

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED]
LBI

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] LBI My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1949 and I am 68 years of age. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Background

2. I have two daughters aged 37 and 32. I am retired now having worked all my adult life. I started in the Civil Service with the National Savings Bank then when my first child was born I stayed at home but worked part-time in a local sports centre. I also went back to college during that time training on the new computer systems that were coming in at that time.
3. In the eighties I did a business course and worked with a large insurance company as an assistant to the HR officer. I then became an HR consultant and I later became a commercial underwriter which I did until I retired.
4. I was brought up in [REDACTED] the eldest of seven children. My mother was from Cork and my father from Northern Ireland. My father flitted a lot between Glasgow and Tyrone. My mother came to Glasgow when she married my father.
5. My father worked all his life and my mother was a housewife. My father was the disciplinarian and did use the belt on us now and again, though I suppose that was considered normal in those days. However, life at home was happy and we used to go on holiday to Ireland regularly.

6. My sister [REDACTED] was the sixth child born and it was at that time that my mother was diagnosed with [REDACTED] cancer [REDACTED]. Everything seemed fine after that and she again became pregnant in [REDACTED] 1961 but became ill again in [REDACTED] 1961.
7. One morning, in [REDACTED] 1961, my mum was too ill to put us out to school so we saw ourselves out. When we came back from school she wasn't there which was unusual. Mum was in hospital but not a lot was explained to us. My father, who was very religious, had us kneeling saying prayers that night.
8. My mum gave birth to my young sister [REDACTED] two days after going into hospital. It was then discovered that the cancer had returned. There were then discussions between my father and a neighbour, a Mrs [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED].
9. Mrs [REDACTED]'s brother was a priest and another priest got involved with our situation and it was decided us five girls would temporarily go into care. At the time I was almost twelve, [REDACTED] was eleven, [REDACTED] was ten, [REDACTED] was almost nine, [REDACTED] was four, [REDACTED] was three and [REDACTED] was the new-born baby and still in hospital. [REDACTED], my brother, was the only boy in the family and, at eleven, was too old to go into Nazareth House as they didn't take boys of that age.
10. Going into Nazareth House was only supposed to be temporary and I think my mum was involved in the planning of it. Looking back I don't think she realised how ill she really was, hence why she probably thought it would be temporary. I didn't think I had to go into the home as I felt I could look after myself. I could both cook and bake.
11. My four younger sisters went into care in the afternoon and my father came to my secondary school to get me when I finished school that day. I was then taken to Nazareth House in Cardonald. It was the evening of [REDACTED] 1961.

Nazareth House – Cardonald

12. Nazareth House was a big old building that was a convent run by the nuns. When I arrived it was cold and dark and there was nobody else there at first as they were all at supper. Sister LFH who was the senior nun, then came and took me from my father and upstairs to a dorm. We were on the top floor in the attic. As a family we were all put into the same room at first.
13. My sisters were quite excited about it but I didn't want to be there. The dorm was like the old Nightingale wards but partitioned into smaller rooms with six beds in each. The sisters in charge of the children slept in what they called cells in the dorms. The ground floor was the sitting rooms and the nursery.
14. As I said, we were at first kept together as a family except [REDACTED] who went to the nursery. However, they decided to leave [REDACTED] who was four, with the rest of us. The problem with this was that it meant that she was left alone when the rest of us went to school and she ended up spending her time with the Mother Superior. I've always thought she should have been left with [REDACTED] in the nursery.
15. I knew at the time that it was wrong that [REDACTED] should be separated from the rest of us and, to this day, she still seems somewhat separated from the rest of the family. She was in the nursery until she started school at the age of five. Children under school age went into the nursery which was a separate building. They would come into the main building when they started school.
16. As I recall, me and my sisters were together for a short time, maybe a couple of months, then [REDACTED] was moved to another room. The girls in each dorm were of a mixed age.
17. When we went into the home in [REDACTED] 1961 my youngest sister [REDACTED] was put into a corporation nursery. In [REDACTED] 1962, it was [REDACTED], we got told that we were getting home for the weekend. When we got home my mother was there and that was the first time we got to meet [REDACTED] who was in her pram.

