

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PLM

Support person present: No

1. My name is PLM although my maiden name is PLM. I like to be called PLM. My date of birth is 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before care

2. My mum is who was born on 1933 and my dad was who was born on 1929. I was born in Oakbank Hospital which is in Glasgow. I have an older brother called who was born on 1963. I have a younger sister called who was born 1966 and also a younger brother called who was born 1968. My sister is now known as .
3. We lived at Possilpark which was a two bedroomed flat in a close. My gran lived with us as well until she died in 1973. She was my dad's mum. I had a happy childhood with loads of friends. I have happy memories of all the kids in the street out playing and the parents out as well playing games with the kids. I went to Hawthorn Primary School which was only five minutes away from the house. Mum didn't work and dad was a bin lorry driver.

4. When I was ten my dad died. All I remember is he went into hospital to have his blood thinned. He was a heavy smoker. The day he was getting out my mum was getting ready to pick him up and she got a phone call to say he had had a heart attack and had died in the hospital. Dad's death had a big impact on the family. He had paid all the bills and stuff and my mum was just given the housekeeping for things like food. She got my dad's pension and because she got his private pension it was like ten pence over the scale to get any other benefits. As well as the pension she got child benefit but that's all she got to survive on. We did get school dinners. She didn't know where to go or how to pay bills and stuff. She ended up getting a wee job in a friend's mobile shop. Mum couldn't manage her money and she was always sending us to a friend to borrow money. She just lost it so it was me who took on a lot of responsibilities for my younger brother and sister.
5. [REDACTED] my oldest brother got run over and as far as I can remember he had behavioural problems. He used to go to a boarding school down in Thornton, Ayrshire. It was run by Barnardos. He would go there through the week and come home at weekends.
6. I know that going to Fornethy was something organised through the school. We never had a social worker or anything. My mum had to fill in forms and we were just sent off which I think was to give my mum a break. I don't know what preparation we had to do but I have a memory of going to this place and we were kitted out but I don't know if that was for Fornethy or to start back at school. I think the place was on Boswell Street and it was this building full of clothes which I am guessing people donated and we could go and get rigged out. I think we had to go for a medical but I couldn't be certain.
7. Life at home was fine before my dad died. I seem to have narrowed what went wrong to that time frame but I have never connected it to anything. It was only just when Fornethy started popping up it kind of fitted in.

Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

8. You could only go to Fornethy if you were at primary school so that is how I know I went there between 1976-1977 because it was after my dad died and before I started high school. I went to Fornethy twice, each time it was for six weeks and we went in school time. [REDACTED] went with me both times. I am sure I was there before [REDACTED] 1976 and then I was away at [REDACTED] time and then again before [REDACTED] 1977. I don't know if Fornethy was the first two times I was away or the first and last times as the other place I was sent was called Castle Toward. The last time I was away would have been around [REDACTED] 1977 because I would have been too old to go later in the year as I would have been starting high school after the summer. My memory doesn't separate the two visits so they are all jumbled up and all I know is I don't have any good memories from any time at Fornethy.
9. I think we were chosen to go to Fornethy because my mum couldn't afford to take us anywhere so it was like they were sending us on a holiday but I don't know who organised it all.
10. I just remember there were lots of girls staying there but I have no idea how many there would be. I don't even know how many dorms there were. I do remember all the dorms had names and the only ones I remember are Forfar and Reekie Linn.
11. It wasn't a castle but it looked like a mansion or a palace. It was massive and I hadn't seen anything that size before. We had been told we were going on holiday so we were excited the first time we went. I thought we were going on holiday to do all these nice things. On the ground floor it had a kitchen, a big bathroom with a bath in it and a dining room which I am sure had round tables in there. It must have had a laundry because we used to collect our clothes and they were all ironed in neat piles. There was a boot room. I never saw inside the kitchen. There were massive stairs leading to the dorms which were upstairs.

