

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ELA [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is ELA [REDACTED] At birth, my name was ELA [REDACTED]
ELA [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh. I don't know much about my life before care as I went to Smyllum when I was thirteen months old. My mother's name was [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I know very little about my mother. I know she was in Lasswade Children's home in 1933 when she was nineteen years old and pregnant. She gave birth to me in 1951 and put me into the orphanage at Smyllum. My father was Polish. He died when I was seven years old. His name was [REDACTED]

Smyllum Orphanage, Lanark 1952 to 1958

3. It was nuns who ran Smyllum. I can't remember any of their names. No one ever explained to me why I was in Smyllum.

Routine at Smyllum

Mornings and bedtime

4. We slept in a dormitory. The bit I was in was all boys. We had cots or beds all in a row. There were quite a few boys in the dormitory. I couldn't say a number but there was a lot of kids screaming. It wasn't a happy place. The screaming varied night and day.

Mealtimes/Food

5. I don't remember a lot about the food. I can't recall if it was good or bad.

Washing/bathing

6. If you needed the toilet at night, the nuns would drag you there. You would be sitting on the toilet and they would put the light off. That was horrible. Then they would shout at you and drag you back to your bed again. I can't remember if we got any help with washing.

Clothing/uniform

7. I would imagine I just wore normal clothes in Smyllum but I can't remember anything in particular. I have a photograph of me sitting on a cushion with what was like a dress. I was eighteen months old. It must have been taken in Smyllum.

Leisure time

8. There was a park and a children's play area which was inside. The play area was all enclosed, there was a roof over it and there were windows but you weren't allowed outside.

Schooling

9. I don't remember primary school in Smyllum. There were classes in Smyllum you would go to, the nuns taught me to write. I believe it was the same nuns who ran the place that did the teaching.
10. When I left Smyllum and went to Stirling primary school, they had to get a speech therapist for me to speak properly. The nuns didn't speak to me much. They just told me to hurry up or to go to the toilet.

Healthcare

11. I vaguely remember my tonsils were taken out at a very young age. It was in a white, clinical area but I don't know if it was a hospital or if it was done in Smyllum. After they took my tonsils out I was just back in my room and back to the indoor playground.

Religious instruction

12. Smyllum was very Catholic orientated. We had to go to church every Sunday and say prayers at night before we went to bed. We had to kneel on the floor by the bed.

Work

13. I don't recall having to do any chores at Smyllum.

Birthdays and Christmas

14. I didn't know when my birthday was when I was at Smyllum. I don't remember anyone's birthday being celebrated.
15. I remember at Christmas they had a big Oxo tin full of sweets. They would give you a handful of sweets but never a toy. I don't remember a Christmas tree or Christmas dinner.

Bed Wetting

16. I wet the bed up until I was fourteen years old. The nuns would smack you for wetting the bed. That happened mostly in the morning. I don't remember what happened to the soiled bedding.

Visitors

17. I didn't get any visitors at Smyllum. I didn't know I had a family when I was at Smyllum, that was something I only found out about much later.

Review of care

18. I don't remember any official visits at Smyllum. I don't remember anyone asking me how I was getting on.

Discipline

19. You would get the odd smack from the nuns but it was mostly verbal. I can't remember the specifics of what they said, they just shouted at you.

Abuse at Smyllum

20. The nuns hit me. Some had the belt. I don't recall any specific incidents with any particular nuns. I can't recall seeing other children being hit by the nuns.
21. I am left handed. When I was learning to write I would get smacked on the hand for using my left hand. They didn't want you to write with your left hand, it was bizarre.

Leaving Smyllum

22. I left Smyllum in 1958, when I was seven years old. I can't remember being told I was leaving Smyllum or why. One day, Mrs ^{ELB} came and took me away. That was the first time I saw her. We got the train from Lanark to Stirling. Mrs ^{ELB} came with her daughter her nick name was would have been in her twenties at that time.
23. I can't remember how I felt that day leaving Smyllum. When you are that young, you just go with the flow.
24. No one explained to me about my family. Mrs ^{ELB} didn't say anything to me about my mother or father but she knew a lot more than she told me. I wasn't fostered by Mrs ^{ELB} I was boarded out to her. I would like to know the definition of being boarded out. I don't know if it was just a different term used at the time.