18. We were only at home during the day and what we didn't realise was that [REDACTED] was coming back to Nazareth House with us. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Looking back I think my mother was trying to keep all us sisters together.

Routine

19. In the home we were separated into three groups these being red, green and blue. Each group had a sister in charge of it and I recall Sister [REDACTED] LFP was in charge of the red group, Sister [REDACTED] LFH was in charge of the green group but I don't recall who was in charge of the blue group.
20. Sister [REDACTED] LFH was an elderly nun, [REDACTED] and was in charge of our group until she left half-way through my time there. Sister [REDACTED] LFL took over from her.
21. We would get up at 6:30 am when a nun would come into the dorm clapping her hands telling us to get up. We would then say prayers, get washed and dressed and go for breakfast.
22. After breakfast we had to do chores. The children did all the domestic work supervised by the sisters and staff. I would say that the kitchen was the only place a nun did any physical work and that was the cooking. The chores we did in the morning before going to school were really just superficial but on a Saturday we had to do a full heavy clean. That would include scrubbing, waxing and polishing all floors in the refectory, dormitories and corridors. We were in teams with the small children doing the polishing with cloths under their feet. It was a bit of a sliding game to then.
23. We would then go to school and return to the home for lunch after which we would clean up then go back to school till about 4:00 pm. After school we would have

recreation time. I don't recall homework being actively encouraged. Each group had its own recreation room and we had toys and a TV.

24. I would say that there were between fifteen and twenty children in each group. The groups did interact with each other, especially during dancing classes, though they were kept separate when in the sitting rooms.
25. Supper was about 6/6:30 pm. Again, as with breakfast and lunch, the refectory and kitchen would have to be cleared and cleaned by us children and the tables prepared for the next meal. You were then supposed to be in bed by 8/8:30 pm.
26. Our days were run according to the sister's days and they all had to be in bed by 9:00 pm when the "Jesus, Mary and Joseph" bell was rung except for one who would be on watch till 11:00 pm. Depending who was on I would sneak back out of bed to watch TV.
27. Saturday mornings were spent doing all the chores thoroughly. Then we would get head checks looking for lice. If you had lice you didn't get pocket-money and had to spend the afternoon getting your head cleaned. It annoyed me that I often had to spend my Saturday afternoons cleaning my sister's head.
28. Sunday morning was Mass. You still had chores to do on a Sunday but it was more relaxed. Fresh covers and matching mats were put on the beds and the dorms all looked lovely though I know now that it was just for show in case there were any visitors. The fresh covers and mats were always put back in the cupboard on a Sunday night.

Food

29. The food was nourishing but nothing special. It was like school meals. It wasn't bad but normal. You got things like shepherd's pie and stew. Now and again, if you got something you didn't like, you would be made to stand at the top table and eat it.

You wouldn't be force-fed but it would still be there for you at the next meal until you ate it.

30. The kitchen staff, especially the sister, were always good for a laugh and were good fun. You were never hungry.

Bedwetting

31. As soon as the nuns got us out of bed the first thing they did was to check if any of us had wet our beds.
32. If a bed was wet then it would be stripped and the wet-beds, as those who wet their beds were called, would be lined up. There was a big bath and they had to wash their sheets themselves.
33. My sister [REDACTED] was a bed-wetter but was never caught because I put her wet sheets on my bed and my bed was never checked.
34. There was one child, [REDACTED] who was a constant bed-wetter who on one occasion was told to go stand in the corridor. At 10:00 pm that night she had to knock the door of a member of staff and ask if she could go to bed. They had completely forgotten about her. In that sense I would say she was neglected rather than abused. I do recall that the bed-wetters were always getting pushed and shoved by the sisters.
35. I think the treatment those children received maybe made them feel that they were less than us but I would add that the other children didn't pick on them.

Washing

36. Washing was a farce. You washed every morning and every night. When you entered the place you were given what was called a washing petticoat made of coarse linen. This was to be worn when you washed to allow you to wash modestly.

