideration of the processes social workers should follow or techniques they should adopt to protect children from abuse. It did not, other than as a social worker you decided whether you could work with a family or took them into care. It was poor.
16. There was no knowledge or discussion of the risks of sexual abuse within or around residential care, either within the course, or on placement, nor in my later work as a social worker in Glasgow. I don't know if there was any training or development of professional knowledge whilst I was working in Glasgow. Neither I nor anyone in my

teams was offered any training or invited to any discussions. There was no development of my knowledge about such risks up to 1978, when I left Glasgow. At college we were given the definition of incest and what the categories of incest were. Due to Victorian era attitudes, women were even blamed for 'allowing' their dad to be sexual with them. The definition of incest was a man related to a woman and the categories of prohibited relationship. The woman who 'permitted' that man to have sex with her was committing an offence. Rape within marriage was not an offence. Anyone who wanted to be predatory would not have had a difficult time.

Early career experiences

17. People were dismissive of my questioning and said I didn't know what I was talking about. They said I was too young to understand these things. It bewildered me. I was in the minority. I was managing the Homeless Families team in Glasgow when I was 26 years old. What did I know when I was 26? I was progressive in thinking about what we were trying to do. My team worked hard to understand people. We had a lot of conversations about how to help people parent their children better. Some of the stuff we did was basic, like how to keep a clean house and how to stop your kids going to school with fleas. We were trying to give families floors and doors, because they'd lifted up the floor and taken the doors off to light the fire with. I was curious about what was going on for the young people.

18. I visited St Euphrasia's in Bishopbriggs whilst on placement from college and did one of my placements at a Doctor Barnardo's children's home in Hawick. I also did a placement in an old people's home. You did a bit of everything during your training so you were well-prepared for being a generic social worker. I visited Eversley Children's Home in Glasgow when RLC, a child on my caseload, was resident there. I went to West Princes Street Hostel, Glasgow, when RLC was there and I was involved in taking her down to West Richmond Fellowship in Bristol. I worked in East Kilbride for a bit.

Placement at Doctor Barnardo's, Hawick

19. I was at Doctor Barnardo's in Hawick for a couple of months, as a student doing a placement in a residential unit. I was a member of staff. Dr Barnardo's was strange, compared to Eversley, in how different it was. The staff were caring and the children were happy. It felt like they had fun. You could have conversations with the children. I enjoyed my placement there. There was a little boy who was mixed-race. He was later adopted. He told me that it was because he liked Marmite that he was black and if he'd just eaten strawberry porridge, then he wouldn't have been black. I asked the man who was running the home if we should be telling him it was because he had a black dad or mum. He said it was okay for the boy not to know that. I thought, "Oh, come on."

Visit to St Euphrasia's, Bishopbriggs

20. Whilst on placement in Paisley, I attended a review of a young person who was accommodated in St Euphrasia's with my practice supervisor, Mr Ferguson. It was a meeting that was held regularly. There were psychiatrists and doctors at the meeting. The purpose of me attending was for me to attend a multi-disciplinary meeting where decisions would be made, as part of my training and as an observer.
21. I was shown around the building and was shocked to be shown a room in a 'turret' which I was told was soundproofed, it certainly looked as if it was. This room I was told was used as a punishment for girls who were being difficult or unruly. The nun showing me around was pleased to say she would tell the girls about the soundproofing, informing them they could scream all they liked because no-one would hear them. There was a sadistic bit to that, a smile that went with it. I shared this information with my practice supervisor who showed no concern and told me not to worry about it. When I asked if it was okay to be putting girls in the turret room, I was told it was nothing to do with me and to forget about it. I had the impression it was accepted practice and it was me who was out of step.

