

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCZ

Support person present: No

1. My full name is GCZ My name at birth and whilst in care was GCZ GCZ My date of birth is 1971. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before care

2. I was born in Perth. I lived at home in Hillyland with my mum, and my brother, who was about three years old than me. My mum didn't work. She stayed home and looked after us. I have never met my dad. My mum was one of seven siblings so there were a lot of uncles and aunties around.
3. I started Our Lady's Catholic Primary School in Perth. I remember not having a school uniform, and wearing a dress with a stripy green top to school. I remember waiting for my mum outside school and she wouldn't be there so my brother and I would walk home. My mum wouldn't be in so me and would sit outside waiting for her. Sometimes it would get dark while we waited and sometimes the neighbours would take us in.
4. I remember my brother stealing milk from peoples' doorsteps in the morning so we could have some milk.
5. I remember my mum having lots of parties and there always being a lot of drunk people at home.

### **Going into care**

6. I have a vague memory of being in care at a young age, before I went to school. I think I was in and out of care a few times. I remember me and [REDACTED] being taken to a place called Colonsay House in the middle of the night and meeting people the next morning. I think we were just there for one night and then taken back home the next day so I don't remember much about it.
  
7. I also remember being in a farm with a tractor, which might have been a foster care placement. I think we were in and out of a few short term care places. We would go back to our mum and she would stop drinking for a while, but then start again.
  
8. When I was about primary one age, I remember being at my mum's sister's house in a high rise flat. My mum was at a meeting and the police and social work came and took me and [REDACTED] away. My uncle was fighting with the police to stop them. It was horrible. I think my mum must have been at a children's panel and they'd made a decision to remove us, and so the police and social work had come to take us as soon as the decision was made.
  
9. I think we were taken to Carolina House that time and that was the first proper time we were in care. It would have been organised by what was then Tayside local authority, which covered Perth and Kinross, Dundee and Angus.

### **Carolina House, Dundee**

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### **Life back at home**

16. Life back at home was ok for a while and then my mum started drinking again and she was a really aggressive drunk. That was always what happened.
17. There were always a lot of men around the house all the time. I have memories of being in bed with my mum while she was having sex with a man. She got out of the bed, and the man started touching me sexually and asked me if it felt nice. I can't remember who he was.

- 18. I remember my brother and I were having sex all the time. He was horrible to me. I don't remember a time in my life where I wasn't having sex with [REDACTED] I never told my mum about it.
  
- 19. We had a babysitter when we were at home called [REDACTED] who was older, maybe eighteen or nineteen years old. He used to do sexual stuff to me and [REDACTED] and get us to do stuff to him. I told my mum and she must have phoned the police because they got involved. They asked me to show them on Cindy dolls and action men where he had touched us. I was maybe in primary two or three at that point. I don't know what the outcome of that was.

