

Witness Name : Jean Pamela Neil  
Statement No : First  
Exhibits: JPN1 – JPN10  
Dated : 22/09/2014

## THE INDEPENDENT JERSEY CARE INQUIRY

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Witness Statement of Jean Pamela Neil

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I, Jean Pamela Neil, will say as follows:-

1. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1935, and I am now 79 years of age. I was taken from my parents and placed in the Westaway Crèche as a baby. I remained there until the age of six. Following this I was taken to the Grouville Home for Girls where I spent the rest of my childhood.
2. In this statement I give an account of my experiences of my time in the care of the States of Jersey.

### My Background

3. Before going into care I lived at home with my mum and dad. I was the [REDACTED] girls and we had [REDACTED] brothers.
4. My family life was not happy. The reason I was placed in care was because my dad was a drunk and would often come home inebriated. On one particular occasion [REDACTED] of my brothers were in the house and one of them made a remark about my dad, saying "the old man had come home drunk again." My dad heard this and threw a metal instrument at one of my brothers, nearly taking his ear off. He needed hospital treatment. My dad had also stabbed my uncle that same evening.
5. The police were called to the house and a policewoman heard me crying upstairs in my cot. She found me in my cot with my [REDACTED] sister [REDACTED] who had been dead for a few days. She had been left in the cot with me because

my parents couldn't get rid of the body. I was just a baby at this time and [REDACTED] would have been around [REDACTED] years old. Being so young, I have no recollection of the incident myself, but my sister [REDACTED], who saw what happened, told me afterwards that when the policewoman picked [REDACTED] up her nightie just fell off her because she was so thin. She died of starvation.

6. After the police visited the house I was taken to St Helier Hospital with my sisters, to be checked over. I understand that we were there for no more than around four days.
7. Both my parents were imprisoned for ill treating us. My dad also received a separate term of imprisonment for sexually abusing girls.
8. Due to my parents' inability to care for their children, I missed out on a normal family life.

### **Westaway Crèche**

9. After I had been checked over in the hospital I was sent to the Westaway Crèche. My sisters were all sent to the Grouville Home for Girls. I attach as my Exhibit **JPN1** two pictures from my time at the Crèche; I have identified myself with a cross on the pictures.
10. My memory of Westaway Crèche is still so good that I have been able to draw a layout of every room there. I attach as my Exhibit **JPN2** two drawings of the home; one is of the playground and the other of the building inside. I remember there was a balcony at Westaway Crèche which I have included in my drawing.
11. A day at the Crèche started with being woken up. Our bedrooms were upstairs and there was another room on the side for the babies. We would go downstairs for breakfast, following which there would be some time for games. We were often taken for a walk connected by a rope that kept all the children together. We would go to the beach and return for lunch. At the Crèche we sang a lot of songs and I had a particular party piece which was to sing the Shirley Temple number "On the Good Ship Lollipop".
12. There were not many children at Westaway Crèche, possibly only 30 to 50 in total. We had second-hand toys which we shared. I particularly remember a red pedal car and a tricycle with pedals that kept falling off. Also there was a swing in the yard. We never knew what it was like to have our own toys.

13. I remember at Westaway Crèche people thought my parents were German officers and they would say horrible things to me. I used to pull my tongue out at them in retaliation. However I do not recall ever being spanked at Westaway Crèche. I was generally well looked after there.
14. I attach as my Exhibit **JPN3** a copy of an article from the Jersey Evening Post dated 1 December 2006 on the subject of Julia Westaway and the establishment of the Crèche.

### **The Grouville Home for Girls**

15. At the age of six I was told I was going to a party at a big house where there would be lots of other girls. I was told to pack a little case. I was then put into a car and she drove me to the Grouville Home for Girls (the 'Home').
16. I remember travelling to the Home in the car with [REDACTED] telling me all the rules. She said 'our rules are our rules' and that if I misbehaved I would be caned. She said that she would cut my tongue out if I was to tell anyone outside about what happened at the home. The [REDACTED] was something of a witch, and she did always have a pair of scissors hanging on her side.
17. When we arrived at the Home I was taken up some steps to the front door and I was introduced to [REDACTED]. I was told that she was my sister. I was in shock as I never knew I had siblings. Even whilst at the Home I never knew I had brothers. It turned out my sisters [REDACTED] were also at the Home. They were all [REDACTED] than [REDACTED]. I did not know [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at all.
18. I was then shown to my room. I had wooden wardrobes and there were beds made of iron with very thin mattresses and sheets. There were approximately eight girls in one room. All the girls in the room were roughly the same age. The first group I was with were infants around the age of six to eight. I grew up with these girls as I moved around the home with them. My sisters and I were in different rooms as we were split into different age groups.
19. My memory of the layout of the Home is very clear. I attach as my Exhibit **JPN4** three separate plans I have drawn of the three different floors. As you walked up the steps and into the Home through the entrance to one side was [REDACTED] sitting room. To the other side there was a cash office. On the lower floor there was also a surgery and staff stairs, which only the staff were allowed to use. There was a sweets cupboard, a staff dining room and a

