

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Sister Anthony MACDONALD

Support person present: No

Others present: Denis Moloney, Solicitor, Donnelly & Wall Solicitors

1. My name is Sister Anthony Macdonald. My name at birth was Josephine Patricia Anne Macdonald. My date of birth [REDACTED] 36. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I was born in Basingstoke. I had a brother who was eighteen months older than me, he is now deceased. I had a sister who was two years younger. In 1939, at the outbreak of the war, my family moved to Edinburgh after my father was called up for the duty. I went to Cramond Primary School and then onto Holy Cross Academy.

The Sisters of Nazareth

3. I joined the order, the Sisters of Nazareth, in 1953. I was seventeen and a half years old. Training took about four years. I spent the first three years in Hammersmith in London. After I took my final vows, I was asked to go to Australia. I was aged about 25. I started my teacher training in Melbourne and I completed my education as a teacher when I was in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia when I was 28. I was teaching in a children's home there. I was there for three years.
4. I was asked to come home by the Order and I was put in a hostel in Glasgow for students thinking of entering the Order. It was called St Basil's in Cardonald, Glasgow. I was there for seven years. During my time there I attended the

University of Glasgow where I gained an honours degree in English and History. I was in in my late thirties when I graduated.

5. I was again asked by the Order to go back to Australia. I went to Perth in Western Australia and I taught in a parish school. It was a local Catholic school and I taught primary school aged children. I was there for nearly three years.
6. Whilst in Australia, I received word that my mother was dying of cancer. I came back to Edinburgh to look after her. After my mother died, I felt like I couldn't go back to Australia and leave my dad to look after himself. The Mother Superior at Lasswade children's home asked me to come to replace a Sister who was to have an operation in London. I was to replace her while she recovered. This suited me as I could still be near my dad. I went to Lasswade children's home in 1975. I think I was there for less than a year or maybe a month into the following year.

Nazareth House Children's Home, Lasswade

7. There were four groups of children. Two groups were in the main house and there were two groups in another part of the grounds in a building called Holycot. I was put in charge of a group of fourteen children who stayed in the main building. I think they were all of school age and they all went to the local primary or secondary school. They were aged between five and fourteen. I don't remember any of the children going to nursery. There were boys and girls in my group.
8. I had two staff members that helped me with my group and I also had a cleaner. I think that was the same arrangement for the other groups in the home. It was only the staff or myself that had access to the children.
9. There were three other sisters who were in charge of the other groups. There was Sister [LTX] and Sister Joan of Arc. They were in charge of the groups in Holycot. Sister [LQC] was in charge of the other group in the main house. The Mother Superior was Sister Mary Francis.

10. Each group was entirely separate, I would not be involved with the children from the other three groups. The groups did not mix. They interacted with the kids from the other groups when they were out playing and at school.
11. I was in charge of the same group for the whole time I was there. In my unit, there was a lounge, a dining room and bedrooms. There was a kitchenette but the food for dinner was brought over from the main kitchen.
12. When a child first arrived at the home, I would try and make them feel welcome and to make them feel at home. I would introduce them to the other children. Sometimes, when a child first arrived, they would be distressed depending on the circumstances which they arrived under. I remember from other places where children had been neglected before they arrived at the home but I don't remember anything in particular like that in Lasswade.

Routine at Nazareth House, Lasswade

Mornings and bedtime

13. The children would be woken up at about 7.30am during the week for school. They were allowed to sleep longer at the weekend. I think I slept over in the convent, I can't really remember. They would get up and have their breakfast then go off to school. When they came back from school, the children would be given a snack and then they would go out and play.
14. Bedtime was about 7pm for the younger ones and the older ones were allowed up until about 9pm during the week. At the weekend, I allowed the boys to stay up later to watch a TV programme about football, they liked that.
15. The children slept in bedrooms, not dormitories. There would be two or three children in each bedroom. I can't remember how many bedrooms there were.

Bedwetting

16. I can't recall specifically if anyone wet their beds in Lasswade. My practice with bedwetters was to get them up at about 10pm and take them to the toilet. I would then hope that they would stay dry the rest of the night. If anyone did wet their bed, I would try and change their sheets discreetly. It was usually the younger ones and they would be given a bath in the morning. I did the process discreetly so as not to humiliate the children. I am sure there would have been bedwetters in the home at Lasswade as there would have been children under stress.