22. I don't remember if the room was heated or lit but it didn't have any windows. There was no bed or toilet in it. It was like a padded cell. The girls would miss their meals. The nun didn't say how long a girl would be kept in there but I got the impression it wasn't just for an hour. It felt like it could have been for a couple of days and they'd be put in there until they learned a lesson, for as long as it took for them to be contrite, willing to confess and promise not to do things again. There was a significant Catholic part to St Euphrasia's and if they had to go to confession, then they would be a better child.
23. A child was put in there if they tried to run away, backchatted, if they were violent, or if the nuns considered them to be out of control. The nun didn't give any explanation, other than to teach them a lesson, about why the girls were treated that way. It was just what they did and what was needed. The nuns, she said, had discovered that a useful way to get the girls to behave was to do that. With some of the girls it would be successful and with some it wasn't. Some had to be put into the room several times before they learned their lesson.
24. This 'not to worry about it' phrase was again used following my sharing my concern about the decisions being made in the review I attended. The discussion between the professionals was about a particular girl and whether she needed to have a hysterectomy, because her promiscuity would lead to pregnancy and she would not have the mental capacity to parent. It seemed like that was the usual policy and the meeting was to decide if that policy should be applied to her. The decision was that the girl should have a hysterectomy. I don't know if a hysterectomy happened but I didn't get the impression it didn't happen.
25. I have been asked whether any evidence was provided of the girl's promiscuity. I was told that was the reason the girls were in St Euphrasia's, their behaviour was out of control, they were promiscuous and would continue to be promiscuous. They had been taken out of their homes because they were promiscuous. I don't know where the evidence that the girls were promiscuous came from. There was no explanation given. It was almost as if it was genetic and, if they went on to have children, it would be a disaster. The girls in St Euphrasia's were in their teens.

26. Other alternatives such as counselling or contraception were not discussed. There were no other factors which were thought to be relevant to a decision to require a hysterectomy, just that the girl had a history of promiscuity and their capacity to parent was limited or non-existent, so that having a child would not be okay. That justified it, that they should have a hysterectomy to prevent them from having children.

27. Everyone was accepting that St Euphrasia's knew what they were doing with these girls. Again, I was looked on as overreacting and too young and as a student would not understand the necessity of this procedure. I was 22 at the time. I can't remember who told me, but I was told it was because I was Protestant and I didn't understand that this was what was needed. It was the Catholic way and, within the Catholic culture, this was acceptable behaviour. It was almost being racist to think this was not okay.

28. The culture and practices at St Euphrasia's were shocking. What was happening was being accepted and not being questioned. That wasn't right. They were taking away these girls' right to have any children. Anybody who knew about the practices should have been questioning this. Some of the young women had Down's Syndrome, some had learning difficulties, and some were bordering on having mental health issues. Nobody wondered about their behaviour and how come they were there. They were just 'bad girls.' They were being treated as naughty, bad girls who, if you treated them harshly and with lots of discipline, could be put on the right track. There were several other people with me, being shown round St Euphrasia's. Nobody else seemed to be concerned and nobody discussed it afterwards.

Working with the [REDACTED] family

29. [REDACTED] and her children were on my caseload from 1972 till 1974. Although first involved with the whole family whilst [REDACTED] was homeless, I was not involved in her three children being removed from her care in Eversley Children's Home. I cannot give more detail about the circumstances in which the children came to be placed in care, and specifically at Eversley. It started with [REDACTED] being in

Foresthall, the Homeless Families Unit. I was managing the Homeless Families Team and we picked up [REDACTED] and her children. The children were already in Eversley. My duties in relation to the family were to get [REDACTED] rehoused and to see if it was possible for the children in Eversley to join their mum in her new accommodation. To start with I was the social worker for the family and had regular interaction with them.

30. There were four children, [RLC], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s three younger children had a different father and therefore had a different surname. [REDACTED] and her three younger children were allocated to another social worker at the request of Eversley to match their 'family house' group initiative. Separate social workers were allocated because the children were being split. It was as if they were no longer a family. I have no idea where the initiative came from. All of a sudden, [RLC] was split off from her siblings within the house because they found out she had a different dad. From that point on, [RLC] was called [RLC] [REDACTED] and her three siblings were [REDACTED].