Boarded out with Mrs ^{ELB}, Stirling, 1958 to 1970

25. Mrs ^{ELB}'s first name was ^{ELB} She stayed at then she moved to number She moved when I was about ten years old. When I was about fifteen years old she moved to just a street behind I stayed with Mrs ^{ELB} until I was eighteen years old, then I left to join the army.

26. Mrs ^{ELB} was one of thirteen brothers and sisters and had her own family too. She had , , , and . None of them lived in the house when I was there. was in the forces, was married and lived in Cornton and was in the RAF and lived in Leicester but died about seven years ago. worked in Hospital. I got on with them alright. was nice to me. He was stationed in Singapore. He brought me back this beautiful reversible jacket with lions and tigers. He brought me a football once too.
27. The other person who lived in Mrs ^{ELB}'s house was ^{ELC} I think ^{ELC} moved in with Mrs ^{ELB} when he was about seventeen years old. He knew some relative of Mrs ^{ELB} so she had heard about his situation and took him in. ^{ELC} called Mrs ^{ELB} 'ELB' he didn't call her mum. I just called her ^{ELB} too. Mrs ^{ELB} didn't talk much about her husband or anything else. She wasn't much of a talker.
28. ^{ELC} was already at Mrs ^{ELB} house when I arrived there at the age of seven. He was twenty four years old, there was a seventeen year age difference between us. He worked as a labourer for a local builder and he was a piper in the pipe band.
29. ^{ELC} never divulged if he had been in a home like me. He did tell me he had been in a home but didn't say which one. He then joined the army at fifteen years old. He didn't divulge much to me about my mother, although he did know her.
30. As far as I know ^{ELC} was gay but he had a girlfriend. She worked in the prison service. They were getting on quite well but he went round one time and she was in bed with another woman. He was a bit shocked by that seemingly. That was the only female he had in his life as far as I know.
31. My name didn't change officially when I went to Mrs ^{ELB} but I was being referred to as ^{ELA}

Routine at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]

First day

32. [REDACTED] was a three bedroom house. It was nothing special. It had coal fires. There was a little close in the middle and two houses on the ground floor and two on the top floor. The people who lived next door to Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] were Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]. They had a son called [REDACTED] who was a similar age to me. He was a big lad. I don't know if it was a swap between council tenants or what. The Italian lady downstairs, Mrs [REDACTED] was nice.

Mornings and bedtime

33. At [REDACTED] I was in one of the bedrooms at the back of the house. ^{ELB} [REDACTED] had one and ^{ELC} [REDACTED] was next to mine. At [REDACTED] the arrangements were basically the same. Two bedrooms at the front and one at the back, I had the one at the back.
34. I used to sleep walk a lot when I lived at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]. Neighbours would find me out in the street, in a daze. They would guide me back home and ring the bell.

Mealtimes/Food

35. I just got a bit of toast for breakfast. I was quite underweight when I was at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED].
36. I had lunch at school. It was free school meals in those days and we got a little bottle of milk every day.
37. Dinner at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]'s was things like mince and tatties. She used to make custard in little brown bowls. I don't know if we got enough food, I was always hungry. When I

was older I was allowed to help myself to a snack in the kitchen and at high school I would get seconds at lunch.

Chores / Pocket money

38. I was made to clean out the coal fire every morning from the age of eight years old. I didn't get any pocket money from Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] ^{ELC} [REDACTED] would give me money for polishing his shoes.
39. I had to clean all the brass things with Brasso every Sunday. When I went to high school I worked at the Co-Operative. My friend [REDACTED] used to do the deliveries with the basket on the bike every Saturday. He asked me to do it every other Saturday, so he could go to the football. I thought it was great as I used to get tips from the people I was delivering messages to. I could earn about a fiver, which was a lot in those days.

Clothing/uniform

40. Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] did buy me clothes. When I went to high school she took me to a place called McAree's in Stirling. She bought me long trousers and a blazer. I thought I must be growing up.

Schooling

41. I went to [REDACTED] Primary School in [REDACTED], Stirling. My standard of reading and writing was not bad compared to the other kids at [REDACTED] When I went to school I had to wear a cap.
42. I went to Saint Modan's High School in Saint Ninian's, Stirling. Some of the other kids at school picked on me because I was in care, I didn't have a dad and I didn't have a mum either. They forced me to steal cigarettes from Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] and bring them to school for them, otherwise they would beat me up.