Mealtimes / Food

17. For breakfast, there would be a choice of cereals, boiled eggs or a fry up. There was a mixture of food. The group would eat together within their own unit. The children would stay in school for their lunch.
18. The children would have their tea between 5.30 and 6pm. After dinner, I would insist that the children did their homework. The younger children would go into the playroom and I would sit with the older ones helping them with their homework. I would help with their reading.

Washing / bathing

19. In my unit, there were a couple of showers and a bath. The children had a shower every evening and the younger ones would have had a bath at night. I would take the younger ones up and help to bath them.

School

20. The primary school was not far from the home. One of the staff would walk the little ones up the road to the school. The older ones walked to the secondary school on

their own. At the end of the school day, someone went to collect the younger ones and brought them back safely to the home.

21. The children all wore a school uniform. We provided the uniform and it was a different uniform for the primary and secondary school.
22. I would encourage all the children to do their homework. I was not involved with the teaching of the children at Lasswade. I was like a house mother there.

Leisure

23. We had extensive grounds and the children could play football, there were goal posts. There were swings and slides for the children to play on. They could also stay inside and watch TV.
24. The children did extra-curricular activities. Some of the children attended activities like the Brownies, Scouts or the Cubs. They were also allowed to invite their school friends into the home or to play in the extensive grounds. I remember that happening.
25. The children were all given pocket money. I would take the little ones down to the village to buy what they wanted. The older ones would go off to meet their friends and spend their money. They were allowed to do this from about the age of twelve. They would be given a time to be back at the home. They were allowed to go to the local town.

Trips / Holidays

26. I remember we went to the Edinburgh Military Tattoo and we also went to the pantomime.
27. During the summer, all the groups went on holiday to Dunbar. I think we went there for about two weeks. We stayed in a building, it was like a school camp with bunk

beds. I remember we all slept in a large hall. The staff and the sisters slept up on the stage and the children were below.

Birthdays and Christmas

28. When it was a child's birthday, we would have a party and they would get a cake. They were allowed to invite any special friends from school. I would organise the party in the unit and ask the kitchen to make a cake and then go out and buy sweets or lemonade.
29. I think I might have been in Lasswade for Christmas, I am not sure. I think there was a party on Christmas day and there were Christmas decorations. I was responsible for doing that. People would send in lovely toys and the children would go out to parties organised by the Catenians or the Rotary Club.

Visits / Inspections

30. Some of the children were allowed home to stay with family, I can't remember if this was a frequent occurrence. If the children had relatives and if the relatives were allowed to visit, they would see the children in the home or they could take the children out of the home down to the local village. We had to be careful about who was allowed to visit as some of the children had come from abusive families.
31. The children were encouraged to keep in contact with their family if it was permitted. We would be given information from the social work department about this.
32. We had regular visits from social workers. They would come and visit the children. I did notice that the social workers seemed to change. Very rarely would the same child see the same social worker all the time. Social workers visited about every two or three months.

33. If a child's care was to be reviewed, then I would be involved with those discussions when the social worker came. The social worker would speak with me and ask how the child was getting on or if there were any issues. If a child was leaving we would try and get them some clothes and we would take the older ones into town and ask what they would like.
34. I have no memory of an inspection during my time at Lasswade.

Healthcare

35. If a child took unwell, we would contact the local doctor or the dentist. There was a local doctor in the town. I can't remember ever contacting the doctor and I don't remember anyone going to the hospital.

Religion

36. The children in Lasswade were of mixed religion. I would say grace before meals and I would say prayers with the little ones before going to their bed. I think all the children went to church on a Sunday. There was a small chapel attached to the home. The local parish priest would come and do mass in our chapel. He did not stay in the grounds. He would only have had access to any children if they were making their Holy Communion. I don't remember any priest coming into my unit.

Chores

37. I would ask the children to set the table for meals or to tidy their bedrooms. I would ask the teenagers to tidy their wardrobes as they used to shove things in and when you opened the doors stuff would fall out.

Personal possessions

38. They all had a locker or a cupboard in their room where they could keep their personal possessions. Some children, if they were given something from their mother, would keep it under their pillow.