sewing room. On that same side were the backstairs which the girls used. The kitchen was on the lower floor and it led out to the back garden and on to some fields. All the dormitories were upstairs, as were the staff bedrooms.

20. The daily routine at the Home involved us getting up at around 6 a.m. Our beds would be checked to see if we had wet them during the course of the night. Then we would have various duties to do such as sweeping and cleaning the toilets. These had to be completed before school. We would start school at 9 a.m. We went to Grouville School, a mixed gender school near the home. We returned from school at 4 p.m. We would then have further chores to do, including cleaning our shoes, which had to be spotless. We would have dinner and possibly some time playing with the other girls, before having to go to bed at seven in the evening.
21. On Sunday mornings we lined up in numerical order to be handed our clothes for the week. We had one set of clothes (including underwear) to last us all week. We also only had one hanky and if we lost it we would have to miss breakfast until we were able to find it. On some occasions when I lost my hanky I would steal the hanky belonging to another girl and just cover up the numbers with my finger so it looked like it was mine. Other girls did the same to me.
22. During my time at the Home I never saw anyone from Children's Services, or anyone else from outside come to check up on us or to see how we were doing.
23. I attach as my Exhibit **JPN5** a series of short articles from newspapers in the late 1930s which refer to the Jersey Home for Girls. I also attach as my Exhibit **JPN6** a photograph of some of the girls at the home.

### **Punishments**

24. There was a strong regime of punishments at the Home. In fact it seemed to get worse over time. I was around 11 years old when my sister [REDACTED] left the Home and at this time we had new staff come in. The regime seemed to get much stricter and so my experience of the Home is different to that of [REDACTED].

### Punishments for bed-wetting

25. When I arrived at the Home the girls warned me what would happen if I wet the bed. When we wet our beds we were routinely taken down to the cellar, where we had our clothes removed and were beaten with fresh stinging nettles from the fields outside. The wet sheets would be rubbed all over our faces and bodies. We would be paraded around and then have to go to school without washing.

### Weekly Public Beatings

26. We were all quite naughty as children and I in particular was a rebel. However some of the punishments went above and beyond what was required. Every Saturday evening at the Home we had public beatings. Staff would take children from each year group, which included the six to eight-year-olds, the eight to ten year olds and the ten to twelve-year-olds, who had the most bad marks that week for the beatings.
27. During the week, points would be given to children if they misbehaved or if they back chatted to the staff. There were girls appointed as prefects, who marked down the children who misbehaved during the week, often on the instructions of staff.
28. Every Saturday the 10 girls with the most bad marks in each of the three age groups would be beaten whilst the whole population of the home (which included around 100 children at the time) stood and watched. I was in the hit list most weeks.
29. The beatings took place in a large room. The room had a partition but this was always removed on Saturdays to fit everyone in. There was a platform in the room and a chair was placed on it. The children would stand on the platform with no clothes on. The children would already be stripped off and would be waiting to be beaten.
30. We were made to bend over a chair and were beaten for quite some time, to the point where our bodies were marked. After the beating we had to stand on the side trying to keep ourselves composed: we were threatened with a further beating if we cried. Over time I became harder and learned not to cry. Instead, following the beatings I returned to my room and wept into my pillow. The beatings started at the age of six and they lasted till I was about 12 or 13

years old. They didn't beat girls after that point as they knew we would fight back.

31. Most weeks it was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who beat us, but other staff also did it, depending on who was on shift at the relevant time. Staff members who I recall beating us included [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### Ice baths

32. Another form of punishment was for staff to dunk a child's whole body into a bath which had ice blocks in it and to force their head under the water. Only when the child gasped for breath would the staff member pull the child back up. The whole thing would last a few seconds. Sometimes we were pushed in again if we shouted for it to stop. On occasion we were chunked into the bath fully clothed. I received the ice bath punishment quite often, as I was a rebel. I cannot recall the exact frequency, but it is quite possible that I received this punishment at least once a month. I remember the bath was upstairs and it had funny legs, like lion's legs.
33. Whichever staff member was on duty would administer the ice bath and it could happen at any time of the day, except for when we were at school. We often received this punishment for swearing or back chatting.
34. As new girls arrived at the home we would teach them about the ice bath and tell them that they would have to gasp as soon as possible in order to be let out of the water.