**Birch House, Scone**

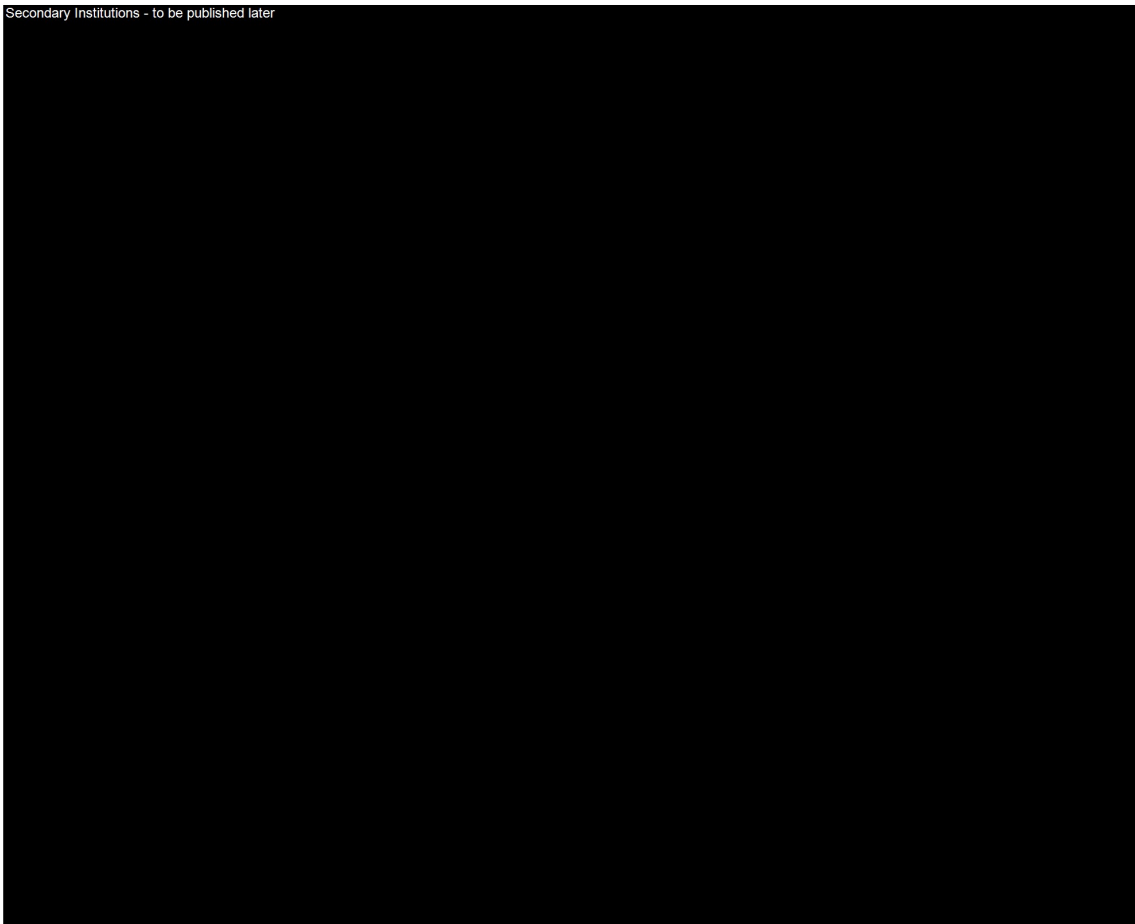
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**Rhoineach Mhor Children's Home, Dundee**

