

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HHL

Support person present: No

1. My full name is HHL. This has been my name since birth. My date of birth is 1973. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before care

2. I lived in the Westerhailes in Edinburgh after I was born. I lived with my mum, and older brother, who was about a year older than me. I never met my dad. My younger, half-sister came along after a while, but I can't remember when. She is between one and three years younger than me.
3. I moved to the Southhouse area of Edinburgh when I was about three or four years old years old. I started Burdiehouse Primary School.
4. I started getting suspended from school when I was in primary one or two, and that carried on right up until I was in primary seven.
5. I was getting suspended because I couldn't concentrate in class. I couldn't understand it all. It was always messy when I wrote things down, so I just stopped doing any of the work and started acting up.
6. My teacher in primary three, Mrs was horrible. She used to stick a metre stick down your back and pull it, and smack your knuckles with a ruler.

7. As I got older, I started getting the belt in class.
8. Life at home was rubbish as well. I got singled out by my mum. I was the only one in the house who got a kicking from her. She hit me with the clothes pole and chucked hammers at me. One time the neighbours had to come up to stop my mum choking me.
9. I think my mum was jealous of me because her parents loved me and gave me lots of attention because I was their blue eyed boy. She was jealous and took it out on me.
10. I started Gracemount High School and got suspended about five times in first year, and then multiple times again in second year.
11. You got to choose your subjects in high school, and I chose music and art. German was the only subject I had to take.
12. I was good at art and drawing cartoon characters, but the school wanted me to draw apples and bananas and I couldn't do that. I explained that I didn't want to be drawing those things. They never listened and kept on at me so I got kicked out the class. I was put into a class called "the unit" where all the bad laddies were put.
13. The same thing happened in music. I got months of being made to learn about Bach and Mozart. I wanted to learn how to play an instrument and that never happened. I got chucked out of music class and put into the unit class. I ended up being in the unit for most of my classes.
14. The teacher in the unit would bend your pinkie right back into the palm of your hand and squeeze it, if you were acting up in class. It was really sore. His name was Mr [REDACTED] and he was a bible basher.
15. I kept getting suspended and was eventually kicked out of the school for good, in third year. I never had a social worker throughout all of this time.

- 16. My mum then said she couldn't control me. I think that was rubbish because she was a twenty stone, big woman. Also, my brother was worse than me and was having the police round at our door because of his behaviour. The police never came to the door because of me. The worst thing I was doing was just not coming in at 8:00 or 9:00 pm when my mum told me to, so she would batter me when I got in late, and then I would go to bed.

- 17. I went to a children's panel, but I don't know why the panel happened. I remember being there and everyone there talking about me as if I wasn't there. One woman asked to hear from me and asked me what I wanted. I said I was happy to go into care and that I didn't want to live with my mum.

- 18. I think I was taken straight to Dean House Children's Home from the panel, just in the clothes that I was wearing.

Dean House Children's Home, Ravelston, Edinburgh

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Midfield House Children's Home, Lasswade

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80. I was taken to another home in Haddington.

Tenterfield Children's Homes, Haddington

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92. I was in there for about three or four months. Then I was just told I was leaving one day, and then I was taken away to a home in Uphall. Nobody told me why I was leaving and going to a new place.