31. I don't remember questioning the decision at the time. It was just going to happen and [REDACTED] wasn't going to be able to manage [RLC]. I don't know why [RLC] couldn't go home. [RLC] was [RLC], too much for [REDACTED] probably. We had such a lot to do and decisions were made. Looking back, we had too many cases to carry and too much to do that was practical rather than anything deeper. We were skittering along the top. Sticking to the simple solutions that could be offered, rather than looking to see any causal factors, was the thing to do.

32. Someone, a member or staff or a visitor, who knew [REDACTED] wanted to adopt her. It might have been someone at her school. It was arranged that [REDACTED] would be adopted and she would then not have had a social worker. I was involved in obtaining [REDACTED]'s agreement, and arranging for [REDACTED] to sign her agreement, to [REDACTED]'s adoption. Part of the plan was that [REDACTED] could go home. He would have had the family aide, as they were known, to try to keep things ticking over. [REDACTED] stayed in Eversley, as far as I know. She must have had a separate social worker because I wasn't her social worker. I didn't have anything to do with the other children in Eversley and therefore I didn't hear about anything that was concerning in relation to them.

33. I continued to work with RLC, [REDACTED]'s eldest daughter. I was officially her social worker for about two or three years. Although not their social worker I was still involved in the lives of [REDACTED] and her children in Eversley, then her next three children when she lived in Ruchazie with her husband [REDACTED]. I had conversations with [REDACTED] about RLC and I would, irregularly, go up to the family home in Ruchazie and see what was happening there. I was there primarily to keep in touch with [REDACTED].
34. The other families I was working with had been rehoused. The [REDACTED] children and RLC [REDACTED] were the only family on my caseload with children in residential care.

Experience of Eversley Children's Home and working with RLC [REDACTED]

35. As RLC's social worker I would plan to regularly visit her in Eversley. I saw RLC in Eversley for about two years. I can very well remember there were a high number of times I spoke to my manager about my concerns about how Eversley was being run and the difficulties I was having in dealing with SNR-RLD [REDACTED] and her staff. Not just about their physical behaviour, the feeling of discipline in the place, but the way they spoke about the children in very derogatory terms, and that they had no clothes of their own. By 'the staff's physical behaviour', I am referring to the information RLC [REDACTED] gave me about the way some children would be 'clipped round the ear'. My managers at the time were Frank McGaughie, Douglas McEwan and Gus McDonald.

Staff at Eversley Children's Home

36. The strong impression I was given was that it was very much that the staff were having to deal with children who were not easy children to deal with, and they needed to be taught a lesson. I never heard the staff compliment a single child or say anything positive about any of the children who were in their care. It was always about how naughty and undisciplined they were, how they would lie, and how they were terrible children. I never witnessed the staff saying these things in front of the children because

I was never allowed to spend any time going around the place. I was marched up to RLD's office and marched back out again. I was never invited to have a cup of tea or to look round Eversley. I was a nuisance, coming to visit. RLD said that none of the other social workers came to see the children as much as me.

37. The staff never had names. RLD was RLD and Sister was Sister; she was RLD's . I have no memory of knowing RLD's name. I had to call her RLD and she called me Miss MacPhee. RLC got told off for calling me Norma. I was 24 or 25 years old and RLD was at least in her late forties or early fifties. She looked as if she was the age of my mother. Sister was a bit younger but not much. RLD was always right. She was opinionated and dismissive of any opinion other than her own. Sister was the same. They were in control. It was their child and they were going to do what was best for that child. If I disagreed with them, it was my problem.

Clothing and shoes

38. Clothes, including underwear, and shoes were distributed as required from a communal cupboard. Sunday best was kept for Sundays only. The shoes disturbed me because my dad was a chiropodist. He said never to wear anyone else's shoes because all the diseases people have go into their feet and shoes. When I heard about these children wearing anybody's shoes, I thought they shouldn't be doing that and said so. I was asked for the evidence of this but did not have any and my concern was dismissed as nonsense. That taught me not to say something without evidence to back up.
39. During the fireman's strike in Glasgow, one of the clothing warehouses had gone on fire and the clothing was soaked. They gave the clothing to us for families. There were three boxes of children's knickers and I took a box to Eversley. RLC remembers, for the first time ever, that she had enough pairs of her own knickers. She was twelve or thirteen years old.