43. I enjoyed high school. I wanted to stay on and be an architect but Mrs ^{ELB} said no, I had to leave and get a job. So I left school at fifteen years of age.
44. Mrs ^{ELB} got me a job working at the local builders but I was only there for three weeks. I hated it. In those days you could leave one job and get another the next day. Then I got a job at the Co-Operative as an apprentice grocer. Then that branch of the Co-Operative got closed and I got a lovely job with Burton's Tailors.

Clubs /organisations

45. Mrs ^{ELB} never took me out to activities like the cinema or swimming. What happened was Mrs ^{ELB} would give Mrs the old woman who lived up the stairs, sixpence or a shilling to take me to the pictures. Mrs would take me on the bus up into Stirling. We would go into Woolworths and she would buy a bag of broken biscuits. They were cheap because they were broken. She would take me to the cinema and we would sit eating our broken biscuits.

Leisure time

46. I was allowed to play outside in the street with other children, playing football and things. I wish I had been a football player.

Religion

47. I got my first Communion on 1958 when I stayed with Mrs ^{ELB} I remember my Communion. It was done at primary school. We all had orange coloured sashes and the girls had nice dresses.
48. I had to go to church every Sunday, to Chapel. Mrs ^{ELB} didn't go with me, she was Church of Scotland. At church we got to learn the Highland fling. We had lessons during the week at night but I wasn't very good at it. I stopped practicing religion when I left school.

Birthdays and Christmas

49. Christmas with Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] was very quiet. Her thing was New Year. She enjoyed having people round at New Year. She had policemen and people like that round. She was quite well connected, she sat on committees. She sat on the [REDACTED] football club committee. She was also on the committee for a place called [REDACTED]
50. We didn't get big Christmas presents, in those days we couldn't afford it. One year she said she didn't have much money. She got me a little plastic machine gun from Woolworths, but that was fine. I was quite happy with that.
51. Birthdays weren't really celebrated at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]'s. I can't remember much presents as such. Her sons would bring back presents from wherever they had been abroad.

Trips and holidays

52. Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] took me to Edinburgh zoo one day and we went to Burntisland. There was a chap called Mr [REDACTED] who lived round the corner from [REDACTED] and he organised a coach for the locals. They paid so much each month and once a year there was a trip out. Burntisland was cold, it wasn't nice. Apart from that there weren't any trips. It wasn't like nowadays. I suppose money was tight.

Supervision oversight / inspection by fostering authority

53. I never saw anyone from the social work department, I didn't see anyone from the local authority.
54. I remember one woman coming to visit when I hadn't been there a long time. She had curly hair. She was very smart and had a big coat with fur on the collar. She sat there and asked questions. ^{ELB} [REDACTED] made me stand beside her. She asked me, "Would you like to come and stay with us?" I said, "No." ^{ELB} [REDACTED] said, "He's

alright, he's happy here." I don't know who the woman was. I don't know if she was a social worker. She could have been my mother, I never found out who she was.

55. One of Mrs ^{ELB} sisters who was alive at the time was We called her Aunty she lived a few miles away in Alloa. Aunty was nice, she was kind. You always remember the good things clearly and try to block out the bad things. Aunty said to Mrs ^{ELB}, ^{ELB} let me look after ^{ELA}?" She knew how Mrs ^{ELB} treated me but Mrs ^{ELB} said no.

Relationship with foster parents / other children

56. Mrs ^{ELB} never had any other foster children, or boarded out children. It was just me and ^{ELC}

Discipline

57. When I was at primary school I walked to school myself and walked home. There was a garage up the road from Mrs ^{ELB} house and they had a son who was the same age as me. I would go there after school sometimes to play football in the park behind the garage when I should have gone home. Mrs ^{ELB} would know where I was. There was a leather belt that hung up beside the fireplace. She used that to smack me all the way home from the garage.
58. After getting belted by Mrs ^{ELB} for playing football on the way home from school I was more careful. I played football again when I was older, up at the football park

Bed Wetting

59. I had terrible problems with bedwetting at Mrs ^{ELB}. Before bed Mrs ^{ELB} would make me drink water from a tin mug. I would have to drink one mug after another as punishment for wetting the bed, but I thought that wasn't going to help me. They had a rubber sheet so it wouldn't soak through to the mattress.