#### Washing and Disinfecting Private Areas

35. We were washed in our private parts by some of the older girls at the home. This happened every morning and every evening. The staff would watch and laugh while the girls did this. They did not tell us why this had to happen except to say that it was in case we did not do it properly ourselves. There were particular older girls who were trusted to carry out the task.
36. If there was no hot water, because the boiler wasn't working, the staff would put three girls in a bath together and they would be strip washed. The older girls stripped and washed the younger girls and we referred to them as "fufu washers".

37. Another form of punishment was to clean out the girls' private areas with disinfectant. This was done because staff would catch us messing with boys from school. The boys would tease us and we would roll around on the floor fighting with them. Staff from the Home would drive past and see this. They would march us back to the Home and straight to the sick room where they held neat disinfectant and a bottlebrush. They told us that a doctor was coming to inspect us to see if we had had sex with the boys. At that age we didn't even know what sex was. Then this supposed doctor, who I actually believe was a lesbian friend of the staff members, would gag us and clean us up inside with the disinfectant.

### Injections and Rape

38. One of the worst punishments that I received at the Home were the things that were done to me while I was injected. Girls at the Home were taken out of their beds in the middle of the night by [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] would come up with other staff members and choose the girls that they wanted to do this to on that particular night. When the members of staff came to get us they sometimes came with hooded cloaks on.
39. We were carried down by either the matron or another member of staff to [REDACTED] sitting room. Whoever carried you down would then inject you with something. When we asked why we were being injected they told us that we needed it and to mind our own business. Whatever they injected into us would make us feel dazed but it did not knock us out completely. I can only describe the effect of the injection as something like a local anaesthetic which left me with no fight and unable to talk or shout. We were then told that whatever we thought had happened or whatever we remembered didn't actually happen to us.
40. I distinctly remember people having sex with me after I had been injected. I do not know who it was but I know that I was raped and that there were other people there. [REDACTED] was in the room as were some other staff members from the school. [REDACTED] was often at the home as he would come to visit [REDACTED]. The people in the room included female members of staff who I believe were lesbians. They fumbled us and had their hands inside us at the same time.

41. This occurred fairly often and a couple of girls would go down maybe two to three times a week. I must have gone down at least once every couple of months. The rape of both girls would take place in the same room.
42. I was only nine when this first happened to me. After it happened I returned to my bed and the staff would say see you in the morning. I would not be able to sleep. These incidents stopped happening when I was 11 or 12 years old. After it happened, the following morning we would be taken aside and threatened by [REDACTED] not to dare tell any of the girls anything. Therefore I could not tell the other girls that this had happened so we never talked about it.
43. In my statement that I gave to the police I did not tell them about the fact that I had been raped and only mentioned that I had been injected. This is because I found the whole thing very embarrassing because the interview was at [REDACTED] Police Station and because the counsellor and some of the police officers were local people. I wanted to put things behind me and didn't want to remember such awful memories.

#### Other Forms of Punishment at the Home

44. Punishments for swearing or fighting often included being made to scrub the red tiles on the kitchen floor before going to school in the morning. These particular tiles were very difficult to clean as they had little bubbles on them which would gather the dirt. However the job had to be done properly or it would show. Sometimes staff members would purposefully kick the bucket of dirty water on the tiles so that you would have to start all over again. If you retaliated it only resulted in further punishment. Another punishment was to peel a week's worth of potatoes for the whole home in a cold room. The potatoes had to be perfect and there could be no black marks on them as they were tested by the staff.
45. The food at the Home was not good. If I refused to eat my porridge at breakfast, it would be served to me again at lunchtime and then again at teatime if I refused further. If I still did not eat it then the following morning it would be given to me cold and I would be force-fed until I vomited. When the home was eventually knocked down, jars and boxes of food and sweets were found in the cellar. These were meant for the children but the staff members had hidden them from us. In fact my sister [REDACTED] caught [REDACTED] and

██████████ making parcels of sweets to give to their friends instead of the children.