40. I set up a campaign to stop using the 'clothing book'. There was a big shop in Glasgow, called Goldbergs or something. You took kids in to get their school uniform and you didn't have any money. The shop also had a book that they wrote in and that made it clear to staff and other customers these were children in care. Concerns were overruled by administration managers. It was humiliating for the children and we shouldn't have been doing that.

Social work visits

41. I cannot say how many times I was stopped from seeing RLC for one of my arranged visits because there were so many. The reason given by RLD was RLC's behaviour. It was a punishment. Sometimes I would get there and RLD would tell me that I wasn't allowed to see her. I would be frogmarched up to RLD's room for her to tell me. It was like I was the naughty child for turning up. Other times, I'd get a phone call to say not to bother turning up because RLC had run away again and was naughty, therefore I was not allowed to see her.
42. I was concerned about the visits being stopped. When I discussed it with my manager, to ask if it was okay, the answer was that it was okay, the children's home was the children's home and they ran it. My manager said you couldn't disagree with their policies.

43. I had taken ██████████ to sign the papers for ██████████'s adoption at City Hall because I knew her better than her new social worker did. I picked up ██████████ to have her last contact with ██████████ before she was adopted. ██████████ was about nine years old. I wasn't allowed to go into the room for the last visit. It was RLD's decision. I was told I had to wait outside. There was a little window in the door and I could see into the room. As soon as the visit was over, ██████████ and I were shipped out. ██████████ was upset.

Running away

44. RLC's running away certainly troubled me. RLC was twelve or thirteen years old. RLD and Sister said she was promiscuous and having sex when she ran away. I

was saying to RLD and Sister that RLC was saying to me specifically that she was not doing what they were alleging she was doing. They said she was and she was lying. They said I was being naïve in believing RLC. When spoken to about running away, RLC would, with some bravado, speak of her exploits to escape and the trouble she would be in on return. One of the women at Eversley was ex-St Euphrasia's. RLC told me she took RLC there and said this was where she would end up if she didn't behave.

45. My understanding of why RLC was running away was that it was to escape. I got the sense that she had to get out of Eversley and wanted to see if she could 'get one over' on RLD by escaping, that she'd get out without them knowing and have a bit of fun. RLC described running away as almost being a prank. At the time, I didn't question that. I wouldn't have wanted to live there and I wasn't surprised that she wanted to get out of the place because it was so disciplined and controlled. It was like, good on you, RLC, for getting out of there. I didn't suspect there was anything else in Eversley, other than emotional and physical discipline. There were times I picked RLC up when she was dishevelled and had obviously been sleeping rough for a couple of nights. She was frightened to return to Eversley.

Discipline

46. From what RLC was saying to me, RLD was a fierce disciplinarian. Punishments were for running away, talking back, or stepping out of line. The rules were clear and, if you didn't stick to the rules, you were in trouble. They were not written rules but just how the place was run. I don't think anyone went over the rules with RLC, she just had to learn them. It felt like there was a lot of disciplined behaviour required. I did not witness RLD disciplining any children.
47. RLD was also a fierce disciplinarian towards me, sitting me down for a lecture on RLC's difficult behaviour, her running away, and her promiscuity. RLD did not give me any evidence of RLC being promiscuous. She said RLC would run away and, when the police picked her up, they would say they'd found her with a group of boys. Therefore, she was promiscuous. The only reason she'd be with boys was because

she was having sex with them. RLD's response was that RLC wouldn't see me. They wanted RLC out of Eversley and moved on to West Princes Street Hostel. They were getting concerned she might get pregnant and RLD wanted RLC to go on the contraceptive pill. I agreed pregnancy would not be in RLC's interests and took her to the Family Planning Clinic.