Discipline

39. A child would be disciplined if they had been bullying other children or if we received a report of bad behaviour from school. The children would argue and quarrel with each other and it was my job as a house mother to sort that kind of thing out. I would discipline by depriving the older children of some or all of their pocket money. If the younger ones misbehaved, I would send them to their beds early or deprive them of watching TV. How I disciplined them depended on the severity of what they had done. I did not see any child being disciplined in a physical manner by a nun or by a member of staff. I had no knowledge of how others disciplined their group. Looking after the fourteen children in my group took up all my time. I don't remember any violence between the children.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Lasswade

40. I have been advised that a number of children who stayed at Nazareth House, Lasswade, have made allegations of abuse against members of the Order, Sisters of Nazareth. No allegations have been made against me and I can confirm that I have not been the subject of a police complaint nor have I been subject of a civil action.

LTX

41. Sister LTX was in charge of a group of children in Holycot during my time at Nazareth House, Lasswade. Holycot was a separate building. I think she was already there when I arrived and I think she was still there when I left.

42. All I can remember of Sister [LTX] interacting with the children in her group, is her sitting in the grounds rubbing a child's legs. She had a disabled child in her group and she felt that the girl was not receiving proper physiotherapy so she would sit and massage the girl's legs out in the gardens.
43. The only time the groups mixed and spent time together was during our holiday to Dunbar. I never noticed Sister [LTX] abusing any children during the two weeks on holiday.
44. [LCB] has given an account of her time at Nazareth House, Lasswade to the Inquiry. I have no recollection of a child by that name. In her statement she has made allegations of abuse that she received from Sister [LTX]
45. [LCB] has said *"When Sister [LTX] was brushing my hair and I don't know whether I moved or I fidgeted or something, but it would be a pull of the hair then a punch to the head. The abuse was daily, not so much to myself but there was always one of the kids getting it. Punching, kicking, and pulling hair. At that time [LXB] and I had long hair. She threw brushes at kids' heads for laughing. She was really good at aiming her brushes. It was hard times, the physical assaults on the kids. She would punch with the top of her fingers in a fist. One time [LTX] made [LXB] drink salt water until she was sick because she had accused [LXB] of taking some Benilyn or some sort of medicine. This was when we were on holiday in Dunbar."* I never saw that.
46. She has also said *"One time [redacted] who was [redacted] and [redacted] and I were in the living room and [redacted] shouted because she needed the toilet. Sister [LTX] and a member of staff were out in the hall talking. They weren't paying attention so she wet herself. Sister [LTX] picked her up by the arm and smacked her bare legs."* I have no recollection of that.
47. [LCB] says *"Kids got accused of lighting candles and trying to burn the units. I can't remember the wee boy's name, but he got leathered for that. I don't think he was even old enough to strike a match."* I have no recollection of that.

48. She says *"She was funny because sometimes if you'd been naughty she didn't hit you, even if you'd done something bad. One time I hit someone with a cricket bat and she only sent me to my room. I really thought I was going to get it."* I have nothing to say about that.
49. LCB says *"She would sometimes "send you to Coventry" which meant nobody was allowed to talk to you or play with you. Family, friends, no-one. Even at the dining room table. The longest it lasted was three or four days. It was horrible being sent to Coventry. We could speak to friends at school. It was the only time I liked going to school. My sister used to whisper to me in bed. You had to apologise to have it stopped. I didn't mean it when I apologised because I didn't know what I'd done half the time."* I don't remember seeing that. I knew nothing about the children being isolated.
50. She goes on to say *"There was a time when LXB was in the bathroom trying to help ████████ to walk and she fell and hurt herself. Sister LTX asked everyone to go in and hit LXB but we didn't. She also punched LXB in the face because the school had said she didn't have a tie on. She ended up with a bruise on her face. The school then asked LXB how she got the bruise on her face, I think it was Mr Mooney. He called the convent to say that LXB told him a nun had done it, so she got punished again."* This sounds incredible to me to be honest. I remember the headmaster at school, I can't remember his name. He did all he could to help the children from the home.
51. LCB says *"The most humiliating thing was when I was told to strip naked in the laundry room and Sister LTX smacked my bare bottom. I was completely naked and had to lie over a chair while she hit me with a slipper. She said I'd been to someone's birthday party without permission. One of the older girls walked in because they were in the laundry working. I can't remember who it was. The hitting went on and on. I was grabbing the chair with my legs so hard I had bruises, trying to grip on it."* The laundry room was not far from Holycot where Sister LTX group was. I think we had our own washing machine in our unit. We would send all

our sheets to be cleaned to the laundry room. There was no need for me to be in the laundry room.

