

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Deborah Sullivan
Date of Birth: 07/12/1972
Care Setting: Craig residential school
Dates: 1978
Persons Involved: miss bonnet, Mrs McCourt

Full Statement

My earliest memories are of being sent into care. I was very young, frightened, and desperately homesick. I cried myself to sleep every night and was often physically sick from the distress. I had no comfort and no help. I wet the bed because I was so scared and overwhelmed, and instead of being cared for, I was punished. I was smacked with a shoe and a belt Regularly and forced to sleep in the wet bed as humiliation and punishment.

One of the most traumatic memories I carry is being taken to the baths after this and scrubbed aggressively with a scrubbing brush. This was done in a way that was deeply embarrassing and degrading and very painful . At such a young age, I believed that staff showering us was normal as this happened often , but I remember feeling extremely uncomfortable, frightened, and powerless. I did not understand why I felt this way, only that it did not feel right and left me ashamed.

I was severely bullied by staff, particularly Miss Bennett. I would write letters begging to be cared for or asking to go home. Instead of helping me, she would laugh at me and rip the letters up in front of me. This made me feel worthless, unwanted, and completely alone. It destroyed my hope that anyone cared about me and again very abusive in a physical way , I can still feel the pain of the sand shoe till this day , Food was another way they tormented us. Meals were often contaminated with hair and other rubbish. We were forced to eat this food while crying, even though it was clearly uneatable. This happened repeatedly, and I truly believe it was done on purpose to punish and control us. Being forced to eat food like this made me feel dehumanised and powerless they would restrain us or lock us away for this as punishment in a cupboard .

I clearly remember Mrs McCourt hitting me with belts and canes. I also remember witnessing her regularly abusing my older sister, Donna, in the same way. Seeing my sister suffer while being completely unable to protect her has left me with deep guilt and pain that I still carry today.

The staff called me cruel names, including "weasel." They would encourage the other girls to sing "Nobody's Child" to me and tell me that my mum and dad were not coming back for me. This was devastating. I knew my mum was poorly and my dad worked away, but I could not understand why I was being kept from them. Contact with both my parents was stopped completely. I was made to believe I had been abandoned, and this caused me extreme emotional distress that has never fully left me.

I was kept locked in dormitories, often with younger children, and deliberately kept away from my sister, who

was my only source of comfort and safety. I was frequently locked in my room and denied dinner and supper. One of the most traumatic experiences was being locked in a cupboard by Miss McCourt. This has left me with severe PTSD. Even now, confinement and closed spaces can cause panic and flashbacks. This abuse was not a one-off incident — it was ongoing and daily while I was in their care. I lived in constant fear. I learned very early that adults could not be trusted and that asking for help only led to more punishment.

The impact of this abuse has been lifelong. It has severely damaged my ability to form and maintain relationships with family and friends. I struggle deeply with trust. I live every day with anxiety and PTSD. I am under the care of a psychiatric doctor because of the damage done to my mental health. I still relive these experiences through memories, fear, and emotional pain.

I feel that my childhood was taken from me, and that these experiences have affected every part of my life. I carry shame, fear, and guilt, especially knowing what my sister endured as well. What happened to me in care has had a devastating and lasting impact, and I truly feel that it has ruined my life.