48. RLD's descriptions of RLC did not at all match my views about RLC. Looking back, I wasn't being taken in by RLC. It may not have been every time, but it felt like it, RLD strenuously gave me her opinion that I was being taken in by RLC. She said I had to accept RLC was a liar, a thief and impossible to trust or manage. RLD expected me to support her and her staff by believing this about RLC. I was to stop believing RLC, stop being nice to her and fully support her and her staff in their dealings with RLC. This always felt like instructions which were not for discussion. I thought RLC was always very honest, many times to her detriment. RLC would admit any wrongdoing but she was always very certain she was not sleeping around or having sex when she had run away. She spoke about friends as friends, definitely not sexual partners. At the time, I was thinking it would help RLC if she would behave and not make these people angry with her. I was concerned about RLC's behaviour but only in the sense that I was trying to understand it, and the difference between what she said and they said about her. At the time, I sometimes thought RLC was her own worst enemy and, if she had behaved, things would have been a lot easier for her. She hated Eversley.
49. At no time did RLC tell me about RLD striking her with a cane. She did tell me about other punishments, yellow hard soap in her mouth and having to sit in a bath of cold water with her soiled knickers, until her period blood stain came out of her knickers. These were all vociferously denied by RLD who would bring in Sister and other staff to reinforce her very negative opinion of RLC and how stupid and young and inexperienced I was to be believing RLC. RLC also told me about children being 'clipped round the ear'.

Culture

50. I look back on that regime as one of coercion and planned denial. That is my reflection making sense of what I know from what RLC said to me back then and what I know now, that is from RLC, my further training, and experience. They were setting up a child who might disclose what was happening in the home as a liar and a thief and treating me as an interloper. What was going on there was not my business. That would have allowed them to do exactly what RLC was saying they were doing, grooming the network around a child. 'Planned denial' comes from my work with sex offenders. Sex offenders choose their partner with greater care than they choose their victims. Your partner is the risk, more than your victim is. There is planning involved in creating an environment in which you can behave in a particular way. If your plan was to make a place somewhere where you can do what you like to children, then you'd make sure visitors were not allowed and wouldn't be allowed access to the children. If somebody looked like they were getting curious, you would make sure that person is not believed as well.
51. At the time, the systemic culture was to believe adults and not listen to children. This was a dangerous but useful, necessary, maintained and appreciated belief for those who, instead of looking after the children in Eversley and no doubt elsewhere, were causing them significant harm. By this I mean, if you are going to set up a system where you can do harm to children, you make sure you set up that system really well. Part of that is that you maintain a strong belief that children should not be heard and not be believed. If children tell you anything, you don't listen to them because the adults around them know better. If there's a discrepancy between what the child says and what the adult says, you immediately believe what the adult says. You're being ridiculous if you think adults would lie and children would only tell the truth. Fundamentally that's not correct because both children and adults lie and tell the truth.
52. If you want to set up a children's home where you can harm children physically, emotionally, and sexually, you would have that ethos in the home. You would recruit people who agreed with your philosophy. You would recruit vulnerable staff. For example, I know from personal discussions with staff employed or not, about Frank

Beck, who managed children's homes in England, and Fayed (Harrods owner) would sexually assault people applying for a job when they were interviewing them. If they made a complaint or looked like it wasn't okay, he didn't employ them. Frank Beck received a long prison sentence. I can look back at Eversley and say it was well-organised to meet the staff's needs and allow their behaviour to continue.

53. My concerns about Eversley, at the time I visited there, were only on the physical discipline, the emotional control, and the lack of love in the place. There was no feeling of any care for the children. I didn't have any idea that any of the staff were behaving sexually with the children. I never got a clue of that from [RLC] either. I don't remember any of my colleagues sharing any concerns about establishments that they were visiting.
54. I spoke to colleagues about Eversley when I came back to the office, saying the place was awful. Everybody would say it was awful but nobody thought there was anything to be done about it. The impression was that was how to run these places. The children were blamed for their behaviour. They were seen as being difficult children, not that they had come from difficult environments, or that they were troubled children. If only they would behave then they would be fine.
55. [RLC] has said to me that she was told that, if she said to me what was happening and I believed her about anything, [RLD] would stop her seeing me. Worse for [RLC], she was told that I would not want to see her again because I would be so disgusted by her in every way. [RLC] believed this was true because [RLD] did cancel my visits.
56. I have been asked what my impression was of the overall culture in other children's homes or residential establishments. I cannot comment as I didn't visit any others, other than those already discussed.