52. She says "Sister [REDACTED] LTX accused me of breaking a set of rosary beads. I hadn't done it, but she punched me in the mouth and punched me so my head was hitting a wall. I had to say the devil made me do it, even though I hadn't broken them. On one occasion, Sister [REDACTED] LTX put a wooden splint on a wee boy's right arm to stop him sucking his thumb." I never heard any complaints from the children about Sister [REDACTED] LTX I didn't have contact with that group so I don't remember seeing anything.
53. [REDACTED] LCB says "I spoke to my brother [REDACTED] and he told me it was Sister [REDACTED] LTX who hit him with a wooden coat-hanger." I never heard anything about that.
54. If this all happened then I think it would constitute abuse. If the children had had any complaints about their treatment, they could talk to their social worker or any of the staff. They could also have talked to me.
55. I remember three children coming to me, I'm not sure if this was in Lasswade or someplace else, but their dad had asked them if they wanted to be adopted separately or together. They were upset. They were all of primary school age and I didn't feel it was appropriate for the dad to ask them that. It was too stressful for them.
56. I felt that the atmosphere in the home at Lasswade was happy. The groups were only all together on the summer holiday and I didn't see anything untoward there. If I had seen anything and I thought that a child was being treated cruelly, then I would have spoken to the sister or the member of staff acting in that manner.

Records

57. In relation to my group, I would imagine that I would have kept a punishment book. I don't think I would have kept a daily diary. I'm not sure of the name of the sister I

took the group over from. As I said, my mother had died and I was asked to take over the group temporarily as the other sister recovered from her operation. I would have just carried on using her books.

58. I don't know who looked after the details when a child was admitted or discharged. I think the details would have been given to the sister in charge.
59. The only matter I remember keeping a record of is in relation to a girl named [REDACTED]. I remember the police came to see me about [REDACTED] she was about fourteen. They told me that she was part of a gang that had been robbing houses. I remember [REDACTED] saying that she didn't realise that they had been robbing houses, she thought they were robbing banks. I recorded that someplace and I would have informed the social work department. There must have been a book where these kinds of things could have been recorded. I also imagine we would have recorded any trauma or if anything happened to the children. I would not have recorded day to day events.
60. I don't know if these records would be in Hammersmith. I remember getting a message years ago to send all our records and photographs to Hammersmith so I think that is where they all are.
61. When I left Lasswade, the records would have been left for whoever took my place. I do not know who that was.

Leaving Nazareth House, Lasswade

62. I think I left Lasswade less than a year after my arrival. I know I was not there for very long. I was sent to Middleborough and I was there for about two years. At this time I was in my mid-forty's. After Middleborough, I went to Liverpool to do a post graduate course in education. The Order wanted me to teach in the UK and my Australian qualifications were not acceptable to the education authorities. I was then sent to Aberdeen to fill a teaching post in St Joseph's primary school. This was in

1983. I stayed in the convent and I was a full-time teacher at St Josephs until I left in 1997. The year before I left Aberdeen, I was awarded 'Teacher of the Year.' I have given the Inquiry copies of newspaper articles in relation to this. I have also given the Inquiry copies of all my education certificates.

Nazareth House, Aberdeen

63. I lived in the convent and I taught in the local school. There was a children's home there too. I think there were three groups of children. The children were on the ground floor and I was on the fourth floor in the convent. The children had no access to my floor. I had nothing to do with the day to day care of the children.
64. I was not put in charge of any group however I used to help Sister [REDACTED] LJS. She was in charge of a group and she kept poor health. I remember that she was always coughing and she was eventually sent to America where she was diagnosed with lung cancer. I used to help her out occasionally. I was given a half day off every week and if I saw that she was not feeling well, I would take the younger ones in her group to the park. This was usually on a Saturday afternoon.
65. If a sister in the children's home was going on holiday, I would be asked to go over and sleep with the children at night. I think there were three or four bedrooms for each group and there was one room for the sister in charge of the group. I would sleep in that room when I would help out.
66. I remember there was one child that went to my school from the children's home, she was about six years old. I used to take her to and from school with me. All the other children went to St Peters primary school.
67. During the school holidays, the children would be taken to Tomintoul in the highlands for their summer holidays. During the fourteen years I was there, I was asked to help out at Tomintoul two or three times.