The baths were once a week, on a Saturday, and you rarely got fresh water. As you went through puberty you tended to get a bit more privacy.

Christmas/Birthdays

37. At Christmas we didn't get home. It wasn't a bad time because a lot of big stores would donate gifts and would organise parties for, not just us, but for all the homes in Glasgow. We even got to go to pantomimes sometimes.
38. Older girls would stay for midnight mass and I remember that a lot of people would come to the mass because our children's choir was so good. Any presents you got you kept.
39. Your birthday was celebrated depending on who looked after you outside. They might have brought in a present or a card but otherwise the home didn't celebrate birthdays.

Holidays

40. Holidays depended on people outside the home. For instance, some parishes like Croy or Dalry would ask their parishioners if they were willing to take some of the children for a week or two. I recall I went to Croy in the first year but thereafter my dad took us to Ireland in the summer.

Doctors/Dentists

41. We had a visiting dentist who came once a month. The home had a very basic dental surgery on the first floor. The one complaint I would have is that we tended to get a lot of fillings that I genuinely don't think were needed.
42. One of the sisters was the pharmacy sister who would deal with you when you were sick. If you were really unwell they called a doctor in. We also got specific check-ups

and I think that was to do with the fact that there had been a big breakout of dysentery prior to us arriving at the home.

Clothing

43. To children clothes are very important. Our clothes were all in a case when we arrived and I tucked them all in to drawers. Not long after, Sister LFH spotted my sister wearing her own socks. When she asked [REDACTED] where she had got them [REDACTED] told her that I had given them to her. Sister LFH then went to our drawers and removed every bit of clothing we had.
44. After that we were then having to wear the same clothes as everybody else. You had a uniform for school, recreation clothes and clothes for a Sunday. You got your underwear changed once a week.
45. We had berets that we had to wear to mass on a Sunday but at Easter we had special bonnets that we wore. I recall seeing girls from another group wearing hats that I knew my mother had bought for us two years previously. I was so annoyed at that but couldn't say anything.
46. We all had to go to school wearing what the sisters gave us and we were known as "the convent girls". We had big lace up shoes we had to wear but we would take our nice Sunday shoes and change into them. However, one of the nuns caught us and confiscated our Sunday shoes.

Visitors

47. My mum and dad came to visit us together on two occasions. I knew my mum was ill but, as a child, I thought she was getting better. When mum came to see us she didn't stay long with us but, instead, would rush off to see [REDACTED] the baby.
48. My sister [REDACTED] who was also in the nursery, didn't even know that the new baby that the sisters were making a fuss of was her wee sister.

49. My dad visited every Saturday at about 6pm and we would all meet him in the nursery. That was our only contact with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] while they were in the nursery.
50. We always knew when welfare officers would be visiting the home as all the children would be put into their best Sunday clothes.

Religion

51. Everything was geared round the nun's days. There were certain times of the day when the nuns would have to pray leaving only one of them to look after all of us. You would hear bells throughout the day but these were simply to alert the nuns to do certain things or to go to certain places.
52. You had to go to benediction and confession and you had to go to mass on a Sunday. You would also go on retreat for a couple of days round about Easter time. A special priest was usually brought in during these retreats to give us talks.

Abuse

53. The nuns didn't really interact with the children. They did what was necessary and no more. You were never treated as an individual. There was certainly no affection, no kisses or cuddles or things like that. There was a younger nun who tried to be nice but she left. Apparently after I left there was a Sister [REDACTED] LHA who arrived and my sisters, who were still there, have nothing but good things to say about her.
54. Sister [REDACTED] LFL would use her hand on the children now and again. Sister [REDACTED] LFS came into the convent when I was about sixteen. [REDACTED] She had a terrible temper on her. I remember she lost the plot one time and punched me to the ground. That was the only time I was physically abused.