Uphall Children's Home, Uphall

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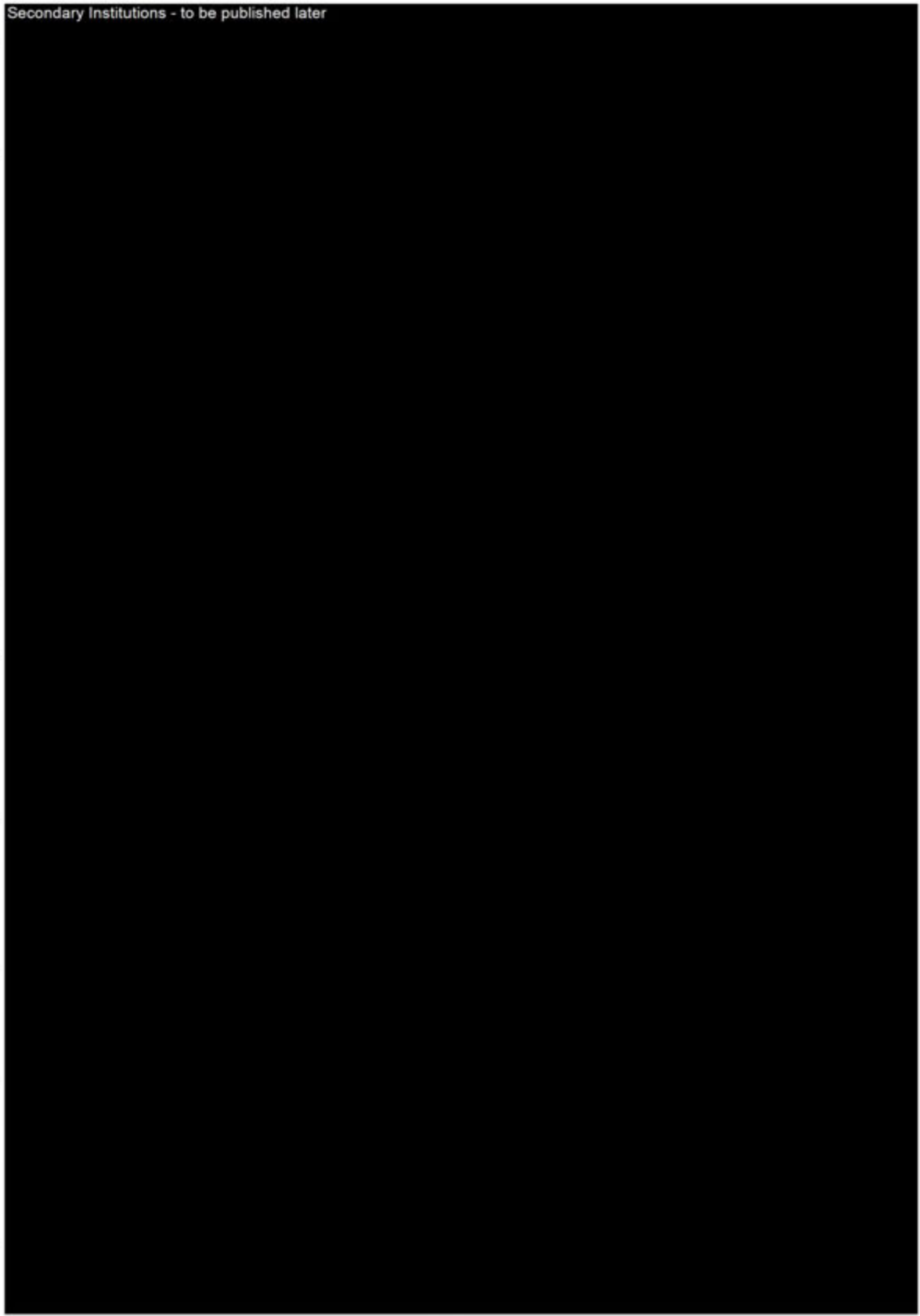
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South Gyle Children's Home, Edinburgh

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132. After being in the home for about six months, I was sent to a children's panel again. This was only the second one I'd been to.

133. The panel wanted to send me home and I said that I didn't want to go home. They didn't ask why and I didn't tell them about the physical abuse. They decided to send me home anyway.

134. I was fifteen years old, nearly sixteen years old when I left.

Life back at home

135. I was in a three bedroom house with my mum, my brother and sister.

136. I decided to Hoover one day and the Hoover was broken so I shouted down to my mum to tell her the Hoover was broken. She came upstairs and punched me in the mouth. I was not a silly wee laddie anymore and told her I wasn't going to take her beatings anymore, and I decided to leave the house.