12. I don't know what the staff's job titles were and I can't remember if there was a matron. Now I just call the staff teachers but I don't know if that was what they were. I can't recall what we had to call them. There were other staff such as kitchen staff. I think they were all females as I can't picture a man being there. I only remember two names but I don't know who they were or remember what they looked like. The names I recall are **LBD** and Fletcher. These are the only names that stick in my head.
13. My overall memories of Fornethy are not good or happy however I don't have clear memories either.

Routine at Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

First day

14. I am sure it was a bus that took us to Fornethy. There were lots of other children on the bus. When we arrived we were shown to dorms but I don't think my sister was in the same dorm as me. It would have been staff who showed us although I don't remember who that was. We were also shown to a boot room and I am sure that is the one that had pinnies but I could be wrong and that could be Castle Toward.

Mornings and bedtime

15. The dorms had so many beds in each one and I think it was maybe six or eight. The dorms were mixed with all ages. I just remember my sister wasn't in the same room as me and I had assumed she would have been. I would always look for her when I wasn't in the dorm. My sister was celiac so she was timid. I looked after her so I had just thought I would have her with me.
16. In the dorm you had your own bed with a chair at the bottom of it. There was a cabinet to put your clothes in. I don't know if maybe my sister and I were in Forfar and Reekie Linn and that is why the names are sticking with me.

17. I think the teachers woke you up in the morning but I don't know what time. Then we would get dressed. I can't remember getting told to brush our teeth or anything like that before we would go down the stairs and have breakfast. I can't remember what time we went to bed I just remember we had to be in bed by a certain time. We had to be in our dorms and it was maybe something like an hour later the lights would be switched off.

Mealtimes/Food

18. There was a dining room and you were allocated to a table depending what dorm you were in. This meant I wasn't sitting with my sister either.
19. We got a breakfast, lunch and tea but I can't remember anything about the food. I can't even remember eating but I do remember you had to clear your plate. It didn't matter what was on it you couldn't leave anything. Everything had to be eaten. If you didn't you would be made to sit there until you did or you would get a slap across the head which happened to me a few times.
20. The kitchen staff would bring the food out but we were not allowed to speak to them.
21. I know my sister had gluten free biscuits, bread and stuff like that. I don't know if she took them with her or if they got it specially in for her. She couldn't eat pasta and I don't think they did the gluten free pasta back then.

Washing/bathing

22. There was a big bathroom with a bath in it. I only remember getting a bath once a week and I am sure there would be two of us in the bath at a time. You didn't wash yourself so whichever staff were there washed you. I don't think it was like seventy kids who would be lining up naked for a bath, it would be like ten or twelve and when they were done the next lot would be in. I couldn't say if it was clean water I was put in or not. I'm assuming as one was out the bath another would be straight in until it was cold but I really don't remember.

Clothing/uniform

23. I can't remember if we had our own clothes or they gave us clothes. They did give us welly boots and they were in the boot room. You would have a peg with your number so your duffle coat was there with the boots. You would wear shoes every day.
24. On one of the days which was either Thursday or Sunday, these days seem to stick in my head, you took your dirty clothes to the boot room and on the other day you got a clean set of clothes back with a clean pinny. It was like a tabard pinny it was maybe yellow but I don't really remember. There may have been different colours for different people.
25. I think we had two sets of clothes and a towel. We had to wear the pinny every day.

Leisure time

26. When you were outside you were not allowed to speak to any of the other kids, you had to keep quiet. We could speak if we did it on the sly when no-one was looking.
27. I don't remember any play equipment like swings or anything. What I remember was long walks which I think was at Fornethy but it might have been Castle Toward. Where we walked to I don't know, my memory is like bits and pieces. I think we walked every day. We would have to go to the boot room and take our shoes off and put our wellies and jacket on. We went as a group and I think it was a bigger group than just those who were in my dorm.
28. I remember going on a scavenger hunt but I don't know if that was at Fornethy or Castle Toward. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

29. There was a room that we would go into in the evening. I don't remember much of what we did during the day other than the long walks. I am sure we would watch a film or TV in this room. I don't remember any games or books.