55. Sister [LFH] in the early two years I was there, had sticks in various places in the building. She would tell somebody to go stand wherever she had the sticks and would hit them on the hand with whichever stick she kept there.
56. My sister [REDACTED] got caned by Sister [LFH]. What had happened was that we had new plimsolls which fell apart after a while. A girl asked [REDACTED] to swap her new shoes for the girl's old ones. Sister [LFH] heard about it and caned both of them.
57. It infuriated me that I couldn't do anything about that and, looking back, I think it was ridiculous that [REDACTED] got caned. Sister [LFH] would also use the cane sometimes on those who wet their beds. She's the only one I recall using the cane.
58. Sister [LFP] didn't use a stick or a cane but she certainly slapped out a lot.
59. The sisters could be quite demeaning in the way they spoke to some of the children. They would call them stupid or bold often at the same time as giving them a slap. I can't say that I ever suffered that. The nuns weren't very good at being kind and tended to be distant. I'm certainly not aware of anybody ever wanting to return to the convent to visit a specific nun.
60. The children were allowed to make their own friends and I don't recall any friendships not being allowed. You could talk freely amongst yourselves but you wouldn't talk freely with the nuns. It just wasn't done.
61. I would never say that the atmosphere was a normal family situation which was something I missed. At home my father may have been strict but we knew we were loved and you always felt like an individual. In the home you were never an individual.
62. I suppose, in fairness to the nuns, you were talking about one nun and one young member of staff to maybe twenty children. They couldn't possibly be like a mum to so many and they weren't trained for such a situation.

63. There was a specific incident that affected our family in particular. When [REDACTED] was thirteen and [REDACTED] was twelve, they had to rise at 5:50 am every morning to “potty” approximately 22 toddlers. This was due to the fact that no nursery staff arrived until 8:00 am. This continued for approximately two years.
64. However, when [REDACTED] was about fourteen, she rebelled and refused to get out of her bed at that time of the morning. The nuns demanded that she continued to do this chore but [REDACTED] refused and [REDACTED] backed her up by also refusing to rise at that time.
65. The result of this was that they were deemed “uncontrollable” and were sent home to their father’s care. This also meant that they were leaving Nazareth House with a black stain on their character by the nuns saying that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were “bad girls” and the problem for our family was that our father believed the nuns.

Leaving Institution

66. I left the home when I turned [REDACTED] I stayed that long to enable me to finish my schooling. My two immediate younger sisters had already left by that time. My three younger sisters stayed on for a few years after that.
67. My father slowly turned to drink after my mother died and I think when we returned home he thought he would have three housemaids but it didn’t turn out that way. What he got were three young girls who wanted to live their own lives.

Records

68. I’ve never felt the need to try and get my records as I’ve always known why myself and my sisters went into Nazareth House. Also, I was old enough throughout my time there to know what was going. I have a good recollection of what happened to me and I doubt if seeing any records would help.

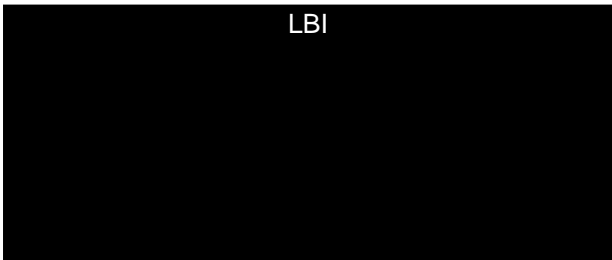
Impact

- 69. It's hard to say what kind of impact my time in the home has had on my life. I suppose it's made me stronger and I'm able to speak out when I have to.
- 70. The reason I came forward to the Inquiry was to try and get people to understand that Nazareth House itself was a sign of the times. The whole environment was wrong but in those days it was normal.
- 71. What is interesting is that I think it was my mother's idea to keep all us girls together and a result of that, is that, to this day, we are still a tight knit family.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 72. The Inquiry cannot repair what happened. I don't think such places like Nazareth House exist anymore and it tends to be foster care. What is needed though is that those who do look after children have to be properly trained and properly vetted.
- 73. Sometimes I think the involvement of the social work has gone a bit over the top but, when I look back to my time in care, their involvement then was minimal and that certainly wasn't good for a child's well-being.
- 74. 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.

LBI



Signed.....

Dated..... 30/1/2018