# Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

QCE

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is QCE . I am 68 years of age. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

### **Background**

- 2. I have resided at my present address for twelve years. I am retired. I spent my working life working on farms and in steel works and after that I was drilling doing site investigation and quarry work.
- 3. I am now widowed, my wife having died in 1999. I have four children whose names are and and are and are and has been a rock for me since I started looking into my childhood.

### What I know of my life before Quarriers

- 4. I have no recollection of my parents. I'm led to believe I have a half-sister who is called and is two years older than me. We have never met and I am only aware of her existence because my son and I visited offices in Edinburgh where we found out about
- 5. I was put into Quarriers when I was about eighteen months old and was there for fourteen or fifteen years. I had actually put Quarriers to the back of my mind up until two years ago when I met a man whose name I'd rather not disclose. He's a very private man. I'll explain how I met him later in this statement. It was him who showed

me how I could get my records from Quarriers and it was through these that I was able to put together, to a certain degree, the circumstances of me ending up in Quarriers.

- 6. Those same files explained to me some things about my mother that I simply didn't know. What I found out hurt me really bad. I had always thought about my mother but I also had bad thoughts about her. I thought that maybe she was a down and out but then I would wonder how I could have such thoughts when the reality was that I simply didn't know anything about her.
- 7. What the files also told me was that my mum was a clippy which is what they called a ticket collector on the buses in the Glasgow area, maybe Ibrox or Paisley. It made me really happy to know that my mum had been a working woman. The files suggested that my mum had an affair with a bus driver and that I was a result of that affair. Apparently I wasn't a well-child, I had a gastric problem and was in hospital, and my mum struggled to cope with work and a sick child. Things were hard in those days and it would seem that I got put into Quarriers to try and help my mum. Apparently I was only supposed to be in Quarriers for a few days respite but things just snowballed.
- 8. It's through these files that I now know she didn't simply abandon me but tried to get to see me, writing letters to Quarriers to get to spend time with me but they just refused her access to me. The letters she wrote have shown me that my mother was quite a caring woman.
- 9. That's something that really hurts me. Quarriers not only robbed me of my childhood, they robbed me of my family. I can never forgive that.
- 10. The files actually gave me the name of my father, the man my mother had an affair with, but I'm not interested in him. I'm only interested in my mother

#### Life in Quarriers

- 11. Quarriers is made up of a number of buildings which were called cottages though in reality each of them was like a small mansion. There was also a church, a nursery, a school, a laundry, a hospital and other buildings.
- 12. There were a total of 43 cottages. I recall being in cottages 2, 22 and 43. I've since learned that I was in two or three of the other cottages but I have no recollection of this.
- 13. Each cottage had between sixteen and twenty-one kids and were run, usually, by two house parents who were either man and wife or two women. We would always refer to them as "house mother" or "house father", never by their first names, and us kids were always referred to by our surname. There were two or three superintendents above the house parents. One man was called Dr Davidson and another was a Mr Munro. I don't think they knew much about what was going on in the cottages as it would only have been the house parents that they spoke to and as they never spoke to us. It was the house parents who had total power within the cottages and I don't think that anyone outside really knew what went on inside them. The cottages I was in were always all boys though I know there were some that had both boys and girls in them.

#### Routine

### Mornings

14. I think they got us up in the morning with one of the house parents coming into the dormitory telling us to get up. There is also something in my memory about a bell but I'm not sure about that. Everything was timed and you had to get up and get washed, brush your hair and get dressed. We would be inspected every morning by the house parents and, for example, if your ears were still dirty you would be punished with a slap to the head or the back of the legs.

#### **Food**

15. The food was poor, always plain and would be taken in the kitchen. The kitchen was massive and we all ate in there together around a big table. It was always the same, just plain and never anything spicy. I don't think the house parents ate the same food as us and they sat at a separate table at the head of the room watching us. The only thing I recall for breakfast was porridge which I had to make every morning. After breakfast it would be school, back to the cottage for lunch, school again in the afternoon and back to the cottage for supper which was sometimes soup and bread then pudding. This was followed by evening activities. The weekends were no different food wise, I just know that you were forced to eat everything that you were given.

### Night time

16. I think bedtime was about 9pm or 9:30pm with an extra half hour at the weekend. There were two dorms in cottages 2 and 43 with about twelve to fourteen in each dorm. The house parents had a separate room. We usually got a bath before bedtime. Cleanliness was a big thing in the home though I can't recall if we all got fresh water for our baths or if we all used the same water. We were checked for cleanliness after the bath.