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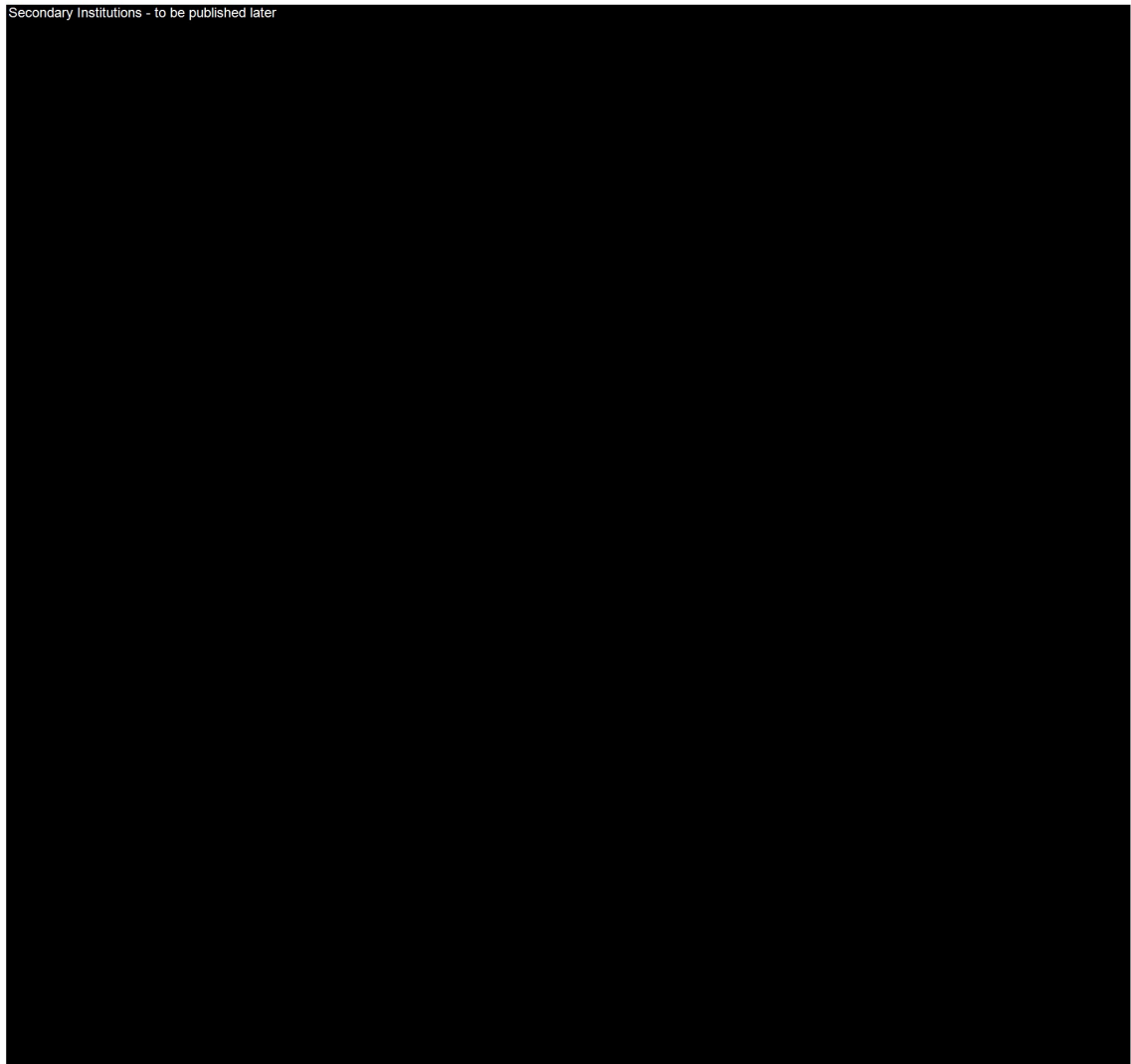
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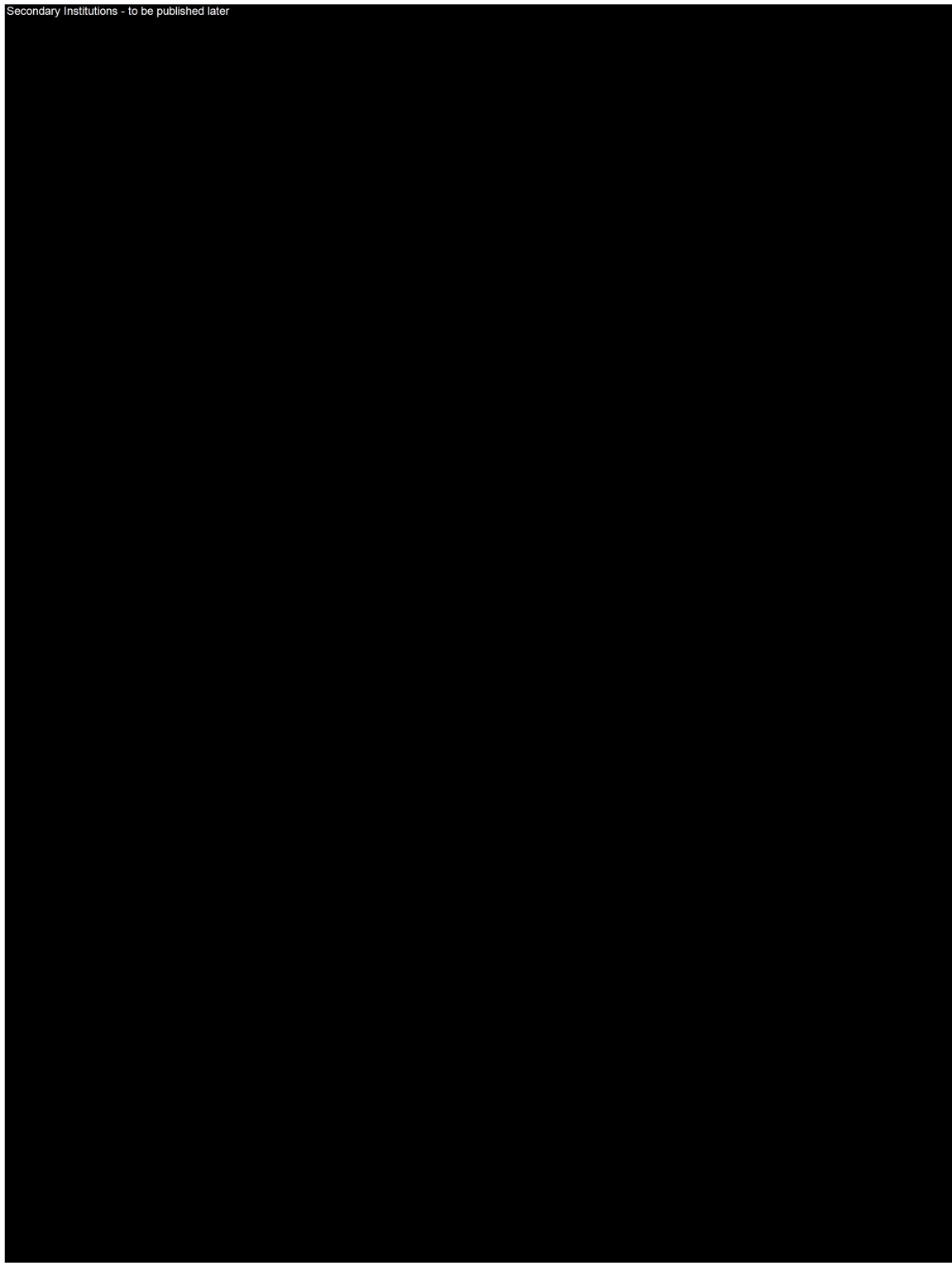
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52. For a while I was made to go to a foster carer and stay overnight at weekends, which I didn't like doing.

