

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GVE [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is GVE [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in the Gorbals area of Glasgow to my mother, [REDACTED] and my father, [REDACTED]. I was christened at St. Francis' Roman Catholic church. I was the eldest of eight children. I had six sisters and one brother, [REDACTED]. We were poor. My father apparently came from a good family but it turned out he was an evil guy.
3. The early years were horrible. We moved from place to place. There were many incidents, but the most serious occurred when we stayed in Bridgeton in Glasgow. At the time, I attended the local St. Anne's Primary School. I was home at lunchtime and my Dad came home, drunk. My Mum put food down for him. For whatever reason, my Dad wasn't happy. He smashed the plate and ran one half of the plate down her face. She had a huge wound on her face.
4. I had to go as a witness against my Dad at the High Court. I can't remember how old I was. I can't remember how many years he got in jail. Even then, my Mum still went to visit him. I remember being taken up to Perth Prison. Then Dad got out and we moved again to Blackhill, a notorious area of Glasgow, in 1966. The twins were born that year and my youngest sister, [REDACTED], was born in 1968.

5. My Dad continued to beat my Mum, my siblings and me constantly. I don't know how he did it, but he got a job as a steel erector. He went down to Grimsby to work. He had an accident and died at work on [REDACTED] 1969. Until that time, I was doing well at school. I was going to be a bright star. Mum was left with eight children. After my Dad died, she just went to pieces. She got six thousand pounds in compensation, but I think she drank it all.

6. My brother and I became feral. We didn't do anything particularly nasty, like breaking into houses. We were running crazy. We didn't go to school. I was extremely clever. I'd skip school and go around the art galleries or to the Mitchell Library. Eventually, social services got involved. I remember a social worker called Mr Nichols. My Mum used to dread him coming. It wasn't my Mum's fault. She just couldn't cope. I can't remember whether it was the courts or the Children's Panel, but I was sent to St. Joseph's. I don't remember being told how long I'd be there for, but it can't have been indefinite.

St. Joseph's List D School, Tranent, East Lothian

7. I was in secondary school when I was taken to St. Joseph's. I was about twelve years old. I was placed at St. Joseph's for truancy. I think the term used was, "For care and protection." People used to boast about what they were in for and I remember being jealous of the people in there for committing a criminal offence. St. Joseph's was run by the De La Salle brothers. Brother ^{MJG}[REDACTED] was ^{SNR}[REDACTED].

First Day – St. Joseph's holiday camp

8. I was taken directly from a panel by two social workers. It was summer time and the brothers of St. Joseph's had taken the children up to Fife to pick berries. I remember the drive vividly. I remember a huge Celtic cross at the side of the road. It had a hole next to it and I remember stopping with the social workers to look at it. They didn't tell me anything about what to expect when I arrived. It was okay when I got there as

there were lots of familiar faces from Blackhill. At first, it seemed like a great adventure.

9. There were big dormitories, like wooden sheds. It almost seemed like paradise, out in the countryside. We earned money. If we worked hard, we got what seemed like a fortune. I really enjoyed it. The weather was great. We used to sneak up on each other and steal each other's stuff. They used to take us to the cinema in Forfar, which was a new experience for us. At that stage, I was reasonably happy with things. That only lasted for the summer and then you were taken back to the main institution in East Lothian.

Routine at St. Joseph's

First day – St. Joseph's, Tranent

10. It was quite scary, arriving at St. Joseph's. It was a huge building, dark stone and very imposing. There were about a 100 to 150 boys there.

Mornings and bedtime

11. There were six to eight boys in a dormitory. Once you were allocated to a dorm, you tended to stay there. We would get up about seven in the morning.
12. There was a night watchman who would patrol the place at night with his torch. He was quite scary. There was always talk about him, but I never saw anything.

Washing

13. Washing was always supervised by the brothers. We washed every morning and every night. I never saw anything untoward happening in the showers, but I heard things from other boys.