### School

17. School was very strict. The classes were divided into ages and we had a teacher for each class. I think there was between twelve and fifteen in each class. Although there were kids from different cottages in the class you didn't really get a chance to talk to them. I wasn't a good scholar and I was for ever getting belted for not being able to do this or that in my lessons. There may have been some homework given but certainly we were never taught any life skills to help us when we left.

18. I recall we wore shorts and would have a good outfit for church on Sunday.

### Religion

- 19. On a Sunday we would have to go twice to the church in the village. Morning service was at 11.am and then again for evening service at 7.pm. In between services we would have to take our Sunday walk in the countryside whereby we would walk in two files and with no talking allowed in line. If we talked we would be whacked across the head. It was so regimented. I think there was a Sunday school element to it as well.
- 20. We also had to say grace before every meal. Religious instruction was part of life at Quarriers.
- 21. We had to be able to recite verses from the bible and were told to read the bible all the time. We were told to know every verse and would be asked to recite verses at random. If we were unable to recite a verse then we would be punished for it in ways I will describe later. As a result we would always be trying to learn it. This happened both at the school and in the cottage.
- 22. There was a large flower bed at the bottom of the massive lawn in front of the church. The flowere bed had flowers planted that spelt out the words "Have faith in God". I don't know how they could call themselves religious given what they did to us. How dare they have something like that.

### Work in the home

- 23. A lot of my time in Quarriers was spent working and doing chores.
- 24. The chores that I remember having to do were cleaning and polishing the grate in the kitchen; scrubbing the pots, cleaning the kitchen and out shed; and polishing the shoes. I had to polish the shoes of all the other boys and the house parents Mr & MrsQBAQB The polishing had to be done to the highest standard to the extent that you could see your own reflection almost. They would always inspect it afterwards and often just muck up what I had just done and tell me to do it all over again for no reason and tell me that I was useless.

- 25. They'd also use it as an excuse to punish you again in the ways I have described.
- 26. When cleaning the grate I had to use emery paper until you could see your face in it. If they saw even a trace of dirt you got battered and told to do it again. There was a play area at the front where the clothes would be hung up. The ground was concrete and I used to have to scrub that with the big bars of soap.
- 27. Another one of the jobs I had to do in cottage 43 was make the huge pots of porridge for the other boys at breakfast and that too would be tested by the house parents for its consistency.

#### Leisure

- 28. There was a big play area at the school and a big park behind the church which we could use for playing mainly at the weekend but you spent more time doing chores than playing. Everything was timed and if you were late you were punished.
- 29. I don't recall a TV but there was a big playroom area on the ground floor to the front of the cottage but you had to play quietly. I remember we got comics like the Beano and the Hotspur. There were various comic books that were in the playroom. We didn't have much in the way of toys though I remember particularly enjoying playing with a spinning top. There were no soft toys like teddys or things like that. Sometimes we got to play in the courtyard where all the coats and shoes were kept, if it was raining we were allowed in there.
- 30. There were no organised games or sports, we had to invent our own play although we did play football at school.
- 31. We never got to the cinema or out to the shops. We had a tuck shop, I used to love Penny Caramels and Gobstoppers and we were allowed some small pocket money which is a sort of a happy memory I suppose

# Trips & Holidays.

- 32. Every year we went to a Boy's Brigade camp which is another sort of happy memory although I have no idea where it was just that there was a massive marquee in a field somewhere. It was very strict because it was run by Quarriers but I recall it being a nice time and us all playing rounders.
- 33. Also, once a year the taxi drivers took us to Saltcoats which was a brilliant day and happy memory. We were given sweets and fruit. It was every July.

# **Healthcare**

- 34. I don't recall there being a nurse or regular health checks.
- 35. There was a separate hospital in the village and I remember being in there once for a period of time for tests in relation to my bedwetting. Tests were done on me and I remember a bell would go off if I wet the bed. I don't recall receiving any medication though. They were pretty decent to me in the hospital.
- 36. I think that we did get dental checks at the school.

### Christmases and Birthdays

- 37. I don't think that my birthday was ever marked or celebrated in Quarriers or at least I certainly don't remember ever receiving even a card or birthday cake.
- 38. At Christmas time we did get excited as there was a massive Christmas tree and we did get some presents. I think they were things that had been donated in to Quarriers. There must have been some sort of Christmas dinner as I remember enjoying eating dumpling for pudding. However, for the most part Christmas was just another day for me.