Schooling

30. I cannot remember if we did any school work. I just remember there was this room we would go into which had a blackboard but that is where we would write letters home.

Homesickness

31. The first time I went to Fornethy I remember being homesick as that was the first time I had been away from home. I just kept my feelings to myself as I don't know if I saw someone else being homesick and they got a row. I also didn't want my sister to see me upset as I didn't want to make her upset. I don't remember any adult I could go to tell them how I was feeling. I only remember the adults coming into the bedrooms to get the bed wetters up. I suppose that was before they went to bed but I don't even know where the staff slept. I don't think we were allowed to talk to the staff anyway. I don't think you could create any bond with any girls or staff because of the no talking rule. I think that is why I don't remember anyone who was there. I can't even picture anyone.

Healthcare

32. I was never ill when I was at Fornethy and when my sister was ill it lasted a day or so but she didn't need to see a doctor.

Religious instruction

33. I am sure there was a church but I don't know if it was close by or if on the long walks we went to one. I can't remember if we went in or not. We had to say Grace at mealtimes and I am sure we had to say prayers at bedtime as well.

Work

34. I think we had to sweep up in the dining room if there were crumbs on the floor. You would have to clean your shoes if they got dirty and I remember I had to polish some shoes so they wouldn't have all been mine. You had to make your bed which I suppose was expected anyway. All your clothes including your pinny had to be in your cupboard except for the clothes you took off as they would have been on the chair at the bottom of your bed.

Birthdays and Christmas

35. I wouldn't have been at Fornethy over Christmas and my birthday is in the [REDACTED] holidays so I wouldn't have been there for a birthday either.

Personal possessions

36. I don't think we were allowed to take anything of our own with us. I didn't have anything like a teddy, doll or photographs. I don't know if they took any photographs but I can't remember any getting taken.

Bed Wetting

37. I wasn't a bed wetter but in my dorm there were bed wetters and staff would come in every night to get them to go to the toilet even if they were sleeping. I was aware that our dorm had bed wetters because they had to turn their chair a different way when they went into bed and because staff would tell us. I don't think my sister was a bed wetter so I didn't have that concern for her.

Visitors

38. We didn't get any visitors.

External Inspections

39. I don't remember anyone coming in to check the place. No-one ever came to speak to me to ask if I was happy.

Sibling Contact

40. I could see my sister in the dining room and I could see her in the room we used to go in during the evenings but they didn't make any steps to get us together.

Family contact

41. I think it was a Sunday we had to write letters home. I remember the blackboard as they used to write what we had to write in our letters on it. The teachers checked the letters before they would send them.
42. I know my mum used to send postal orders every week so we would have money for tuck and stuff. We would get our letter but there was nothing in the letter. They had been opened but I don't know if they had been read or not. The postal order had been taken out and they said they had a tuck shop and they would add it in there. We never knew how much had been sent to us but we were allocated a certain amount for each day or every second day. I think if other kids got more than us they would get more money to spend on tuck. I think my mother sent a tenner a week so it would be £5 each but we never saw it, it was just added into this book. I don't know if we got our full money's worth of tuck or not, you would get your twenty pence, thirty pence or whatever it was and spend whatever amount you have been allocated.

Abuse at Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

43. The big thing that sticks in my head was my sister was celiac and wasn't allowed normal bread and cakes. She had to eat gluten free. I know that Fornethy were aware of this but I don't know who was told. There was one episode where a member of staff

forced her to eat a normal cake. They didn't physically force her they just stood over her, told her to eat it or she couldn't leave the table. We were trying to tell them that she couldn't eat it because it would make her ill. I remember being slapped across the head for interfering. They made her eat this cake and obviously she was ill after it. It makes her be sick, she becomes very quiet and she gets stomach pains. Another teacher came in and she questioned why she ate it when she knew it made her ill. One of us said that the other teacher had made her eat it and wouldn't listen to us. I remember feeling I wanted to cry as no-one was listening and I suppose I was angry. I felt responsible for my sister and was trying to look out for her. I have no idea who the staff were and I couldn't describe them either.