Food

14. The food was good. It seemed good to me anyway, compared to what I was used to at home.

School

15. We had lessons within the institution. All of the classes were taken by the brothers. The only two I remember being taught by were Brother ^{GTQ} and Brother Benedict. I remember the method of teaching English. We were given little cards. It was too easy for me. I got bored. We were force fed the stuff. It didn't stimulate me at all. There was no library or anything where I could go and pick up a book. We weren't taught maths or science. We did classes in the morning and workshops in the afternoon.

Work

16. After school, we were sent to workshops. I remember the guy doing wasn't a brother. He was evil. He would throw bits of metal at you if you did something wrong. There was a rota for chores. I was on buffer duty daily. I had a big metal pole with a cloth underneath it. I had to go up and down the corridors, shining the floor. It certainly built my arms up.

Leisure

17. There was a huge recreation hall with table tennis and things like that. There was a large quadrangle, like a playground, and a playing field as well. We were always playing football. There was also a gymnasium so we had a lot of physical activity.
18. The brothers would take us swimming at Craiglockhart Convent in Edinburgh. The nuns there were lovely. They also took us to Loretto School in Musselburgh. I remember the disdain of us from the pupils there. That started my hatred of public schools.

19. Once, we went to watch a debating show at the Brunton Theatre. I was fascinated. I remember suggesting that we did debating and people just laughed at me.

Birthdays and Christmas

20. I don't remember birthdays being celebrated. The brothers made a point of getting you a present for Christmas or giving you money to get a present. One of my favourite memories is making a wooden tray in woodwork to take home to my Mum. They gave us money to buy a 45 record. I remember I bought The Banks of the Ohio, by Olivia Newton John. My Mum cried when I gave it to her.

Religion

21. There was Mass every Sunday, which I absolutely hated. It was always the brothers taking Mass, usually Brother MJG. Brother MJG seemed such a gentle man, everything you could imagine would be nice in a religious person. He seemed caring and talked to you in a nice way. I don't know if he was aware of what was going on, but I suspect he was.

Visits/Inspections

22. You were allowed home at the weekend, depending upon your behaviour. The school had its own ramshackle bus and one of the brothers would drive us home to Glasgow most weekends. I didn't like it because I knew what I was coming back to. Sometimes, I would get in with a crowd and I wouldn't go back on the Sunday. The police would come looking for me. There was a penalty to pay for that. It would be a while before I could get out again and it was pretty miserable.
23. My Mum came to visit me a couple of times, but I knew she hated it. The social workers never came. They just handed you over and their involvement ended. You were just left in the care of those people. I don't know who was supervising the brothers. There must have been an inspection, because I remember everybody

being marshalled to get the place clean. You knew there was something going on. I vaguely remember being spoken to by somebody inspecting the place. Obviously, I told him the place was great because there was always a brother hovering.

Healthcare

24. There was no medical care. I think they checked your hair for lice, but that was it.

Running away

25. One day, I absconded and made it to Glasgow. I just wanted away from that regime because it was so overwhelming. I felt on edge all the time, like I was waiting for something to happen.

Abuse at St. Joseph's

26. You would always be called by your second name, except by Brother ^{GTQ} [REDACTED]. Brother ^{GTQ} [REDACTED] seemed glamorous. He was an extremely handsome young guy. I used to wonder why on earth he was there. It always troubled me. He used to come up to me and say, "GIVE [REDACTED], give us a cuddle, give us a kiss." I recoiled. He did it to other boys as well. He was particularly creepy. It didn't progress any further with me, but I did hear more about him from other boys. I heard about sexual abuse but I never saw it happen.
27. It was very strict. You got the belt and the usual punches. That was second nature to us. There was a lot of bed wetting. I wet the bed. I was beaten by the brothers and sometimes had my face rubbed in it. Violence and beatings were just a part of your daily routine. The beatings would leave marks and black eyes. Brother Benedict was handy with his boots and his fists. He would fly off the handle for the slightest thing. You could say something or look at him the wrong way and he would attack you. It was as if he was demented. I remember him leaving my nose in such a state, it may have been broken.