Sexual abuse

57. I have been asked whether I had any reason to think [RLC] was being sexually abused during the time I visited her at Eversley. I did not have any reason to think [RLC] was

being sexually abused, only that [RLD] said to me she wanted [RLC] to go on the contraceptive pill because she was promiscuous. When [RLC] and I have discussed this much afterwards, she said it was like the abuse was just what happened. The children didn't know any different.

58. If I had been aware, concerned or puzzled at the time, I would not have felt this was something to discuss with my manager. I don't know what I would have said. Discussions with my manager were only about practicalities and getting things done. At around the same time, one young person I was taking into care asked me if I thought her grandfather would do to her sister what he had been doing to her. To reassure her I said no he wouldn't. At that time, I did not even think to ask what she meant by this. I was in touch with her some years later when I knew about sexual abuse. [Secondary]

[Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

[Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

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She said she asked me if her grandfather would do to her sister what he had been doing to her. She said I said no. She said that had I said anything else other than no, she would not have allowed me to take her into care. The abuse for her stopped but, like other abusers, her grandfather no doubt already was or would abuse her sister or other siblings. I sadly reflect on this as representing my lack of supervision, knowledge and training, and that of the managers and supervisors, at that time, not an excuse, perhaps at best, or worst, an explanation.

Contraception

59. I agreed [RLC] should go on the pill even though [RLC] said she wasn't having sex when she ran away. [RLD] was sure that she was and, if she was, the last thing she needed was to be pregnant. That was my thinking at the time. I did not think that [RLC] was lying to me but [RLD] was certain. What if [RLC] was conning me? Maybe [RLD] knew [RLC] better than me because [RLD] lived with her. I didn't want [RLC] to get pregnant.

60. I don't know what steps were taken to explain to [RLC] what was being proposed. I was told by [RLD] that I was taking [RLC] to the Family Planning Clinic to get her on the pill and, as her social worker, that would be my job. I picked [RLC] up in my car. I had a conversation with [RLC] in the car about going on the pill and she was telling me she didn't need to go on the pill because she wasn't sleeping with anybody. I said she was going on the pill in case she got pregnant and that prevention was better.
61. I have been asked to comment on obtaining [RLC]'s consent to having contraception. I don't think she was given any option. I don't think it was discussed with her on that level. I don't even remember it being discussed with her on that level by the doctor in the Family Planning Clinic. It was like, "The decision has been made that you are running away, you are being promiscuous, and we are protecting you from yourself."
62. When we had a conversation with the doctor at the Family Planning Clinic, she said there was an alternative to the pill. They were researching the use of the 'Depo' injection in Edinburgh and Glasgow and the doctor said maybe it would be better if [RLC] had the 'Depo' injection. I thought it could be a good idea because if [RLC] went on the pill and ran away, she would forget to take her pills with her. Stopping her getting pregnant was the key fact. [RLC] had the 'Depo' injection. She was fourteen.
63. The doctor told [RLC] to take her clothes off and put a green gown on. Her feet were filthy because she'd been sleeping rough for a bit. I said to her to stand up in the sink and we'd get her feet cleaned before the doctor came back. We were laughing, trying to get her feet clean. Afterwards, [RLC] said to me it was the first time she knew that I loved her, because I helped her to get her feet clean. I thought that there was something seriously wrong with what was going on for [RLC] when having her feet washed was being loved for the first time. She was tenacious in keeping her relationship with me.

Attitude of social work management

64. I was given no support, or it seemed even believed, when I would share my concerns about Eversley with my manager. He dismissed it and the response was, that's

Eversley and you know what RLD is like. The attitude was that RLD knew what she was doing and I didn't know children's home, therefore I shouldn't be questioning it. There was no sense of having to do something about it. Looking back, it seemed Eversley had a good reputation with the social work department because it was well-organised. The children were dressed, clean, and went to church. Superficially, it was good.