*Foster care*

53. I used to be made to go to a foster carer and stay overnight at her house at weekends sometimes. I don't remember her name. She had her own kids and another foster boy, called [REDACTED] They went to the same school as me.

54. I hated everything about going there and staying overnight. I had to sleep on a bunk bed which I didn't like. The woman would buy her own kids things when she went shopping but not me and [REDACTED] She treated us differently to her own kids. I also remember having to eat tapioca pudding there, which was horrible. She would make me sit and eat it the same way the staff did in the home.

55. I don't know how long I had to go there for but I remember one day when I was supposed to go, I hid under the pool table in the play room. Mrs Johnstone eventually found me and I cried and told her I didn't want to go. I wasn't made to go back after that.

56. After I was told I didn't have to go back, I remember going back to her door on my way to school because I had left stuff there. I wasn't supposed to go but I just did so I must have been quite bolshie. I knocked on her door and said that I didn't have to come

back and I wanted my stuff back. I don't think I was very nice to her. She said she would arrange to get it back to me, but I don't remember if she did.

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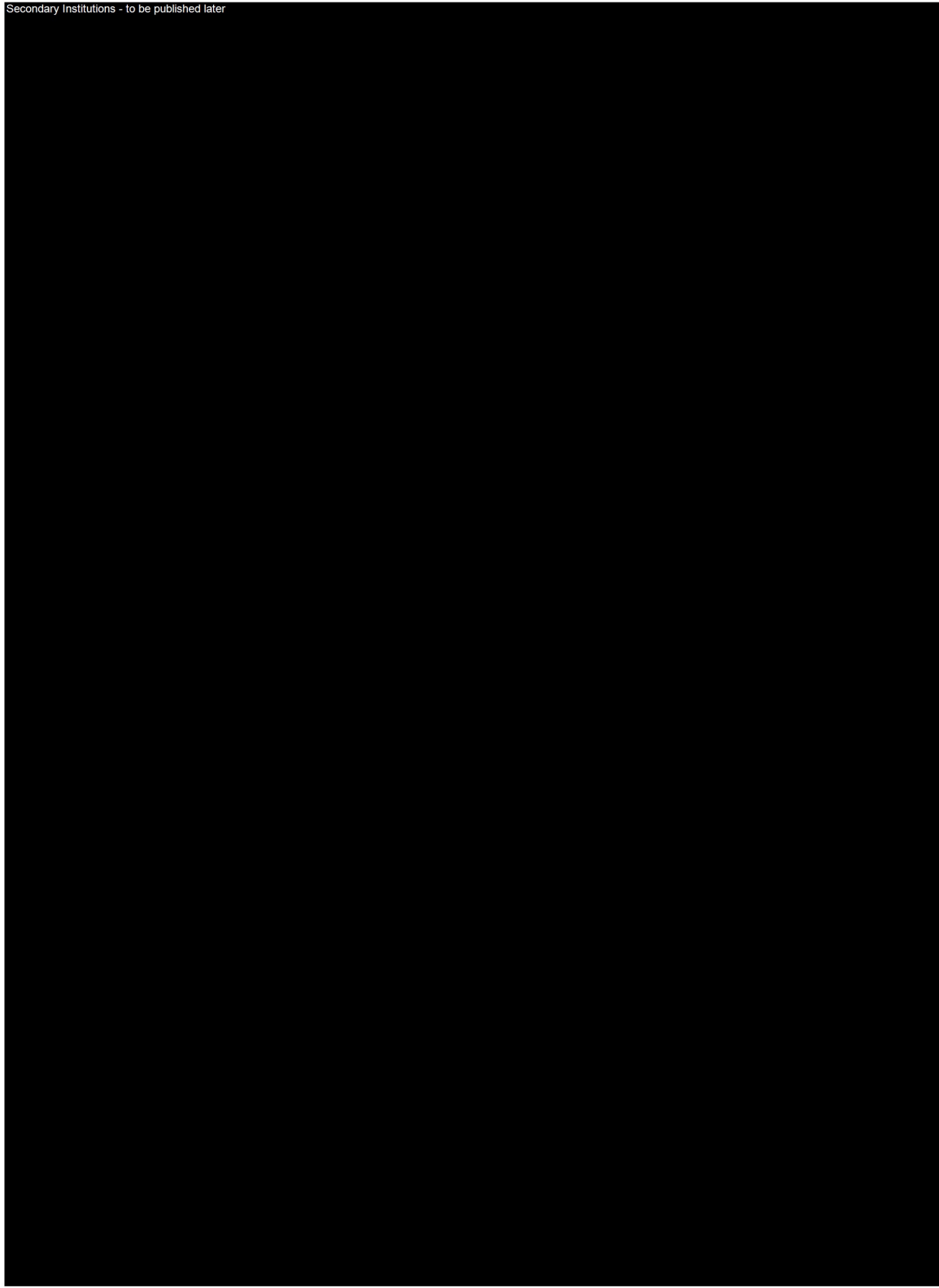
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## Ann Street Children's Home, Dundee