28. There was a lot of violence and bullying amongst the boys, which wasn't surprising given their backgrounds. Boys tended to group within their own areas. There were boys from Dundee, boys from Paisley, boys from Edinburgh. There were a lot of boys from Blackhill, where I was from, so we stuck together and looked out for each other.
29. There was a lot of sexual abuse going on amongst the boys as well. I remember older boys subjecting the younger boys to that. One of the older boys tried it on with me at one point, but I said 'no' in no uncertain terms.
30. I think my brother was there at the same time as me. He was four years younger than me. I remember him telling me that he was terribly beaten by the brothers. I think he told me he was sexually assaulted as well, but I can't be certain. I can't remember if he told me at the time or in later years. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Leaving St. Joseph's

31. Leaving seemed very sudden. I wasn't given much notice. I was fourteen. I can't remember how I got home. When I left, I was under the supervision of social workers because of the family situation. It was pretty chaotic. I carried on truanting. They didn't know what to do with me because I hadn't committed any criminal offence. For some reason, they didn't want to put me in a List D setting.
32. I was before children's hearings regularly. I remember absconding from a children's hearing in Albion Street. I think I was mainly at children's hearings for missing school, but at one point I was charged with a criminal offence. It was something quite minor, like stealing from a shop. I remember the police gave me a big list of unsolved crimes and said, "You did all them, didn't you?" I signed to say I had, although I hadn't. By no means was I a criminal mastermind, that's just the way it was back then. I was a bit of a tearaway, but there was no structure in my life. Everything was

just crazy. When my dad died, I was told that I was the man of the house. It was a terrible burden to put on me. I thought it gave me licence to do what I wanted. The children's hearings arranged for me to go to Larchgrove Assessment Centre.

Larchgrove Assessment Centre, Edinburgh Road, Glasgow

33. I ended up in Larchgrove for about a week. I was terrified there. There was a lot of violence. There was an atmosphere of violence throughout the whole place. I seem to recall there was a huge investigation into the place in the seventies. I absconded from there. I remember being taken out of Larchgrove for a children's panel and I just ran away out the gate.

Abuse at Larchgrove

34. Violence was pervasive amongst the staff. I've never been so scared in an institution as I was there. I just sensed things weren't right. I kept my head down and didn't look anybody in the eye. There were fights every day. I saw violence all the time. I was never so relieved as when I got out of there.

Longriggend Young Offenders' Institute, Longriggend, North Lanarkshire

35. I was transferred to Longriggend when I was about fourteen. I was there for quite a long time. It was horrendous. I was in a single cell. Occasionally you would share a cell, if it was overcrowded. It was a pigsty of a place.

Routine at Longriggend

School

36. There was no education system, but there was at least a library there. We were taken to a classroom during the day. We were given spelling competitions. I remember the prison officer would sit at a desk in front of us. He had the Daily Express. There was a thing called target, which gave you six or seven letters, and you had to make up as many words as you could out of those letters. There was a prize of a Mars bar for the person who got the most. I always won it and other boys were going crazy. I started deliberately losing because they were getting angry.

Food

37. The food was horrible. You were given a piece of bacon and a sausage for your breakfast. You were always hungry.

Abuse at Longriggend

38. One of the prison officers touched me inappropriately. His name was Mr ^{GVG} or ^{GVG}. He was pretty creepy. I was cleaning a corridor and there was a small room where all the cleaning materials were kept. He came in and started rubbing himself against me and touching my genitals. I resisted. For whatever reason he stopped. It freaked me out and I didn't know what to do.
39. Naively, I wrote to my mum on prison paper to tell her what had happened. They censored my letters and I got into a lot of trouble. I suffered a lot of beatings. I was beaten by prison officers. I remember one of them was called ^{GVH}. They told me it was because of the letter and said, "What are you writing this fucking shit for?" I said, "Well, that's what happened." They said, "You're not fucking writing that shit in here." I remember telling other boys what had happened, but there was no opportunity to report it further up.