Routine

68. I think the routine in relation to the children in Aberdeen was the same as at Lasswade. There was a sister in charge of each group and she was helped by two members staff and a cleaner. I am not certain about this.
69. During my time at Aberdeen, I remember Sister [LJS] Sister [LKH] Sister Breda, Sister [LTU] Sister [LHA?] and Sister [LTX] Sister [LTX] helped to look after the old people in the care home, she did not have anything to do with the children while I was there. The Mother Superior was Celia Van Haines and then she was replaced with Sister [LKF]

Mealtimes

70. I think the children had their lunches at school. I remember that Sister [LKH] had some boys expelled from having lunches at school because of their behaviour. She did not tell us this but said that they came home at lunchtime because they loved coming back to the home for their lunch. We used to laugh as we knew the truth.
71. The food at dinner time came from the main kitchen and the children were given the same food as the Sisters. If they didn't eat their food, then I would try and coax them. I would say to them to try a little bit or I would try and get them something alternative to eat.

Bedwetting

72. When I was asked to help out, I would get the bedwetters up late at night, at about 10pm and take them to the toilet and hoped that the bed was dry in the morning. If any child did wet the bed, it was an accident and it was treated as that. They were not doing it deliberately.

Leisure

73. The children could play games outside or they watched TV. The children were separated into groups and they would play in their groups if they were inside.

School

74. There was one child in the children's home that could not read. She was about nine. I offered to help but she would not let me teach her. I used to take her out on an occasional Saturday with her family.

Trips

75. There are some beautiful parks in Aberdeen and the children would be taken there for trips or to the beach. I only went on these outings if Sister LJS was ill. Only the group would go on these outings, not all the children in the home. The only time all the groups went together was when they went on their holiday to Tomintoul, they went once a year.
76. At Tomintoul, the boys and girls slept in separate rooms. All the groups would be there together. I would have been in a position to see how the children were being treated. I would help out Sister LKH there and she was absolutely wonderful with the children.

Medical treatment

77. I remember taking one child to the hospital as she had an infected finger. Her brother had stood on it and it happened when I was looking after this particular group. Apart from that, I can't remember any other incidents.

Religious instruction

78. The younger children would go to mass. When I was looking after a group, I would go with them only when I looked after them during the two week holiday. If there was a big event, then we would go up to the big cathedral.

Visits/inspections

79. Visitors would come at the weekend. The only thing I remember about visits was when a child came bursting into my classroom, she was upset. I asked her what was the matter and she told me that she and her siblings had been kept off school that day as their mum had been coming to visit and she had not turned up. They had all run away and she had come to find me.
80. I have no idea whether there were any inspections carried out at the home during my time there.

Deaths

81. I remember a child from the home died in the swimming pool. It was a little boy and he had only been in the home for a couple of days. A staff member had taken a group to the local swimming pool and I think they were left unsupervised. I don't know what happened about it. I was not involved with it at all.

Abuse

82. When I worked in Aberdeen, I never heard of any children being put in isolation. I didn't hear of any children being kicked or punched. I never saw any child having a wet bed sheet put over their head if they had wet their bed, I never saw anything like that.
83. The atmosphere in the home in Aberdeen was a happy one. There was the usual hitting between the children but nothing abusive.

Records

84. During my time there, I did not record anything about the children. If anything happened about a child while I had been looking after them, I would have told the sister in charge when she returned. I don't remember recording anything officially.

Leaving Nazareth House, Aberdeen

85. I left Aberdeen in 1997 and I went to Australia. This was my third time in Australia. I was sent there to teach and I was there for ten years. I retired at seventy and I returned to the UK and I have been here since. When I retired, I spent a year living outside of the convent. I have lived in Lancaster since then and I enjoy gardening and I run a poetry group.

Help the Inquiry

86. I didn't see any abuse in Lasswade or Aberdeen. I was just with my own group in Lasswade. If there was someone doing something abusive in another group then the children would not have come to me to tell me. You only worked with your own group.
87. I think that if children were abused, then it would have had an impact on them and a long term effect. I have met people who have been abused and it does have a long term effect on them.
88. On reflection, I feel really upset with regards to the allegations of abuse. As a child, I never experienced any physical punishment, and I would never use it myself. I was shocked to hear those allegations.

89. 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..... 5/4/2018