46. If we talked or played up at bedtime then we would be made to stand until the staff members went to bed, which was after 11 p.m. If we fell asleep while waiting then we would be given a smack across the face and were made to stand again.
47. If a staff member found us walking down a corridor laughing and chatting, they would quite often whack us across the face with a hairbrush that they kept on a string, on the assumption that we were joking about them. All of the staff members did this.
48. I suppose sometimes we did deserve the punishment we received. We often went 'scrumping' (i.e. stealing apples), but ██████████ would always catch us because one of the girls would inform her, and we would be given a good beating. We were made to take part in the choir at Grouville Church. We went to Church on a Friday for choir practice and also every Sunday, in a long line of pairs. When practice was over on a Friday myself and some of the other girls would steal fruit from the vicar's garden. The vicar would feed this back to the Home and we received beatings.
49. To frighten the staff we would sometimes climb onto the roof of the Home. When the staff called on us to come down we would refuse, and they would have to call the fire brigade. By the time the fire brigade arrived we would have climbed back down and be acting innocent. Again we were punished for this. I attach as my Exhibit JPN7 an article from the Jersey Evening Post dated ██████████ 1993, which, amongst other relevant material, refers to the girls climbing on the roof.

## School

50. We received hand-me-down clothes and often we had no shoes or would have to fit our feet into ill-fitting shoes. There was no school uniform so we were teased by other children who wore new clothes. I retaliated by ripping their new dresses and throwing their shoes onto the school roof. For this my punishment would be to go to the ██████████ office and be caned. ██████████ ██████████ was having an affair with ██████████ at the Home. He noted down the girls that he caned and then they would receive another beating at the Home with a stick or would have to go to bed with no tea.

51. I was a boisterous child and I was always fighting and therefore I was caned a lot at school. None of our friends at the school knew how we were treated at the Home, and I could never tell staff at the school how we were treated either, as it would just be fed back to [REDACTED]. In addition to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the wife of another teacher, [REDACTED] was friends with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Some of the staff members at the Home also worked at the school.

### Physical Education at the Home

52. Every Saturday morning, [REDACTED] came from the school to hold a P.E. lesson for all the girls at the Home. The whole home did the PE lessons in their different age groups, and [REDACTED] was the only teacher. The PE lessons consisted mainly of gymnastics.
53. We always did the PE lessons with just knickers on, even in the winter. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] would have to hold us up to support us during the course of the lesson and he would take that opportunity to touch us. The girls bodies were maturing and they were starting to develop a bust. [REDACTED] seemed to enjoy touching the girls in their private parts and on their bodies. He would make remarks such as 'you're getting big now' and 'you have something to hold onto'. He appeared to choose the girls at random to do this to. If the girls talked back to him he would threaten them saying [REDACTED] would not believe them.

### Running away

54. When I was 14, I led a group of the girls in an escape from the Home. We roamed the island for ten days. We walked the streets and stole food from shops. We even disguised ourselves and spoke to the police with different accents, although there were posters around the island looking for us. After ten days we had had enough and handed ourselves in at a police station. The police officer asked us to wait whilst he went to arrange transport back to the Home, but we ran off again whilst he was gone. Eventually we were caught and frogmarched back to the police station. All the other girls were sent back to the Home where they received the usual punishments - beatings and ice baths. I was put in a police cell for 24 hours and questioned as to what we had been doing and how we had found food to eat.
55. When I returned to the Home, [REDACTED] put me in the punishment room for two weeks wearing only my nightie and I received only bread and water. There was no bed in the room and I slept on the bare wooden floor. If I

needed the toilet I was chaperoned in case I escaped again. At the end of the first week I was told that if I apologised they would let me off the second week of my punishment. I was determined not to give in so I said no. I was a gang leader and was not prepared to face humiliation from the rest of my gang for giving in to the staff. I had the second week of punishment too.

### Life after the Home

56. I remained at the Home until I turned 15, at which point I went to work for a [REDACTED] family until the age of 18. I think this would have been in response to a request from the family for a housemaid. The [REDACTED] family were not nice people and I was left to run their whole house as a maid and carry out farm work, such as milking the cows. As they followed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] they [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Sometimes they would party all night. I would have the responsibility for washing up after these late nights and would still have to be up early to carry on with the farm work. It was very hard for me there – it sometimes felt like I was in prison.
57. Even though I had left the Home at 15, I was still under the care of the home and therefore if anything went wrong while I was in service I would be sent straight back to the home. Sometimes I would deliberately play up when I was bored so that I would be sent back to the home and be able to see my friends. I would be punished by being made to scrub floors. I was no longer punished with ice baths or the Saturday beatings.
58. I was given time off on a Wednesday when in service, and went out with my friends. By this point I had lost all contact with my sisters.
59. At the age of 18 I knew that I needed to do something with my life and I needed accommodation so I went into nursing and obtained a job at Jersey Hospital. However I fell really ill with appendicitis and ended up in intensive care. I was told that nursing was not the right career for me as I was too weak due to the malnourishment I had received in my earlier life.
60. I decided to put in an application for Westaway Crèche which was successful and I passed the children's nursery test. I worked at the Crèche until I married. It was very sad knowing what lay in store for many of the children. There was one particular woman who had [REDACTED] sons. Every time she wore a black coat I knew she was pregnant with another child by a different father. She said she was 'doing her bit' by bringing these children into the world.