44. The other thing that sticks in my mind is bath night. We were all basically lined up naked in the bathroom. It was all ages and you were all just put in the bath and washed. I remember I was at an age I was starting to develop so I tried to hide myself with my hands. I remember I got a slap across my head and my hands were pulled away from me and I was told to stand with my hands at the side. The slap was like a tap on the head. There were younger kids there as well and it made me feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. I was self-conscious about my changing body which is why I was trying to hide it. It was one of the teachers who did this but I don't know who it was. As far as I remember there would be two in the bathroom.
45. Getting slaps or taps on the head was quite a common thing from staff. I remember getting slaps when I would not clear my plate.
46. I remember there was a blue light out in the corridor at night time which I guess now was a night light. If you were a bed wetter you were made to turn your chair to the side. Teachers would come in and wake them at a certain time but I can't remember what time that was to get them to go to the toilet. I remember if kids got caught going to the toilet before that time they were made to stand in the corridor. I don't know how long they had to do that for. I never had to do that.

47. If any of the kids wet the bed they would be humiliated. Teachers would tell everyone in the dorm that they were a bed wetter and they would be made to go and stand in the corridor. I can't say how long they did that. At that time I didn't have a watch or anything so I wouldn't have a clue about timings. I remember staff humiliating children in my dorm and telling us they had wet the bed. I don't remember anything about the teachers who did this. I remember feeling sorry for the kids who wet the bed and I wanted to help them but I couldn't do anything.
48. Once when we were writing our letters home my sister did write something like 'it is horrible here and I want to come home'. She was pulled up in front of everyone and was embarrassed in front of everyone about what she had written before they ripped her letter up. They told her to write another letter with what was on the board. She wasn't the only one as there were lots of kids trying to sneak messages back home but staff always read them before sending them.

Reporting of abuse at Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

49. I only told the teacher why my sister ate the cake because she asked us. I didn't speak about anything else because at that age and time you just accepted it. There was nothing about child abuse spoken about. Adults you respected and you just did what they told you.

Leaving Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

50. I think we would be taken back on a bus and I suppose I would be happy to be leaving. Boswell Street still keeps coming to my mind and I don't know if that was an educational building so we might have got dropped off there.

Castle Toward, Dunoon

51. I just can't say if I went to Castle Toward in between Fornethy stays or after two stays but it was still in that year time frame before I went to high school. It was a six week stay. I couldn't tell you where Castle Toward is but it is in Scotland somewhere. It might be Ayrshire but I couldn't even guess. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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[REDACTED] went with me and my younger brother went to Seaview which was in Ayrshire. I can't say if he went at the same time as us though.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after being in care

58. About a year or two after dad died we moved across the street to [REDACTED] which was a bigger house in the middle floor. I went to Possilpark Secondary School. I was a loner but I never got bullied or anything. I was always on my own and I just sat at the back whereas at primary school I had loads of friends. When I came back and went to secondary school it all changed. In primary school I had a best friend but not in secondary. Looking back I think I was depressed. If someone spoke to me I could hear them speaking but I didn't take it in. It was as if I had blanked out and I still do the same now sometimes. I think I felt invisible and if you were to ask people at the school about me I don't even think anyone would remember me.
59. My mum went off the rails and she took to drink so for a while we were living without electricity or gas.
60. I did one of the YTS schemes and that was the same as I was invisible. It was a tuck shop they used to run at [REDACTED], Glasgow and I checked the stock and sold the tuck.
61. I foolishly got married after that at the age of seventeen and during our marriage we had five daughters who are aged 38, 36, 33, 31 and 29. I was still living in Glasgow at that time but in 1994 we moved to Wales. My husband was mentally abusive but when we moved to where I live now they had a building set up to help all the families living in the area create a community. I found my feet and got a bit of confidence. The

marriage lasted for fifteen years until I came to my senses and got a divorce. I had three part-time jobs and worked in the school holidays, two of the jobs were in crèches during school hours and the other was cleaning when I could go during the evening or at weekends.