#### **Visitors**

- 39. There was a visitors day once a month.
- 40. I never had any visitors except for a period of maybe two years in cottage 43 when I was visited by these two women who I was introduced to. I was told to call them Aunt Mavis and Aunt Margaret I think. They were not related to me as far as I know and I don't know who they were. They were maybe just two women who enjoyed visiting children and taking them out. They would come with sweets and I think they were allowed to take me out for a day or something. I have a slight memory of a visit to a house in Paisley and thinking it was nice from the outside but strangely I have no recollection of it from the inside. They would also take me to a park. They were so nice to me and they clearly thought Quarriers was a lovely place for me to be but you just couldn't tell anyone what it was really like. I never had any visitors beyond these two women.
- 41. I have now learned from my Quarriers file that for about a year after I was placed in Quarriers at eighteen months of age that my mother wrote letters to Quarriers asking if she could come and take me out sometimes on visits to meet my cousins and aunts and uncles. Her requests were, however, always tersely denied by Quarriers. I sometimes now wonder if my mother was duped into signing something when I was placed there or signed something that she did not really understand. The letters seemed to stop after about a year until there was another one from Quarriers when I was maybe about fifteen years old suggesting that I had been abandoned there.
- 42. There were no visits to Quarriers from any inspectors or anyone official outside. There were no inspections of Quarriers that I know of and I never had or saw a social worker. Your life was run solely by your house parents. I just thought that the Quarriers way was normal and only realised that it was not when I went to work on the farm at Drongan with Mr

#### **Abuse**

- 43. I was in a nursery before I went into the first cottage that I remember, which was cottage 2. Obviously I don't remember anything of my time in the nursery and I don't remember how old I was when I first went into cottage 2. It was run by two sisters called QBE I think, I can't be positive about their name and all I remember is the dreadful way we were treated. They were amongst the nastiest people I have ever met. There was no love for children from them.
- 44. In that cottage you would be punished for any wee thing, even just talking out of turn, and it happened every day. I was slapped around the head, the arms, the legs, everywhere. They knew how to hurt you. It was constant, every day in life.
- 45. If you looked them in the eye then you got slapped for being disrespectful. You had to speak to them with your eyes looking downwards
- 46. They simply didn't speak nicely to you. There was no love. The mental and physical abuse was constant. In my opinion they thrived on the torture they handed out to us.
- 47. Another punishment was to be locked in a cupboard. There would be no light and you would maybe be in there for two hours at a time.
- 48. You would never show weakness by crying as that would just lead to more beatings.
- 49. The food was also poor, very plain. If you didn't finish your meal it was held over to the next meal so you eventually did eat it. It was awful, especially when we got tripe. I hated that. Sometimes the food was so bad you would vomit on to your plate. When that happened they still made you eat the food, vomit and all. Can you believe that? Can you imagine anybody could do that to a child?
- 50. School was also very strict and the use of the belt was common place, again, for any daft wee thing. Although you were in class with kids from other cottages, you

weren't allowed to mix with them and certainly you wouldn't speak about the abuse you would get in your particular cottage. If you did you knew you would get battered. It was usually the belt on the hand you received.

- 51. From cottage 2 I went to cottage 22. I don't recall what age I was when I went there but I know I wasn't there for long. All I remember about cottage 22 was that it was run by a single house parent, a man and that my time there was a lovely experience. The man there was brilliant to me and never hit me. I was there maybe nine months or a year and all I remember is good experiences.
- 52. After that I went to cottage 43 where I stayed till I left the home. It was run by Mr and Mrs QBA/Q and they were awful people. I was maybe about nine or ten when I went there. QBA/QBB were really nasty.
- 53. As with cottage 2 the food in cottage 43 was also poor. Again, if you didn't finish your meal it was held over to the next meal so you eventually did eat it. And like I said earlier, if you were sick on your dinner you had to eat that as well.
- 54. Sometimes we would try and hide some of the food in our pocket to dispose of it later but if you got caught that was another battering.
- 55. QBA/QBB used to use a belt on us and would hit us on the hands, backside and the bare legs as we wore shorts. It was given if you spoke out of turn or if you did something they thought was wrong regardless of how trivial it was. They just seemed to enjoy inflicting pain on you. They also had a big stick that they used to beat us with.
- They would punish you for no reason and if they thought you had not done your work to a high enough standard. For example with the grate cleaning, if they saw even a trace of dirt you got battered and told to do it all over again. Or if the shoes were not highly polished enough they would muck up what I had done and tell me to do it over

again and tell me that I was useless. They would also use these things as an excuse to physically punish me again.