65. My manager was aware that the children did not have their own clothes, including underwear, because I questioned it. I did not know if that was okay and if that was generally what happened in children's homes. When I thought back to children's homes in Victorian times, that is what would be happening. It reminded me of Dickens.
66. I took the incident where RLC had to sit in a bath of cold water back to the office. I said it was terrible and shocking that that would happen in residential care. I was told by Frank McGaughey, my manager in Govan social services, it was none of my business. It was up to the manager, they were running the children's home, and they should be left to get on with it. Frank McGaughey was an ex probation officer. He would have been in his fifties. He was of an age where even talking about children having their period and blood on their knickers was disgusting. He was uncomfortable with me having that conversation with him, closing it down as quickly as possible.
67. The Social Work (Scotland) Act came in, in 1968 or 1970, and I was the only generically trained social worker in my team. The rest were ex probation and ex mental health. Their attitude was that I was too young and didn't know enough, that I didn't know anything about mental health or probation. They were right. They were dismissive and I was seen as too nosy. They wanted me to stop being curious. I was well-brought up and I'd never experienced any of this in my family. When I saw the way that children were being treated in Eversley, I thought it couldn't be right. It was so disciplined, it felt cruel. I didn't think they should be doing that now because we'd moved on, it was the 1970s. Why were the children being marched down to the church? Why had they to wear their 'Sunday best' clothes? It was so old-fashioned.

RLC [REDACTED] *leaving Eversley*

68. When RLC [REDACTED] was telling me about her treatment at Eversley, I didn't have the authority to move her to a different residential establishment. That wasn't considered. The way the children were being treated was just Eversley, it was a good place, and they knew what they were doing. Part of the planning for RLC [REDACTED], as she got older and was going to be leaving school, was that she would be moving into a different residential unit. Eversley was for younger children.
69. RLC [REDACTED] moved to West Princes Street Hostel when she was fifteen. She needed to be somewhere where she couldn't run away, where she didn't know where she was, and so that she would be more controlled. She needed to be in a more controlled environment.

West Princes Street Hostel, Anniesland, Glasgow

70. Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED]
71. [REDACTED]

Records

72. There was a family file that came from [RLC]'s mum's homelessness, her mum's stay in Foresthall, and her mum's rehousing into Ruchazie. That might have in it the reasons why the children came into care. I don't know if there were ever separate files on the children. I don't remember having access to [RLC]'s mum's file after she was rehoused. I had a file for [RLC], and at one point the family file, in my office. If any child had a change of social worker, the file would be handed to that social worker.
73. [RLC]'s file was sent to John Street, perhaps to be transferred to microfiche, which was used then for long-term storage of documents. That would ensure it was kept for 99 years, along with the adoption file. When cases were closed or a child left care, I was told that the care file was kept for only five years and it was only the adoption files that had to be kept for 99 years. I don't know what the truth of that was. When a case was closed, the file was sent to John Street by courier. I don't know what John Street was, maybe the records department. I had the feeling it was a big basement full of files.
74. I don't remember the reason why, but I had to take [RLC]'s file, and the family file, with me when we went to Bristol to visit St Elizabeth's. [RLC] and I were sitting next to each other on a plane and we knew we would have time to look at her file. That's why [RLC] and I remember very clearly that, when I was her social worker, her file was a bulging six inches of paper, maybe even more than that. I brought the file back to Glasgow and it was left in the office when I left Glasgow.
75. [RLC] and I have kept in touch and still see each other regularly. She asked for my advice about asking for her case notes about her time in the care system. At first, she was told these were destroyed in a fire in John Street. I don't know anything about a fire in John Street, only that that was what [RLC] was told. We couldn't find out anything about a fire there. When she initiated, through her solicitor, her claim against Glasgow City Council, her notes were again requested many times. The solicitor wasn't told they were destroyed in a fire but that they were lost. Then they were told the notes were not available. A direct order from a Judge finally secured the notes. The order

said the council had to provide the file by a specific date. I don't know where the file [RLC]'s solicitor received came from.