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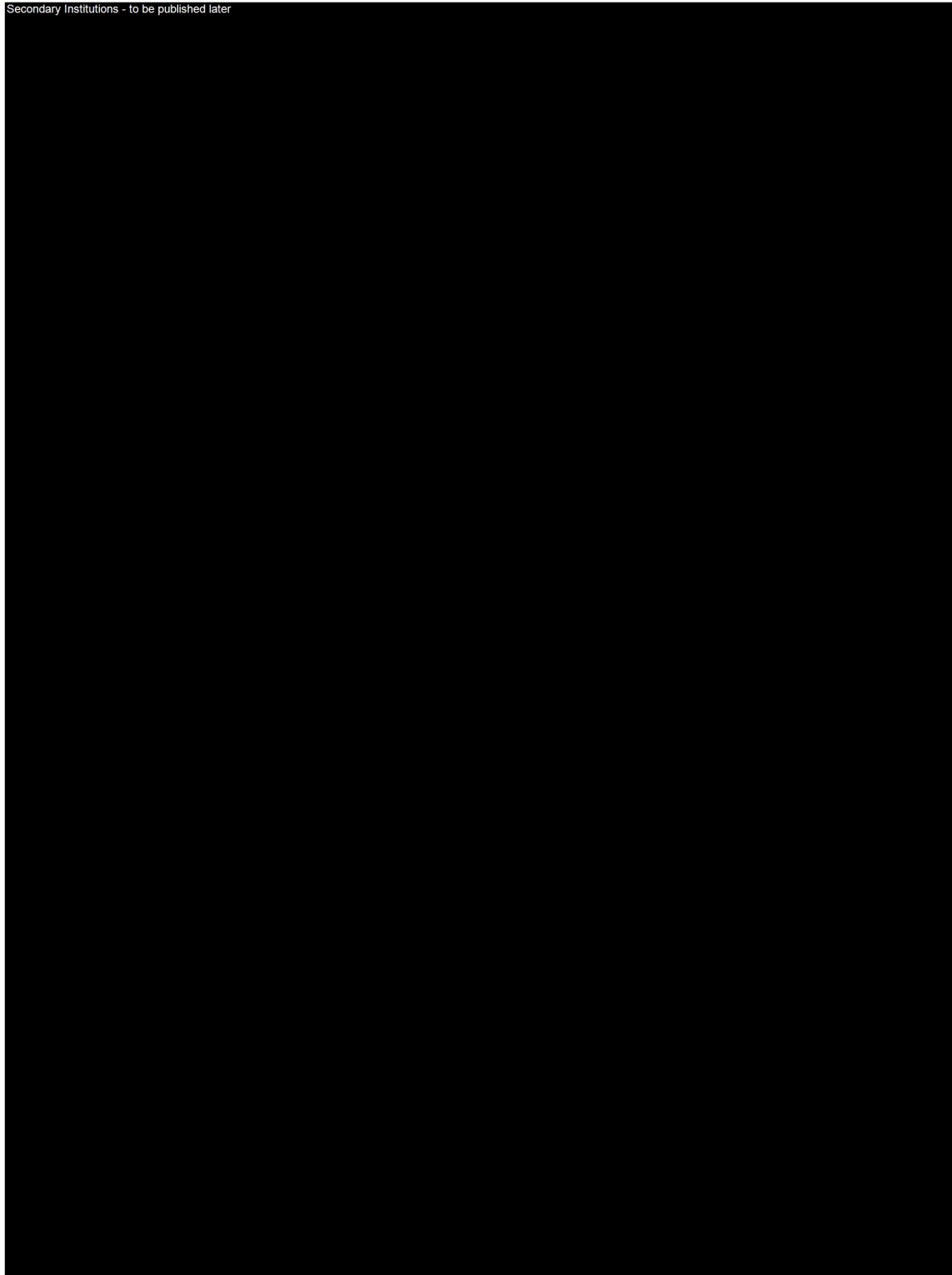
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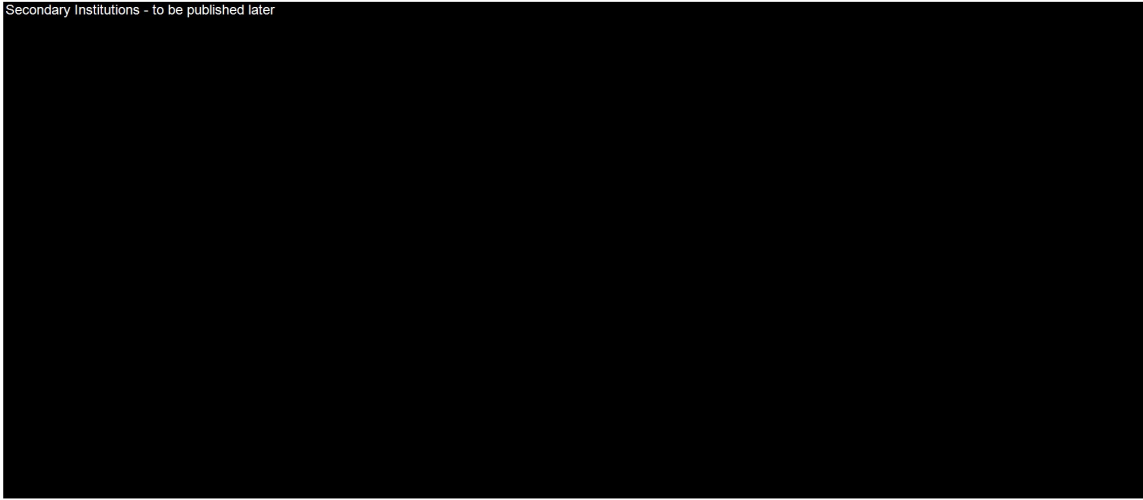
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### **Throughcare and aftercare**

153. I moved into a three bedroom house on [REDACTED] in Dundee, which was a brand new build and had flats attached to it. I was there with [REDACTED] who had been in Ann Street with me, and a girl called [REDACTED] who had been in another children's home in Dundee. We got money to buy our own bedroom furniture.
154. I was doing a Youth Training Scheme by this point, so I was working.
155. It was supposed to be a supported house, but it wasn't at all. The three children who were placed there were from different areas of Dundee. This caused rivalry between our friends who would come round, as we all had our friends around and partied a lot. We wrecked the place.
156. [REDACTED] asked to go back to Ann Street and he was allowed so he left and went back. I asked to go back but I wasn't allowed. You weren't allowed to go back and visit after you left, but I remember going back to me meet someone and standing at the front gate and making a point of smoking a cigarette at the gates, to make a point to the staff that they couldn't tell me what to do. I think I had burnt my bridges with them.
157. Me and [REDACTED] were still living in the house and she wasn't very nice. There would always be lots of boys round and lots of parties. I had also stopped going to work.



