

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**Christine HUGHES**

Legal representative present: Yes: Graeme Watson, Clyde & Co.

1. My name is Christine Hughes. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Background and employment history**

2. Throughout my employment I have been involved in work in either libraries or archives. I first started many years ago with the London School of Economics. I worked at the library within the acquisitions office. I then went on to mainly work with local authorities. This was within their libraries and reference libraries.
3. Prior to starting work at Nazareth House, I worked in the archive centre for the City of Westminster. In 2003 I moved to Nazareth House as a volunteer.

### **Nazareth House, 169 – 175 Hammersmith Road, London**

#### *Experience*

4. Initially I was a volunteer at Nazareth House assisting my father, Doctor Peter Hughes, who was the general archivist. I soon became a paid member of staff as an assistant to my father. My father had started the archive in 1994 at the request of Sister Bernard. I don't know where the records for the houses were stored before then. I do not know where the children's records were kept prior to 2003. I know that

they were with the generalate in 2003 when I started work in Nazareth House. However, they did not go into the archive until 2006.

5. In 2011 I became the general archivist. My father continued as the archive consultant until his death in 2017.

### *Training*

6. I didn't receive any specific training when I arrived at Nazareth House. I had gained a lot of experience from my previous employment. My father did pass on a lot of his knowledge to me. You can never know everything within the records. I am always finding new records and learning more.

### *Current role*

7. I would say that my role has changed beyond recognition over the last three or four years. This is a result of undertaking work for public inquiries and police enquiries. Prior to that, and what I see as the prime task of the archivist within Sisters of Nazareth, was to preserve the records of the congregation. This involved cataloguing and indexing documents and is an on-going process. This is referred to as the "generalate archive" within the organisation. It is primarily there as a private archive for the congregation and the generalate in particular. We hold the historical records of the congregation right from its foundation in the 1850's.
8. I look after the documents and make them available to the generalate when they need them. I also use the records to answer enquiries from former children, their families and also adoption agencies. The records are also used to assist academic researchers although there are not many now that use the archive.
9. I have two assistants who work with me. Kevin Brown started in 2014 and Rosamund King was appointed last year on a short term contract, which has concluded. Rosamund's role was specifically to assist me with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry work.

*Record keeping pre archive*

10. In the early years there was no policy or procedures in respect of the keeping of records. There were local guidelines in place indicating how long documents should be kept for. In terms of employment records or financial records they may have been kept for seven years, although I do not know. If there was an appointment of a new local mother superior then older records may not have been kept after this. At that time records may not have been kept in a consistent or organised manner.

*Cataloguing and indexing*

11. All of our cataloguing is now recorded on specialist software. This includes what is within our archives along with new documents that arrive. There is a huge backlog but that is no different from most archives.
12. The archives were initially held within the generalate at Hammersmith. This is a separate building within the Nazareth House campus. In June 2017 the majority of the archive was moved to a large room within the residential care home for the elderly building although still within the campus. This is a temporary measure. We all work within this room.
13. Any material which is unlisted is stored within the archive room or within the basement area. Eventually this material will also be catalogued. There are plans for a purpose built room to be built within an unused building on the campus. Once complete this will mean that all material will be stored together.

**Records within the archive***General*

14. At present we have all the surviving documents for the foundation of the order. There are also the surviving documents in relation to the foundress of the order and all the succeeding superior generals. There are records for all the sisters from the congregation who have died. We don't hold records for living sisters other than for knowing where they are in the congregation. Also held is information relating to the day to day running of the congregation over the years. This includes the constitution, chapter minutes and records of the general treasurer and general secretary.
15. There are records held for every Nazareth House throughout the world. I don't know how many foundations there have been in total. Currently there are 36 Nazareth Houses in total. For houses that are closed we keep the surviving record books and registers. All the surviving children's records for England, Wales and Scotland are held. These items are stored within boxes. They are arranged within an archival sequence. This separates out the different houses. The Scotland houses are not kept together. These are within the northern region. This means that in between the Scottish houses there are houses e.g. Middlesbrough and such like. This order of the records depended on the founding date of the houses within the sequence. This information is readily accessible through the cataloguing system.
16. From my experience I know what documents should be kept at each of the houses. There is an old document in the archive in relation to the keeping of documents at the various houses. This is titled, "Regulations for the keeping the various documents in the congregations of the Poor Sisters of Nazareth". The first version of this in the archive is from 1925. The second document is from 1942. This document details what should be held at individual houses.
17. Copies of these documents have been provided to the Inquiry. I have no knowledge of any reason why some of the records from the houses are missing.