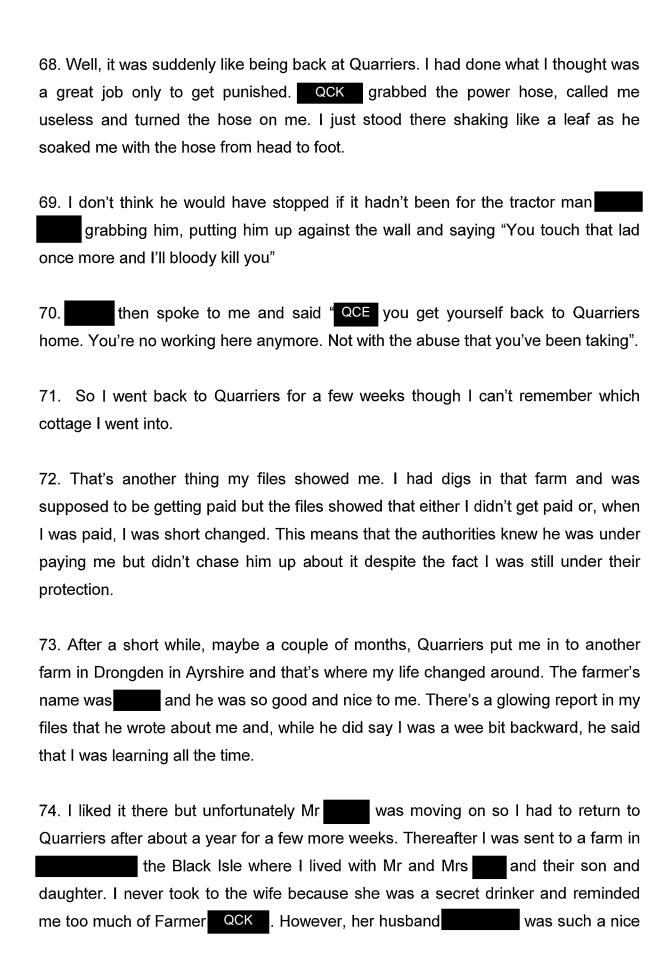
- 57. Another example is the concrete play area that I told you that I had to scrub on my knees. There was no mat to rest my knees on and sometimes, when I finished, they would throw a bucket of water over it and tell me to do it again. They would tell me I was useless, no use to society, a waster. It was awful but that was my life there every day.
- 58. I used to think I was doing my chores properly but it just seemed that every time I did them I would get punished. I used to feel like screaming at them. I couldn't understand why I was getting punished for doing as I was asked. It was so frustrating. It wasn't just me who got this. That was how all the kids were treated.
- 59. I said earlier that we used to get visitors once a month. I remember one incident involving a boy called whose name is the only one I remember from the home. We were all in the playroom looking out the window for people visiting and we saw this man come to the door. We were asking each other who knew him but nobody did. We eavesdropped at the door and heard the man say "I'm here for ". was astonished.
- 60. The next thing was that Mrs QBB came into the room and said "come through to the living room". Then we heard screaming "No. No. You're not taking me. I'm not going" It turned out the man was his father and had come to get him because had become of age.
- 61. When was screaming he was just showing his emotions. Well, he got battered for that. Absolutely leathered with the belt. And all he had done was to show his emotions.

### Running away

- 62. Three times I tried to run away from Quarriers. I always knew that I would be caught and they always seemed to know where to look to find me. I never got any further than the main road. On being taken back to cottage 43 the consequences were serious in terms of punishment. I was hammered to a pulp and locked in a cupboard.
- 63. As I've said, this was my life in Quarriers. Constant abuse every day. I didn't know life could be any different.