**St. Andrew's List D School, Shore Road, Shandon, Helensburgh,
Dunbartonshire**

40. After Longriggend, I was transferred to St. Andrew's. I was there for two years. It was run by civilians. It was wonderful. It took my breath away, it was so amazing. If it wasn't for St. Andrew's, I don't know what would have happened to me. They taught me so much. There was education, but I didn't receive any formal qualifications.
41. There were dormitories, but as you became more senior you were rewarded with your own room. I got to go home almost every weekend. I couldn't wait to get back after weekends. They treated me like I was a human being. I was a little bit older and wiser and I was starting to think about my life a bit more.
42. I left when I was about sixteen. That was the end of my time in care.

Reporting of abuse

43. I told my wife about being abused almost as soon as I met her. She had been abused by a family friend as well, which gave her some insight. I've spoken to my daughter since getting in touch with the Inquiry. I've never reported anything to the authorities.

Life after being in care

44. I went back home when I left St. Andrew's. I just drifted. There was still no structure in the home. Life was chaotic. I didn't know how to access further education. I did odd jobs and eventually I drifted back into trouble.
45. In 1978 I got involved in something that still haunts me to this day. I was involved in a robbery. My brother ██████ got five years, another guy got four years and I got eighteen months for housebreaking. I was in Glenochil Young Offenders' Institute. I served one year and was released in ██████ 1980, when I was 21. I felt like I needed to get my life sorted. I couldn't go back to prison again.

46. I started applying for jobs. I saw an advert for a job at Strathclyde University in [REDACTED] 1980 for a job as a handyman. I got a reply, inviting me for an interview. I wrote a letter back saying that I had a criminal record and they might not want to pursue the interview. Fortunately, they wrote back saying they still wanted me to come for an interview. The chief technician, John Marshall, the head of department, Professor Bowman and James Houston, another technician, interviewed me, even though it was just a handyman job. John Marshall was an enlightened guy. He was a conscientious objector during the Second World War and spent the war in Barlinnie Prison. He asked me my story and I told him. He took a chance. He trained me up. I started off doing chores around the department and he trained me to be a laboratory technician. I've been there for 37 years and am due to retire later this month.
47. I met my wife in February 1981 and we got married in 1984. In 1990, we had a still born daughter, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was born the following year. She's 26 years old now. Sadly, my wife passed away two years ago.

Impact

48. I think being in care has had a negative and a positive effect on me. It's made me look at the world in a different way. I hate violence and war. I care more for my fellow human beings.
49. Being in care has impacted upon my relationships. I can't trust people. I'm always suspicious of people. I can't make friends. I don't have a single close friend. I find it hard to relate to people. Some people at work call me a sociopath. I internalise everything.
50. Sometimes I think why me, why was I so lucky? So many of my contemporaries in care are dead, through drugs or crime or whatever. I feel guilty.

51. My wife and I decided to have a week in the countryside in 1984. We travelled to North Berwick and around East Lothian. I decided to go to Tranent and visit St. Joseph's. There were still murals with goal posts painted on, just like when I was there. I found it difficult.
52. I have intrusive thoughts regularly. It can happen at any time. I've got a thing about black boots. I can't wear black shoes because I associate them with Brother Benedict.
53. I wasn't religious before I went to St. Joseph's, but being there reinforced that. I'm devoutly atheist. My time in care made me more political though, which I'm grateful for. I've been in a trade union all my working days and was the union representative.
54. I've never had any counselling about my time in care. A few years ago, I think I was on the verge of a breakdown. I went for some psychiatric help. Because of health service funding, I was only allowed a certain number of sessions and then it stopped. I'm still on anti-depressants.

Records

55. I didn't realise I was allowed to access my records. I've never tried to obtain them. I've hired a genealogist to look into my family history, so I'm interested in records. If they are available, I'd like to get access to my records.

Hopes for the Inquiry

56. There has to be more supervision of institutions. The state has a responsibility to take care of children. These places were left at arm's length when I was there. The staff had free rein to do whatever they wanted. It's astonishing to think the state allowed people to do that, just a generation ago. The state washed its hands of us, as if we didn't matter.

Other information

57. 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.

Signed... GVE

Dated... 14 / 11 / 2017