137. There was a pound coin on the TV and I asked my sister if I could have it. She said yeah, so I took it as I was leaving, and my idiot brother saw this and tried to batter me. We started fighting and I went outside and told him to come out.

138. My brother came outside, hit me with a knife and went back in the house and locked the door. I smashed all the windows of the house and left.

139. By that time, I was seeing a lassie in Burdiehouse so I went to stay with her at her mum and dad's house.

140. I got my first house through the council when I was sixteen years old. It was in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Gracemount. It was just like a gang hut with people coming round. I didn't have a social worker or anything. Nobody helped me with furniture or with budgeting. I got no help from anybody.

141. I didn't get a social worker until I started getting into trouble, when I was sixteen years old, so I got one for being in trouble but not to help me when I had nobody.

142. I was put on probation when I was sixteen years old, for two years. During that time I had to go to the social work office in Gilmerton to check in once a week with them, but I didn't have an allocated social worker. I would see somebody different every week.

Saughton Prison

143. I was seventeen when I was first sent to Saughton Prison. When I got there I knew six people from Gracemount so I thought it was alright in there because I had mates there. I wasn't there long, before they sent me to Polmont Young Offenders Institute.
144. I was sent to Saughton again when I was seventeen years old. When I went in, there was a guy in there who I had almost had a fight with in a pub when we were both on the outside. My mate had stopped the fight then.
145. When this guy saw me in the jail, he slyly put his hand out and cut me with a razor blade he had between his fingers. He cut me under my ear, down the back of my head and on the back of my thigh. I didn't see it coming.
146. I grabbed the guy by the throat. His mate was also standing there with a battery in a sock ready to batter me, so I let go and thought I'd deal with him another time.
147. I got taken to the hospital in the jail and got staples for my injuries. I didn't say who had injured me because that is not what you do in person.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution, Polmont

148. I think I got sixty days from the Justice of the Peace Court the first time I went into Polmont at seventeen years old. I was then in and out of Polmont about two or three times a year from aged seventeen to twenty-one.
149. When I went there, the place had just changed over from a borstal to the young offenders' institute, so some of the staff there were still borstal minded.
150. Sometimes I had my own cell and sometimes there were four people to a cell, if it was busy. On average there would be two people per cell.

Daily routine

151. You were woken up at 5:30 or 6:00 am by prison officers knocking on all the cell doors. You had to get up and make your bed blocks, which was a nightmare. You had to fold and make your bed in a specific way, and fold your t-shirt in a specific way. If you didn't do it right, then you wouldn't get your breakfast and the prison officers would come and trash your room.
152. We ate meals in a big empty hall. People would come and put tables and chairs out for dinner and they would be responsible for cleaning up as well. I thought the food was ok.
153. You could sit in the cell all day and get what was called "a cell wage," but that would only be enough to cover a packet of tobacco, skins and a lighter. If you went to work, you got five or six pounds, which meant more money.
154. If you weren't working, you would just be in your cell. There was no activities or education organised. We got one hour of exercise time a day.
155. I didn't get any visitors when I was in Polmont. Not by family or social workers.

Discipline

156. If you were behaving in a way that the staff weren't happy with, you had to appear before the governors. You would go into a room with two prison officers, who we called "screws," and the governor. I was made to sit in a cardboard chair, apparently for their safety. The screws would stare at you while the governor would tell you that you had been charged with something.
157. It was funny them telling you that you'd been charged, because only the police could charge you. The kind of things they would charge you for were stupid as well, like being insolent.

158. Then they would ask you how you pled, guilty or not guilty. It was all a bit of a joke. Then they would take days off you, which basically meant they were making your sentence longer.
159. This went on for ages, until the rules changed and they were no longer allowed to take days off you.

