

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Helen Aitken
Date of Birth: 03/11/1976
Care Setting: The Good Shepherd In Bishopton
Dates: 1991-1993
Persons Involved:

Full Statement

From the age of five, I was in and out of care. My mother left when I was two, and my father struggled to cope. We were placed in homes for short periods until my father came to collect us. As he began drinking

heavily, he became violent, and at the age of nine I was sent to Milton Children's Home. I was separated from all my siblings, who were placed in different homes and foster families.

I spent five years at Milton before being moved to a children's home in Airdrie at the age of ten. My time in Airdrie was positive, and I experienced no abuse there. After a year, I was sent to Cecil Street Children's Home, and later returned to Milton. At fourteen, I was placed in the Good Shepherd Centre, where I remained for two years.

Milton Children's Home At Milton, punishments were harsh. My mattress was taken away, forcing me to sleep on a wooden base. I was frequently restrained with force, often by two or three staff members at once. My arms were twisted painfully up my back, my face forced to the ground, and I was locked in my room for hours. My wrists were often bruised.

One staff member, Matt Divers, took me and other children to his house under the pretence of buying us food. Instead, he gave us a biscuit and then took the boys upstairs. While they were gone, his wife sat beside me, stroked my hair, touched my breasts, and commented that I was "grown up" and "well endowed." I told her to stop. When the boys returned, they were pale and silent. Later, one of them, Graham, said Matt had touched him inappropriately. After that, Graham often lashed out at Matt and called him a pervert. On another occasion, Matt put his hands down my top and grabbed my breasts. When I screamed at him to stop, he slapped me on the back of the head. He slapped me often. During my time at Milton, I occasionally saw my father, sister, and brother, but I did not see my other siblings for years.

Cecil Street Children's Home At Cecil Street, I was also restrained with force. I was locked out of the home from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., regardless of the weather, even if I was not at school. My mattress was taken away as punishment. Staff threatened me with other children if they believed I had misbehaved. An older boy, around seventeen, visited a girl named Heidi in the home. He was allowed into her room. On one occasion, I opened the fire escape and he came in, trying to teach me how to kiss. Bullying was common at Cecil Street, and I was often targeted.

The Good Shepherd Centre At the Good Shepherd, I was forced to participate in Catholic practices despite being Protestant. If I refused to bless myself or pray, Sister Andrea dragged me by the hair into her office and made me say, "God help me today."

One day, I accidentally knocked over a plant pot. Sister Andrea rubbed my face in the soil and then struck my face against a filing cabinet, leaving scratches.

We were allowed four cigarettes a day. If someone was caught smoking more, an assembly was called, and the child was named publicly. Other children would then turn on them, becoming aggressive and spitting, because their cigarettes were removed.

Cold showers were used as punishment if I swore or stepped out of line. Sister Andrea watched me while I showered. When I tried to run away, the nuns dragged me back by the hair into the minibus.

Food was limited. We received three meals a day but nothing in between, so I often stole food and hid it because I was hungry.

Impact on My Life My time in care has affected me massively. I have suffered from anxiety and depression throughout my life. I am anxious about being touched or hugged and struggle to trust people. I have experienced severe psychosis and suffered a nervous breakdown. For years, I turned to alcohol to block out the memories, which led me into trouble. Drinking was my way of trying to forget what I endured in care.