#### **Nazareth House records for Scotland**

18. The records for the houses in relation to the Scottish Inquiry are stored as four separate record groups. There is Aberdeen, Glasgow, Kilmarnock and Edinburgh. Edinburgh relates to Bonnyrigg and Lasswade. Although there were two separate houses for Bonnyrigg and Lasswade for ease they were recorded as Edinburgh.
19. I don't know exactly what records were kept by each house in Scotland during their operation. What I can say is I have knowledge of what survived and reached the archive. I can only surmise what might have been kept but I wouldn't know for certain.
20. The children's records for each of the individual houses in Scotland did not come into the archive until after I started there. This was in 2006. Prior to this the children's registers had been stored at the generalate, which is St Michael's in Hammersmith. Before that I couldn't say where they were. These records were accessible by the sisters of the generalate. Prior to the records coming to the archive the sisters of the generalate would deal with enquiries from former children and their families.
21. The records came to the archive when we requested them. At this time we felt that the logical thing was for the records to be stored with the archive. The sisters had also started to ask for help with the enquiries they were receiving.
22. I have no knowledge how individual records were held during the operation of the various houses in Scotland.
23. When we moved the children's records from the Generalate to the archive room, we listed and catalogued all of them. The records were then boxed or shelved. We boxed everything that was possible to box. Some of the registers were too large and they were shelved. I have a general idea of what is within the archive but not yet boxed.
24. There are more items that come every day. It is always growing. In relation to the Scottish Inquiry there is nothing more to come into the archive. The last Scottish

house for children closed in 1985 therefore there is nothing in relation to these children we are still to receive.

25. Aberdeen house closed in 2006. By this time it was only housing for elderly residents. The records for the elderly residents and the house wouldn't have been received until after 2006. However, the children's records would have been received with the children's records of the other houses and those records would have already been archived.
26. Edinburgh and Glasgow houses are still open for elderly care. They will still have the records for the sisters and the running of the house. The children's records have already been archived.

*Inspection reports in the Histories of the Foundations*

27. External inspections are referred to in the Histories of the Foundations however there are no separate documents within the archives.

*Journals/books*

28. I know that there are some surviving daily journals from the Scottish houses. This is also the case for the surviving punishment books.
29. We have some records for individual children at Aberdeen and Glasgow. These include medical records. The Inquiry has been made aware of these records. I would have expected these types of records to be at the other Scottish houses although I have not received any at the archive. In my experience when records are kept, it is very much about the here and now and not the future. These records may have been lost or moved around when the children's houses closed although I don't know for certain.

*Financial records*

30. There are some surviving records that are referred to as pension or account books. These record what may be called maintenance payments from local authorities or councils. In some cases these payments maybe from family members. These records are not available for all the Scottish houses. The archive only has them for Kilmarnock and Glasgow.

#### *Policies*

31. As such there are no records of policies for individual houses. There were guidance notes within the directories of the congregation. These were called directories and books of custom. Every few years the generalate would provide these in relation to how the children should be cared for within the various houses. These were provided to the local superiors in each house and then distributed to all the sisters. I don't know if all the sisters received one. The same information was passed to all the houses. This continues to this day. Records of these notes are held within the archive.
32. The sisters would also be aware and comply with local authority legislation in relation to the care of children. There are however no examples of this held within the archive.
33. I don't know if the local superior would ensure that sisters were aware of these local guidelines.

#### *Disposal of records*

34. Nothing has been destroyed in relation to records held for children in care. If there is a decision made to destroy anything this is recorded in a destruction schedule. It is very rare for anything to be destroyed. Examples of items that may be destroyed are where there are duplicates or if it is correspondence that is no longer relevant.

## **Section 21 responses to the Inquiry**

### *Role in compiling responses*

35. I had responsibility for providing information that allowed the responses to the Section 21 requests made by the Inquiry in January 2017 to be compiled. In doing this I was assisted by the general counsellors. The general counsellors are the superior general, general secretary, vicaress, general treasurer and one other non-specific general counsellor. The council used to be six but it was changed to five in 2000.
36. In responding to the Section 21 requests, parts A, B, C and D, I initially looked at the individual catalogues for each Scottish house. There is a separate catalogue list for each house. I methodically read and researched the records and documents for what may be related to individual questions.
37. This research was mainly undertaken by myself although on occasion Kevin, one of my assistants, did assist me. For each house in the congregation there is a history of the foundation. This is a manuscript written by a sister in the house. This recounts events that happened. It was almost like a contemporary diary. It would record events that were of some significance to the person writing it or that they may have been asked to write about and record. This could be in relation to certain events. These are large documents as they go back to the foundation of the house.
38. I asked Kevin to assist with reading the histories for all four houses. I provided Kevin with a list of guidelines about the type of things that we were looking for. This proved to be a very long task.