62. All my kids were settled in Wales and it was better than where I came from so we stayed here. I feel my kids had a better life here. I did a bit of childminding and in 2005 my friend helped me get a job working with adults with learning difficulties. I have been there ever since. I enjoy it and you never know what you are going into each day.
63. I went on to remarry again and he is completely opposite to the first one. We got married in 2008 and he is from Wales whilst the other one was from Scotland. He is old school. His father taught him that he goes out to work and hand his wage packet over so when he did that to me I didn't know what to do.
64. Two years ago another company took over and TUPE'd over the house I was in. I don't like this new company but because I had a strong connection to one of the ladies there I wanted to stay with her. I think things then went tits up. Another lady in the house attacked me but accused me of attacking her. I was suspended immediately until they could investigate but they found no evidence I had done anything wrong because there was nothing to find out. I went back but had a hand accident and have been off ever since. I am waiting on them to put risk assessments in place so in theory I still have a job.

Impact

65. I think it is hard to pinpoint impact to the one event in my childhood. I think my dad's death has had a huge impact on me and still does. I think when I was vulnerable, needed support and nurture Fornethy didn't give that and instead I think the way they treated me and my sister has also impacted on my life. I know I can pinpoint to these times as everything goes back to the period of time from when my dad died and the

period I was at Fornethy. I definitely didn't realise this until recently when Fornethy came up in the press and I connected it. I think I had managed to block it all out.

66. I think the problems I have in adult life with food stem back to being made to clear my plate at Fornethy. I still believe I have to clear my plate and it is just an impulse now which is why I think I am a bit overweight. It is not even if the food is on the plate it is like an impulse if it is there I will eat it. I got taught to eat it. It is not that I want it. For instance if there is a packet of biscuits open I won't eat one or two I will have to finish the packet.
67. I struggle to be naked and with my first husband I would get undressed in the dark. With my second husband who I married fifteen years ago it is only recently I will have a go at undressing with the TV on so it is a bit lighter. It is something I am conscious of and I am trying to work on it.
68. I don't like confrontation so if someone is having an argument I will retreat.
69. I am a people pleaser so even if you did me wrong and the following week you asked me to do something, I would do it. I think this stems from being at Fornethy and when adults tell you to do something you just do it.
70. I have problems with emotions as I can't show them. This is a big one for me. My granddaughter was on life support and although I felt everything inside I couldn't physically show it. It really upsets me that I behave this way. Sometimes my voice changes but I won't cry or get angry. I love my kids to bits and I would do anything for them but it really gets to me that I can't show them emotion. I even find it hard to give them a hug and I don't know if that is because I don't want to be hugged. This is probably down to different things and not just Fornethy such as my dad's death and having an abusive husband. Fornethy would no doubt contribute as well.
71. I have been diagnosed with depression years and years ago and I am still taking tablets. It was maybe thirty years ago.

72. I will be the one to help everyone else but I don't like anyone knowing what is going on with me. I don't like people knowing or trying to help me. It is as if I have built a barrier and no-one else can get through it. I have friends but I don't let them in and wouldn't go to them with a problem or anything like that.
73. I still have a close relationship with my sister but I don't like contacting people. If they phone me I will talk to them but I won't make the first move. I would by text. I don't know if it is a confidence thing. I will do it if someone has given me permission to phone them at a certain time. That is like I have been told I can phone so I will phone.