Abuse at Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED]

60. ELC [REDACTED] sexually abused me. I didn't know until my late teens that he was my half-brother. We had the same mother but different fathers. ELC [REDACTED] himself told me when I was in my teens that he was my half-brother. He told me I didn't want anything to do with our mother, but he didn't say why.
61. ELC [REDACTED] started to abuse me when I was about eight or nine years old. It would happen one or two times a week. He used to sneak into my bed, abuse me, and then sneak back to his own bed. It was horrible.
62. The abuse did go beyond just touching. There was never any penetration but he used to get me to hold his penis. He would make me masturbate him and he tried to masturbate me but I was too young to get an erection.
63. There were cousins of Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED] who used to come and stay and ELC [REDACTED] touched them too. They told me about it. I think one was called [REDACTED] and another was called [REDACTED]. I divulged, in a way, that the same thing was happening to me.
64. ELC [REDACTED] eventually left Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED]'s home. He joined the Merchant Navy and I didn't see him again for years. I was in my teens when he left, maybe fifteen or sixteen years old. That's when the abuse stopped.
65. Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED] beat me quite a lot with the belt. There was one time I broke a window across the street when I was about nine years old. Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED] got ELC [REDACTED] to beat me with a stick. It was the most painful beating I ever had. My backside was black and blue, I couldn't sit down for a week.
66. I would get belted by Mrs^{ELB} [REDACTED] for anything. I couldn't do anything right. The leather belt was used many times just for the sake of it. I got belted for sleepwalking.

Reporting abuse at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]'s

67. There was no one I could report the abuse at Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]s to. There was only Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] and ^{ELC} [REDACTED]
68. ^{ELB} [REDACTED] never came and checked on me at night but sometimes I would run from my room to hers and tell her that I had had a bad dream. She would let me sleep with her. I never told her that ^{ELC} [REDACTED] was abusing me. He told me that if I said anything I would go back to the home.

Leaving Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED]

69. I was eighteen years old when I left Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] and joined the army in 1970. I think I wanted a career change and I wanted away from where I was. I was underweight, I was only nine stone and I only just got in. I managed to see our own doctor, Doctor Kennedy. He said he thought I would just get in. When I joined the army I still sent money back to Mrs ^{ELB} [REDACTED] but I stopped that when I got married.

Life after being in care

70. After joining the army I got married when I was twenty one years old. My wife moved to Germany with me. I was in the ^{ELB} [REDACTED] I was an ambulance driver to begin with and then I was driving trucks.
71. I went to Canada, then I went back to Germany and then I left the army in 1982. By then I had my wife and two sons and we moved to South Africa.
72. When I came out of the army I saw ^{ELC} [REDACTED] again. He had been living in the house that ^{ELB} [REDACTED] lived in at ^{ELB} [REDACTED] ^{ELB} [REDACTED] died in 1973, when I

was in the army. I saw ^{ELC} at the funeral. There were hundreds of people there, there were coaches full of people. When I saw ^{ELC} I just thought, "He can't harm me now."

73. ^{ELC} died on [REDACTED] 1998, He collapsed near the train station at Stirling and there was no one else to identify his body so I had to go and do it. I thought, "At least you are not going to harm anyone else now." I dealt with his funeral, clearing his house, and handing the house back to the council.
74. I didn't change my name to ^{ELA} with the Registrars until I was older, in 1981. The reason I did it was because I went to South Africa, I emigrated. It was easier to use ^{ELA} because I knew more about Mrs ^{ELB} than I did my own mother. I stopped using the middle name ^{ELA}.
75. When I emigrated to South Africa I worked as a paramedic and fireman. One week you were on the ambulance, the next you were fighting fires. In the Fire Department we had to carry firearms in the cabin when we went to certain areas because they were so dangerous. I didn't want a gun, I had a dog. I had a gun pointed at me a couple of times. Once was from a neighbour who worked with me at the Fire Department. My dog had chewed his slippers and he said he was going to kill my dog, when I was holding my youngest son in my arms. I told him to behave himself, that I would buy him a new pair of slippers. I went to the duty office at the Fire Department that night and told him what had happened. They took his gun off him and fired him. There were unbelievable things that happened over there.
76. We came back from South Africa because my wife wasn't enjoying it, it was too dangerous. I enjoyed the work there but it was dangerous. I got a job with the London ambulance service but I didn't like London, after being in Africa with wide open spaces, and I only lasted three weeks. We moved back to Scotland and I got a job labouring but sadly my wife and I divorced.
77. I moved to Leicester because I had stayed here with my wife's aunt when I worked for the London Ambulance Service. I got a job with the ambulance service covering a lot of the race tracks around here. I met people like Jackie Stewart. I worked there for

about ten years then the guy sold the business so next I worked as a prison officer. I retired in 2010. I married again and my wife and I live very happily. I have spent more time in Leicester than I have in Scotland but I still think of Scotland as my home.