Abuse in Polmont

160. The first time I went in, I was in a cell on the top landing. The other boys in there could fit their heads out the smashed windows and speak to people on other landings.
161. There was a boy called [REDACTED] from Glasgow in there at the time, and I could hear him calling up to me to tell me to speak to them out the window, but I was getting big by then and I couldn't fit my head out the window. Then I would hear him and others shouting up that they'd take my face off in the morning.
162. When I went down to breakfast, I found out the guy shouting up had been the smallest guy there.
163. There would be fighting between people from Edinburgh and Glasgow in Polmont. There would just be one member of staff and lots of boys. We would sometimes be working with tools, so these boys would have hammers.
164. It would have been a scary place if you didn't know anybody, but I knew folk in there and they were probably as radge as me so it was ok for me.
165. When fights broke out between the boys, the staff would come and break up the fights. They would be overly aggressive and whack us over the heads with batons. Sometimes loads of them would come in riot gear. They would run at us and smash us against the wall. That kind of thing happened quite a lot.

166. It might seem silly to say they were aggressive because it was a prison, but they were grown men in riot gear and we were still seventeen year old bairns.
167. When I was in Polmont aged seventeen I pressed the buzzer in my cell to get the attention of the staff. That was what it was there for. The screws would then come in and push me against the wall, and told me that they would give me a kicking if I did it again. I reacted by smashing up the cell. The screws then came in and took all my clothes from me and left me naked.
168. I reacted by pressing the buzzer constantly so they came back and took my mattress away. They left me with no clothes and no mattress for 24 hours.
169. The screws slid my food into the cell on a tray.
170. They had a portable potty, which was basically a potty that you could use to go to the toilet in. The screws would come and let you out to take your pot to a place where you could slop it out and clean it, then they would take you back to your cell.

Life after being in care

171. I was in and out of Polmont until I turned 21, then I would be sent to Saughton Prison instead, and I was in and out of there a few times a year.
172. I left my flat in Gracemount and went to stay with the mother of my baby. I was about nineteen years old when I became a dad. That didn't last long so I got another flat in [REDACTED] Gracemount. I ended up staying there for eleven years.
173. My grandparents were the only people who ever showed me any affection. I stayed with them sometimes. They're dead now.
174. I got lots of community service for years, as well as prison sentences. When I first got community service, the head of social work refused to take me on because he said I

was a bad influence on everybody else, so the social work wanted nothing to do with me. I can't remember that guy's name.

175. I would get 240 hours community service, and when I would finish that, I would end up getting another 240 hours. That went on for years before a social worker called Peter agreed to take me on. I got on with him and we struck up a bit of a friendship.
176. I was in and out of prison until I was in my mid-thirties. Then I got involved with a woman while I was in jail. I used to phone my friend, who was a chef, and this woman would answer the phone to put me through to him. I told my pal to ask her to write to me, which she did, and she came to visit me in jail.
177. We were in a relationship when I came out of jail and we were together for seventeen years.
178. I have had various jobs over the years. I have worked as a graphic designer, which was a job that I got through somebody I knew. I was good on computers. I've also worked as a roofer and doing delivery jobs. They have all ended with me leaving after having an argument or fight with the boss.
179. My mum is dead now and I see that as karma for the way that she was with me. When my silly brother and my sister die, I will be happy.

Impact

180. I went to Gracemount, Broughton and Broxburn Schools. They were all the same. I didn't get on well at any of them. I never really had an education.
181. I see a counsellor, who thinks I have a form of dyslexia. If this is true, it has never been picked up on and going to so many different schools didn't help.

182. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
183. It is like a battle trying to get the words out to describe the sexual abuse. I have spoken to my Counsellor about it because I see it as a sign of weakness that I can't talk about it, because I am not that wee laddie anymore.
184. I never got shown any emotion at home from my mum or by anyone in care. Instead, I saw and experienced a lot of violence at home, in care and in jail. Violence has never left my life.
185. I have always gotten into fights when I go out, because I get annoyed when I see somebody looking at me and wonder what they are looking at. That has caused me to get into trouble with the police and meant I've had a life in and out of jail. I still get lifted by the police for getting into fights.
186. The way I explain it to my counsellor is that I like things to be flat and when I start seeing it have wavy lines, I get angry and feel like I have no control. It happens instantly. My counsellor thinks I am stuck in fight mode with my reactions to things.
187. My counsellor thinks that I may be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder following what happened to me in care and the incident in Saughton when I got slashed when I was seventeen years old.
188. Every job I have ever had has also ended with me falling out with my boss because I get angry when I hear them say or do something.
189. I find relationships difficult. My relationships have never lasted because I am not able to show affection or emotions. I was with my partner for seventeen years and was never able to tell her I loved her. Whenever she tried to cuddle me, I would feel suffocated.

190. I am the same with my daughter, who is twenty seven years old. I can't show her affection either. I have had contact with her over the years but I find it hard because she doesn't get me. We don't have the best relationship now.
191. All people can see is the bad parts of me. They can't see what happened in my childhood and what happened to me in the homes.
192. I try not to think about my experiences in care and push it to the back of my mind, but they do come back to me as memories. They are vivid memories and seem real to me.

Treatment and support

193. I used to see a woman for counselling, through the doctor, for about a year. After that, the doctor sent me to a wee white house in Balerno, which was run by St Mungo's. I only lasted two sessions there because they didn't like what I was talking about.
194. I suffer from insomnia and sleep apnoea. I have been diagnosed with anti-social personality disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder.
195. I was seeing a psychiatrist through the sleep clinic. He told me to speak to my GP about being put on antipsychotic medication.
196. When I spoke to my GP about this, he said he had me on anti-depressants but didn't want to put me on antipsychotic medication without speaking to my psychiatrist. I told him he already had me antipsychotic medicine, Largactil. He had to google it to realise I was right.
197. I told him he was an idiot for giving out drugs when he didn't know what they were. As I was leaving the meeting with the doctor, which didn't go very well, the doctor pressed the panic button so I was escorted out. I then had to go to the challenging behaviour clinic in Edinburgh.

198. I found out the doctors were going to have a meeting about me behind my back. The receptionist at the challenging behaviour clinic told me about it because I had a good rapport with her.
199. I asked for my paper work from the clinic to see what they were planning for me, and that was when I found out that I had been diagnosed with anti-social personality disorder years earlier, but nobody had told me. I had been asking them if I had it and they had told me I didn't.
200. I attended a meeting with the psychiatrist, sleep clinic doctor and the doctor at the challenging behaviour clinic. For some reason, I was told I wasn't allowed to speak to my community psychiatric nurse, which I thought was ridiculous.
201. I was living in Balerno, and they wanted me to go to the clinic, which was at the Meadows in Edinburgh, every week. I put in a complaint, had a sit down, and was allowed to go back to my original surgery which was nearer to me, with a care plan in place.
202. Nobody really stuck to the care plan at my surgery so now I get my prescriptions sent to the chemist and I can collect it from there without having to speak to anybody. I get medication for restless leg syndrome and Clonazepam to help me sleep.
203. I get support from Future Pathways now and see a counsellor.

Reporting of Abuse

204. I have never reported my abuse to the police. I wouldn't go to the police for anything.

Records

205. I have never tried to get my records. I don't really see the point or what it would achieve.

Other information

206. I don't see how it was possible for staff in care homes to be violent and sexually abusive towards kids without other staff members seeing it happen. They must have seen and heard the things that were going on and kept their mouth shut.

207. There need to be proper checks done for people who work with kids. You can't hide it if you have a violent nature so an assessment should be done to see how they react in stressful situations to see if they snap or stay calm.

208. I have never asked anyone for an apology and I know the council, who placed me in care, would never apologise.

209. 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..... 

Dated..... 15 February 2021