### *Responses*

39. My research was about the care of the children and the day to day activity of the house. I had no part in the responses provided in relation to the legislation affecting



the various houses involved in child care. I have no knowledge about any of the legal aspects.

40. I provided responses in relation to specific questions about topics such as dormitories, day trips, holidays and the chores that children were encouraged to undertake. I compiled these responses after I read the references and records from the individual houses.
41. The information I have provided in relation to why a child was admitted to a house was gleaned from the records.
42. I have compiled information in relation to the accommodation of boys and girls separately at the houses. I have referenced this for the time period between 1930 and the late 1950's. During this time babies of both sexes would be accommodated together. In the late 1950's this changed to the house's accommodating both boys and girls together. This was a gradual process across the congregation as there was requirement to alter buildings to accommodate these changes. This was achieved easier with some places than others.
43. The information about the changes isn't easily found within the records. It would become apparent when I read through the documents. There would be something in the general chapter minutes that indicated that the generalate of the congregation were aware of the need to change to having family groups and having children of both sexes cared for together. This is in the 1952 General Chapter Minutes.
44. Responses about changes in policy and procedure in relation to mixed sex homes and small family groups being kept together would have been researched from available records.
45. To ascertain the number of sisters working with children at the houses in Scotland I had to go through the records and count them from the documents. To identify what training the sisters had undertaken I researched the northern council minutes and

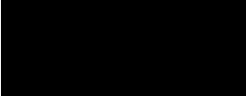
the chapter minutes. I then recorded the relevant information. This was the same in terms of what was recorded for any qualifications that the sisters may have had.

46. I have provided a table that details the number of sisters involved in working with children for each year from 1929 to 1983. The information was obtained from the employment registers. This is a document submitted annually by the local superior to the generalate. This document provides a list of each sister within the house and their employment within the house. The document would be submitted at a fixed point. It used to be April or December and is now in December.
47. I compiled the information for this response to the section 21 request by going through each year and looking at which sisters cared for children and working out the numbers from this.
48. The visitation reports detail the visits by the general and regional counsellors to each house. There are no records in the archives relating to visits by local authorities to the Scottish homes. The local authority visits are however mentioned in the Histories of the Foundation. This is mainly in respect of the earlier years.
49. The history of foundation documents contain details of visits by the local HMI in the 1930's, magistrates, doctors and dentists.
50. I have been made aware of a response that states sisters adhered to policies and procedures within the homes. I have no knowledge of this response.
51. I would say that where no records exist for certain topics then I cannot comment on these. I only provided responses where I was able to obtain information from the archives.
52. Where it has been recorded that children took part in activities and went on holidays I would have compiled the responses to this for the Inquiry. This information is contained within log books from the houses. There are some photographs retained although there are not that many. Photographs may be added at a later time to the

archive if a sister moves on or if they have them as a personal possession and submit them to the archive.

53. I have no knowledge about any responses made in respect of staffing at the homes and guidelines regarding visitors to the homes. We don't have any records about staffing or volunteers so I don't know who provided these responses.
54. In reference to complaints books I have seen such a book but I don't think it was from a Scottish house. This book allowed children to make complaints.
55. I was able to provide responses in relation to child migrants from the Scottish houses. We went through the registers and noted where it had been recorded when a child had gone to Australia. The numbers were then counted up and recorded in the response. It was a Government policy and the sisters had no involvement in creating that as far as I can tell from the archive.
56. As far as I know, punishment books were kept from the late 1960's onwards. I don't think many of these survived. There are two books for Kilmarnock one from 1966 to 1980. The other is for a specific group, Sister [REDACTED] LKI [REDACTED]. This is from 1980 to 1981.
57. There are medical cards for the children within the case files for Aberdeen and Glasgow. We don't have these for Edinburgh or Kilmarnock. I don't know why the records are not available for the other two houses.
58. In relation to deaths and burials there is nothing much in the catalogues for the houses. I did read the history of the foundation, council and the chapter minutes to try and locate such information where possible. This was included in the response I compiled. This was also the case in respect of finding information about arrangements for children during holidays and where they went to.
59. I was unable to find any information or records for lay staff within the houses.

60. 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... 22/03/2018 .....