#### Life after Quarriers

- 64. I went to work on a farm when I was about sixteen. It was called Farm in Mauchline. It was a dairy farm. This was my first job and was basically me in the process of leaving Quarriers. I think I was there for about a year.
- 65. The farmer's name was QCK and he was an alcoholic. I was still under Quarrier's care which I was until I turned twenty-one. He was a vicious man. I know that these days a person such as Farmer QCK would be vetted before taking in a lad like I was then. There was no vetting in those days and Quarriers simply put me out to the care of that man without any checks or supervision.
- 66. The first night I was there I just lay in my room and cried. I had never been out of the home before and didn't know how to handle it. QCK 's attitude to me was to shout up at me telling me to stop crying.
- 67. There was one incident in particular that summed up his treatment of me. The cows were kept in a byre and one of my jobs was to clean it out. One day he went off to the pub as usual and I spent the whole day cleaning the byre, scraping the walls with a wire brush. It was hard work but I was pleased with how clean I got it. There was a tractor man named a really nice man, who was there when the farmer came back from the pub. I had been using a power hose to clean of the residue from the walls and just as he arrived back I caused a bit of dirt to spray on to the wall.



man and was very good to me. He wanted to teach me his business but unfortunately he died suddenly of a massive heart attack. I would be about twenty by this time.

75. When I left Quarriers to go to it was to be the last time I would be at Quarriers. I just remember as I walked away I turned, looked at the place and said to myself "You're not going to get me ya arseholes, ya bastards". Those were the words I used because to me that's what they were. They were the scum of the earth.

76. From things I have read and from talking to others I am aware that sexual abuse also took place at Quarriers. I saw nothing of that and at no time was I sexually assaulted.

### **Bedwetting**

77. I was a serious bed wetter and, in cottage 2, what they did to me was horrific. When it happened I would be forced to stand naked in a bath of freezing cold water or forced to stand naked in a cold corridor all night. Sometimes you would be forced to stand naked in the corridor straight after the freezing bath and you wouldn't even be allowed to dry yourself. It was dreadful.

78. I was too young to remember if I went to tell them I had wet the bed or if they just saw that I had wet the bed. All I remember is the punishment I got for it which, like I said, was horrific.

79. In cottage 43 my bedwetting got worse and while they didn't put me in a cold bath or corridor or hit me for it, I do remember that four or five times a week I would have to walk all the way to the laundry with my wet bed sheets. This was very embarrassing as it meant everybody knew about my problem. This was their way of making me look a fool in front of everybody. At the weekend there was no laundry open so if I wet the bed at that time then I would have to wash my own sheet and hang it out on the line. Very often it would not be dry when I would have to bring it back in so I would end up having to lie on a damp sheet.

# **Impact**

- 80. When I left Quarriers I made up my mind to put the whole experience out of my mind and never spoke about it. I had very strong will power to that and simply decided to work hard all my life and just not think about things. That said I think now that it did have an impact upon my life.
- 81. But I didn't let, what had happened to me, get to me. I've read stories of people who have had a childhood like mine and it has had a terrible effect on them. I know that some have turned to drink, turned to drugs and some have even committed suicide.
- 82. Maybe it was just that I had such a strong will power but I was determined to put it to the back of my mind and get on with my life. Looking back I think it was quite remarkable that I was able to do that at such a young age but I was determined that it wouldn't ruin my life. It all stayed in the back of my mind until my chance meeting two years ago with a man whose name I'd rather not disclose.
- 83. I spent my life putting it all to the back of my mind, my mother, the home, the abuse, everything. I was determined to work as hard as I could and that nobody would ever get to know about the torment and abuse I had endured.
- 84. I now believe that Quarriers robbed me of three things my childhood; my family and my file. I don't even have a photograph of myself as a child to look at. When I went back to Quarriers to try to recover my file about two years ago the women we met showed me photographs of children in books but I never saw myself in any of them. She was maybe an archivist or something but I expected more from her than I got in terms of information. I almost felt as if she was not being entirely open or was holding back a bit.

# **Bedwetting**

85. My bedwetting I put down to Quarriers. It was an issue throughout my childhood and continued well into my adult life. I was three or four years married and about twenty-eight years old before it finally stopped.

86. Another big impact is that I have no idea what my mother looked like. Before I die I would love to at least see a photograph of what she looked like.

87. I am a great believer in the Salvation Army and the good work that they do. Years ago I asked them to try to trace my mother but they came back saying that they had found her but that she didn't want anything to do with me. However, we later worked out that at the time they reported this to me my mother was already dead. She died in 1978. There is another family nearby of the same name and I wonder if they got us mixed up.