However I hated parents like her and I often told them that they did not know what system they had put their child into. The majority of the children who came to Westaway Crèche were there because their mothers could not look after them or because they were being mistreated in some way.

61. I loved the children at the Crèche, and I spoilt them. I would buy them ice creams and sweets. I wanted to give them what I never had. Inside I was hurting because when the children reached the age of six it was time for them to leave the Crèche and go on to a home. This was a particularly upsetting time for me as I knew what lay ahead. Staff from the homes would come to take them away. Some of them went on to Haut de la Garenne.
62. There were rotas at the Crèche and there were probably 12 staff members to approximately 25 to 30 children. I recall a [REDACTED] who was a nursing sister there. [REDACTED] is still alive today. She is [REDACTED] years old. I cannot recall the names of any other staff there. I never saw any Children's Officers whilst working there. Possibly [REDACTED] at the Crèche would have had more to do with them.

### **Police Investigation and Subsequent Events**

63. The Home was demolished in 1993 and I attach as my Exhibit **JPN8** a copy of an article from the Jersey Evening Post dated [REDACTED] 1993 titled "Demolition of Grouville Annexe gets under way."
64. Many years later, when the story broke about the police investigation at Haut de la Garenne, I saw it on the news from my home in [REDACTED] where I had moved when I was married. I felt as if all the blame was being put on the boys home and no one had realised that similar things were going on in the girls home. I approached the Jersey CID to tell them my story. I do not know why I had not gone to the police previously about what had happened to me at the home. Perhaps I thought that they would not believe me. When I did contact Jersey CID, [REDACTED] police officers visited on four separate occasions and put together a statement for me. I had to read my notes over and then, when they typed up the statement, I had to read that as well. There was a counsellor present at the police interviews as I broke down several times. I found the whole process very hard but also very therapeutic.

65. I attach a copy of my statement to the police, dated 10 April 2008 as my Exhibit **JPN9**. Nothing seemed to come of the police investigation. I gave my statement to the police and that was the last I heard of it. I am not aware of any prosecutions or any action taken as a result of my evidence.
66. Eventually a solicitor contacted me to say that I may be able to get some compensation for what I had suffered all those years ago. I applied under the redress scheme and the police statement I had previously given supported my claim for compensation. I was eventually paid [REDACTED] although I did not really feel that this compensated me in any way for the suffering I had been through.
67. Subsequently, I wrote a book about my experiences. This was published in 2012 and is entitled 'Chairbound to Heaven Bound'. I have provided copies to the Solicitors to this Inquiry. It is an autobiographical account including my experiences in the care of the states of Jersey, how I subsequently became a Christian, my marriage to my late husband [REDACTED] and how I was miraculously able to walk after being in a wheelchair for many years. Having put my experiences into my own words, I now find myself able to talk openly about what I went through. I hope that this will help others.
68. After writing my book I did a book signing in Jersey. The Jersey Evening Post initially told me that I would have to place an advert in the paper if I wished to publicise the signing, but they later changed their mind about this. A lady from the paper came and interviewed me about my book. She had with her a copy of the book but had marked up only the chapter about abuse in Jersey. She admitted that she had not read the rest of the book. The Jersey Evening Post published an article following the interview, which read quite well. Unfortunately I did not keep a copy.

69. I very recently made a trip to Jersey and during my time there I visited the Jersey Archives. In the past they have assisted me, but on this occasion I felt that the staff there were unhelpful. I was told that they could not provide me with documents created after the late 1930s. I usually deal with [REDACTED] but she was away. Since arriving back home I have received a letter from her, apologising for the way in which I was treated. Enclosed with the letter is a list of documents that I can view relating to the Westaway Crèche and the Grouville Home for Girls. I attach as my exhibit **JPN10** a copy of this letter and the enclosure.

70. I confirm that I am willing to give oral evidence to this Inquiry if required to do so.

Statement of Truth

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed ..... *J. P. Neil* .....

**Jean Pamela Neil**

Dated .. *22/9/2014* .....