76. What was sent to [RLC]'s solicitor was less than an inch of paper with many redactions. We looked at these file notes together. There is a section of time which has handwritten notes. Neither of us could identify who had written the handwritten section, nor account for what was written there. The records must have been tampered with because there is nothing for the section of time I was working with her. We could find only one note about my attendance at the family hearing, despite my clear memory of regularly writing the required notes about my visits with her and what I was being told about her by staff in Eversley and later the West Princes Street Hostel. The note was a summary of a Hearing that I had been at. There is no other mention of me in the file. [RLC]'s feeling about being blamed, not listened to and other very negative comments being made about her is clearly confirmed by what is written.

77. I would have recorded when I saw [RLC], what we talked about, and reports for reviews at the children's hearing, which were every six months. There would have been notes done in preparation for [redacted]'s adoption and in dealing with [redacted] going home. They may have redacted anything to do with [RLC]'s siblings because these were in a family file. I have been asked whether, in writing reports for reviews, I put anything in about my concerns for [RLC] or the way Eversley was being run. I did not because that wasn't viewed as a concern. [RLC]'s behaviour was a concern, not the way the children's home was being run. Nobody questioned how Eversley was being run. I put in the notes things like [RLC] was saying she was not promiscuous. I was trying to work out which of them was right, [RLD] or [RLC]. None of that was in the records that [RLC] eventually received. I don't think there is anything about Eversley in them, I don't think they say she was even there.

78. When I stopped working with the family and was working just with [RLC], I wouldn't have been allowed to not write any notes. One of the things that got you into trouble as a social worker was not keeping your notes up to date. Your record-keeping was important and you could be disciplined for not keeping your records up to date.

Reflections

79. I have been asked how I now reflect on my experiences in relation to [RLC]'s time in care, and more generally my work with children in Glasgow in the 1970s. It is difficult to think about that. Our training did not prepare us for the job that we were going to do but, as training goes at that time, it was consistent with what was going on elsewhere. It wasn't just Glasgow. It was chaotic. There was no clear management structure or line of authority. You felt like you were in a maelstrom and you had to keep going. When I look back, it was awful but it was also good fun.
80. My team and I worked hard to get people's lives sorted, to make sure they had doors, floors, and furniture. We sourced all sorts of things. For example, we had Public Health Scotland clearing and cleaning homes which were a squalid health hazard and replacing furniture and other household items in two days. We were always disappointed that six months later, everything was as before. I was in touch with a paint company who agreed to give us supplies of paint for families to do their houses with. It was disorganised, chaotic and responsive and there was no wondering about any underlying causal factors.

Lessons to be Learned

81. Every child should have an external visitor. The external visitor should be trained and experienced in listening to what children have to say. Knowing how to do what Lord Clyde recommended – not believing but taking seriously what children say and just as important to be curious about what they don't say.
82. Children should not be blamed for their behaviour. Their behaviour should be understood to be their answer to the problems they have. Anyone who is going to be listening to children and working with them must accept and understand that to their core.

- 83. Recruitment, training, and supervision of staff in residential units needs to be externally monitored and not just set up in-house.

- 84. No warning should be given for inspections. When a warning of an inspection is given, everyone does everything they can to cover up anything that might not be okay. Files need to be looked at. The external supervision and monitoring need to be spot on, by people who really know and who are interested, suspicious, and curious to know what is going on. They must not be accepting of the people running residential units. Inspectors should choose which members of staff they speak to.

Other information

- 85. **RLC** is an extraordinary woman who has, despite all the very significant harm done to her as a child, succeeded as a mother and in her career. This success must not minimise the extent of the harm, physical, psychological and sexual, done to her whilst in the care of Glasgow City Council and their children’s home, Eversley. The psychological processes she required to survive and function, namely dissociation, enabled her to compartmentalise and function but has been, still is and no doubt will continue to be, deeply debilitating and impactful.

- 86. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... 

Dated..... 30 April 2026