### Self-esteem and self-confidence

88. One thing Quarriers did do to me was make me very respectful of other people. Perhaps too respectful, particularly of people in authority.

# **Education and Career**

89. Educationally I can't really answer whether or not it affected me and in terms of my working life I have always been a great team player and enjoyed good relations with those I have worked with which is of course a good thing.

### <u>Parenting</u>

90. I actually think that it may have helped me to be a better parent myself once I realised that there were other good people in the world when away from Quarriers. I did give my children chores and stuff while they were growing up but nothing heavy like I had to do in Quarriers.

# **Trust**

91. There were lots of people I couldn't talk to. I have lots of friends but could never tell them about what happened. I used to cry when I was around friends and they started talking about their parents and families. That's something that really hurts me. The fact that I didn't have somebody to hug, somebody who was really close to me. Quarriers robbed me of that. My wife used to say "Aw QCE", you've got me now" and that was true but it was my childhood and my mum I was robbed of.

# **Depression**

- 92. I do suffer from depression pretty badly but generally deal with it on my own by taking myself off to the bingo and stuff rather than the doctor. I just can't talk to the doctor about it. It comes and goes but affects me most at night. I relate this both to losing my wife back in 1999 but also to my early life experiences in Quarriers especially since it has all come back into my mind since meeting the man I'd rather not mention two years ago.
- 93. Fortunately I don't suffer nightmares or flashbacks but I have never been a good sleeper and often stay up into the small hours.

# Reporting of Abuse

- 94. I did mention Quarriers in passing to my wife and kids over the years but not in any in depth way and certainly not in the detail that I am talking about now.
- 95. There was another close friend who I used to work with and to whom I spoke a bit to about Quarriers. Again it was at a fairly superficial level and think I just told him it was a very strict place or something like that. He and I visited the Quarriers village when we were working together at Greenock. That would have been about 22 or 23 years ago.
- 96. The first person I really spoke to was the man who I mentioned earlier. I met him just over two years ago on the golf course. I was walking down to the 11th tee with

and we invited this chap who was playing on his own to join us. He then asked me if I did not remember him and when I said "No" he just said two words "cottage 43" and it all came back to me. I don't remember him being there but he remembers me. He is six years older than me and I think our time in cottage together was about twelve to eighteen months.

- 97. Despite all these memories of Quarriers being revived after meeting my friend we have never talked to each other about our experiences there. We just know what happened there without talking about it to each other. It was he who advised me how to get my file from Quarriers.
- 98. He was clever and had a great IQ. He's a scholar and university lecturer. However, Mrs QBB tried to belittle him back then because of his intelligence. She would also get him to write things for her own son to copy and pass off as his own work.
- 99. I have never reported the matter to the police and there was nobody at Quarriers I could talk to.

### Survivors Group Meetings

- 100. I had a meeting about two years ago at Fife House. This was not long after meeting the man I met on the golf course that I mentioned earlier and having visited Quarriers with my daughter and him to recover my file. I think it was some sort of survivor group meeting where they wanted to collate accounts of what happened in Quarriers. Anyway it was at a pretty superficial level compared to now and I gave a very shorter account there.
- 101. I also attended a meeting in Edinburgh about the same time. It was to do with people who had been in care. There were three people at a table at the top of the room. I did not find this a helpful meeting and felt as if we were not believed and were making up stories. There were other similar meetings in Glasgow which were

more helpful. I felt let down by MSP Angela Constance who said that there would be help for us but nothing came of it, it was just words.

# Treatment/Support

102. I don't currently receive any treatment or medication in relation to anything that happened to me in Quarriers.

103. The only support I receive, apart from my family and in particular my daughter provided by the In Care Survivors' Support Fund. He has been a fantastic help and support to me in this process since we first met in August 2016. He helps and supports me in practical ways. Right now he is helping me to try to research my birth family history and to try to find out if I have any other living relatives. Ultimately all I really want to try to achieve is to find a photograph of my mother and to know what she looked like.

#### Lessons to be learned

104. In terms of lessons to be learned to protect children in care now and in the future, I think that people who work with children need to have a softer touch and a love for the children they look after. There should not be strict regimes like I had at Quarriers, also speak to them as a normal child.

105. Lots of adults need to be educated in this regard. It requires a special sort of person to work with vulnerable children and not just anyone.

- 106. Just give children a little bit of respect and love.
- 107. My hope is that these lessons will be learned.

108. 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.

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