Treatment/support

74. ██████ told me about something she had seen in the papers. I don't get the Scottish papers down here. She sent me a link to a story which I think was online. There was a ██████ group mentioned in it called ██████ Fornethy and I joined that. Some of the things on it are just way over my head. I know recently they were doing protests which are something about Glasgow Corporation and Glasgow Council who are denying there is any paperwork or anything about the kids who were sent to Fornethy. I think they are protesting about the redress as well. I think their point is it doesn't matter how long you were in care, if you were abused you were abused and it should all be under one umbrella. I think it was through this group that they gave me the number for Thomson's solicitors and told me to contact them. I don't really want to get involved unless it is personal to me and this is personal to me but I don't know if I can do anything about it.
75. I never spoke about my time at Fornethy with my GP because I never made any connection to how I was feeling until fairly recently. I haven't had any counselling or other support because I usually deal with it all myself. I did mention to him about my lack of emotion and the time when my granddaughter was on life support and there was nothing. Everyone else was crying and I was just there supporting them but there was no emotion and it really worried me. That is why I mentioned it to the doctor and he said I am just one of those people who have put a block up and I won't let it down.

Reporting of Abuse

76. I reported my time in Fornethy to the police in Dundee sometime last year. I phoned them and spoke to someone and then they phoned back a few months later and I gave a statement over the phone. I think his name was Sean. I haven't heard anything else from the police. I don't know who is dealing with it but they said they had a group set up in the police station just dealing with Fornethy.
77. After reporting to the police I contacted Thomson's solicitors. It took me a while to pluck up the courage but my sister kept nagging me. I think it is them who are doing the redress thing. They have been sending me letters which are just updates and that is how I found out redress doesn't cover Fornethy. I just thought it was all connected. I don't think I have given them a statement but I can't remember. I know I have definitely given one to the police though.
78. I know that my sister has come forward to the Inquiry as she told me. I think that was about the same time as me.

Records

79. People on the [REDACTED] group said that the Mitchell Library might have had records but they have looked into it and there are none. The only connection I made with records is someone my sister spoke to mentioned she had been to Castle Toward and when she had been, [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED]. There must be some records of her and I would obviously think me as well because we were there at the same time. I had thought it was the people from the Inquiry but I really don't know.

Lessons to be Learned

80. I used to work with children and I know if I had behaved like the teachers at Fornethy I would be sacked but in those days you just accepted that it was the norm. I had nothing to compare it with and I was young. In those days you just did what adults told you. The thing with that is when I was accused of assaulting a client I was suspended right away and I was told I wasn't allowed to contact anyone from work. I was three months without any contact. I know that it is right that the person who says they have been abused are listened to. I totally agree with that but there is also the other side when it is a false accusation. I feel I was treated like I was already guilty. I was left without any contact for three months and wasn't allowed contact with anyone from work. It felt very lonely and isolated. After three months I got a letter that the company I work for have counselling services for staff but by then I had kind of worked through it myself. It wasn't until four months later they took a statement from me and I was back in work the following month. The person who accused me had already been assessed as telling lies and that was all the way through but they still treated me like I was guilty. That should change. There should be counselling for people straight away not leaving it to go through an organisation's system. If you have been accused of abuse you need support. I think nowadays there is a lot of support for someone who makes the allegation of abuse but I don't think there is anything is place for carers who are alleged to have been abusive. I was actually the person who was attacked and no-one contact me to see if I was okay or see if I had any injuries.
81. I also think those who are management need to know what they are doing and have knowledge of the clients we are caring from. In my case I phoned the on-call manager to tell her what was happening when I was attacked. The company she worked for had only taken over two weeks before and she told me she didn't know the lady and asked me what I expected her to do. She was the person who should have supported me with an ongoing incident. There needs to be clear policies that managers follow which would protect clients and carers. I don't know if every organisation works like this but this is based only on my experience.

82. When I think of my time at Fornethy I wonder if maybe someone coming in to do a check might have given me someone to talk to and tell them what was happening. Although back then kids were not believed anyway if they said anything.
83. I do think that when children tell about abuse they should be listened to and be believed.

Other information

84. 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. PLM

Dated. 28/4/2022.