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Child abuse inquiry: Quarrier's Village resident says abuse 'became a way of life'



Quarrier's Village resident says abuse 'become a way of life'

A former resident of a children's home has told an inquiry that suffering abuse "became a way of life" for him at the institution.

The man described how his house parents at Quarrier's Village in Renfrewshire in the 1960s would hit, push or shout at children habitually, on a daily basis.

"It was as if it was the natural thing to do to you," the witness told the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI).

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The man, now in his 60s, also told how his sister later confided in him that she had been sexually abused at the establishment.

The late-19th century development consisted of dozens of orphan homes known as "cottages", which were run by a "house mother" and "house father".

The witness, who cannot be identified, described how he and his sibling were admitted to Quarrier's in the early 1960s following the death of their mother.

He thought he was around six years old at the time.

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He said he was very unhappy at the time he arrived there and was frightened of the house parents in his cottage.

"I didn't feel comfortable, I didn't feel at ease," the witness said.

He told how the pair tasked with looking after him showed no interest in his problems or any understanding of the difficulties he had already been through.

"I was an inconvenience and just part of the job," he said. "They never done much for us at all.

"They showed no love whatsoever, no caring, no understanding."

The man described how he would be force fed, shouted at or "pushed around" if he refused to eat his meal.

Meanwhile, the house father "was the man of authority, (he would) instil fear into you that you had to eat it", he said.

The witness also told how the house father would abuse him if he failed to clean all the cottage residents' shoes properly - his particular, allocated task.

He told the hearing: "In my opinion, he (the house father) was the one that abused me on these occasions by hitting me and pushing me. He would push my head down into the inside of the shoes and pull my head down."

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The witness said the man would use his hands to issue beatings.

"It was habitual, it was constant, it was all the time, he never stopped," he said.

"(The house mother) was more of a shouter and she was quite vicious with her terminology towards you."

He continued: "Every day... something would happen. It was as if it was the natural thing to do to you, to knock you about, shout at you, be bad to you."

"It became a way of life."

The man also described how his sister later told him she had been sexually abused at night time by the house father, something the witness was unaware of at the time.

He told how he felt "elated" when he eventually left Quarrier's to be reunited with his father.

The inquiry before Lady Smith continues.