Impact

78. I didn't think about my situation in Smyllum much when I was there. It was only after I left and as time went on that I think about it. When I was boarded out, I wished I was back there.
79. The question I have is, "What is the definition of being boarded out?" I know I wasn't adopted or fostered but I don't know how Mrs ^{ELB} got me from the orphanage.
80. The sexual abuse I suffered was horrible. If I kept my underpants on, I felt safe because ^{ELC} couldn't touch my genitals. So I still keep my underpants on at night now and I am seventy years old. I put all of my sleepwalking as a child down to the stress I was suffering at the time.
81. I don't know what it was that motivated Mrs ^{ELB} to become a carer at a relatively late stage in life. She had children and they had all grown up and left.
82. It's hard to say what the impact was of the abuse I suffered. It happened. At the time I didn't think I could do anything about it. I have accepted what happened. I have thought about it a lot more in the lead up to talking to the Inquiry. Although I wanted to stay on at school and become an architect I am very happy with what I did do. I think I have done alright.

Reporting of Abuse

83. I have never reported the abuse I suffered to the police. My wife knows about it. I didn't go into details with the Redress scheme, I didn't tell them all that I have told the Inquiry.

Records

84. I contacted Birthlink over twenty years ago to trace my parents. I found out through them that my father died in 1958. I found out where he was buried at Mount Vernon, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. My wife and I visited his grave and it was just an unmarked plot with a number. I am going to get a headstone made.
85. I had found out about my father through the Ministry of Defence. I have found out about my relatives in Poland. I went over about twenty years ago to meet them. They knew about me from my father. When he passed away in 1958 they couldn't afford to have his body shipped back to Poland so he was buried in Scotland. The whole family made me feel very welcome. I keep in contact with my cousins.
86. ELC had always known that he was my half-brother, so did ELB Birthlink were able to confirm that too. Birthlink also told me that my mother had passed away.
87. I have only recently filled out forms with Open Secret to find out about what happened with me being put into care. They are looking into it now, they have got up to a month to reply. As I am getting older I want to know what happened.
88. Through contacting family members I have been able to get photographs of my mum and dad. I feel more resolved after getting these. It must be awful to go through your whole life without knowing what your parents looked like.

Lessons to be learned

89. The authorities had no supervision over, or input into, my care. In those days it was a different system to nowadays. But there was a report recently about a young boy who died and social workers hadn't spotted the signs. You are not going to be able to prevent these things from happening. In those days I suppose it went on more than people knew. It is difficult to know how you could have addressed that.
90. There was a chap who lived next door who was like a father figure to me. He used to take me up to Stirling castle and he made me a bow and arrow out of the branch of a tree. That was fun until I hit something with it and got smacked again. He was a good guy but he wasn't someone I could have spoken to about things.
91. There are more resources now to deal with those kind of problems, things like Childline, that we never had in those days.
92. They should be more diligent about children who are looked after in care. They should do more background checks on the people they are going to get to look after those kids. I think I would have benefited from knowing more about my birth parents when I was younger.

Hopes for the Inquiry

93. I hope the Inquiry will improve things for young people in care, so the things that happened to me don't happen to them.
94. My mother was in Lasswade. I don't know if that had an impact on her giving me up for adoption. She was in Lasswade in 1933 when she was 18 or 19 years old, giving birth to ELC I don't know where ELC went at that time. She gave ELC up for adoption with Birthlink but I don't know where he went. I did ask if he had been brought up in Smyllum but they said no, so I don't know where he grew up. Then in 1951 she had me and put me in Smyllum.

95. I am not making any excuses for ELC because he grew up in a home. I grew up in a home and I didn't turn out like he did.

Other information

96. 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... ELA [Redacted Signature]

Dated... 11-01-2022