158. I was seeing a lot of my mum at that time, who had stopped drinking. I went to stay with her one weekend, and when I came back, the house was wrecked after parties.
159. Madge Orange and Mags McClain were my throughcare and aftercare workers. I turned up at their office and said that I couldn't live in that place with [REDACTED] anymore. I had only been there a few months by this point. I was told we were going to be getting evicted anyway, so we went back and I grabbed as much of my stuff as I could from the house and went to stay with my mum.
160. I had a new social worker by this point. I didn't see much of social work at that time so they didn't do anything to help, and I had no choice but to go back to my mum's.

#### **Life after being in care**

161. When I moved back in with my mum, she as drinking again and physically abusive. My brother was also living there and also drinking, and was abusive to me and my mum. It was a horrible place to be.
162. I got a job through Youth Training Scheme in a clothes shop in Perth. I had a really nice boss, and she would see me going into work with scratches and bite marks on me, which my mum gave me when she was drunk and aggressive. My boss would try to encourage me to do something about it, but I didn't. I just stopped going into work and left my mum's.
163. My mum died when I was seventeen years old, and I remember seeing my social worker at the funeral. I remember wondering what she was doing there.
164. I was homeless for about a year. I stayed in different bed and breakfasts and on friend's couches. I remember I had a money book to pay for my stays in bed and breakfasts, but I don't know how I got that. Maybe it was just from signing on.

165. I had had three abortions and then had a baby. My life changed when I had my son, [REDACTED] when I was nineteen years old. I married [REDACTED] dad, who was nice and I got support from his family. It didn't last between us because we were so young.

166. I went back to college and I had friends and a life. I was back in touch with some of my aunties. I did communications and numeracy at college to get enough points to then go on and do an NC in Social Care. I worked as a care assistant with the council, then got a job with 'Who Cares? Scotland', where I worked for ten years.

167. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
[REDACTED]

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169. [REDACTED] and I got married in 2004. Things changed after I met him. We have two kids, a boy who is fifteen years old now and a girl who is nearly nine.

170. I did my HNC in social care and worked in residential care. I then went on to do my masters in Advance Residential Child Care. I now work as a [REDACTED] [REDACTED], which means I support and empower families to come together to make their own plans, instead of having social work do it for them. It includes involving the wider extended family, instead of just concentrating on the parents.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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173. The only time I ever recall speaking to the police was when I told my mum about the babysitter when I was young. I don't know what happened with that. I have never reported anything to the police as an adult.

### **Impact**

174. I never had a childhood. I can't remember a time that I wasn't sexually active. I always felt guilty and ashamed about all the sexual activity that happened to me as a child, because some of it I enjoyed, because there was no other love. It wasn't until I saw my social work files as an adult in 2004, and saw a picture of myself as a child in care that I realised how young I was. I was only seven or eight years old in the picture. I was just a little girl and it wasn't my fault.

175. When I had my first son at nineteen years old, I remember being scared to even change his nappy because I had always thought that kids who were abused went on to abuse. I would never have hurt my son but that was in my head. I was very over protective with him when he was growing up. I am a very different mum to my younger two and am a bit more normal with them. I wanted to have a daughter so I could give her the nurture and love that I should have had as a child.

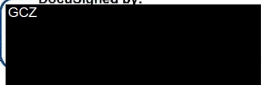
176. When I worked in residential care, my own experiences as a child made me good at my job because I can empathise with people. Sometimes, however, I do feel that I have had social work involvement in my life, in some form, for the whole of my life.
177. I have struggled with authority figures at work and felt inferior, although I come across as confident. I know now that I am clever and I am strong, but I didn't know that when I was growing up. I still think I turned out ok, and I try to look at things positively. I have a good job and a lovely family and my experiences made me who I am. It took a long time, but I like myself now after not liking myself for a long time.
178. I struggled with relationships and trusting people. I would jump from relationship to relationship when I was younger, and had a pattern of ending relationships to protect myself. This changed when I met my husband, [REDACTED]. I knew I loved him but I couldn't marry him. I was able to address some of those issues when I went to counselling. I wasn't able to agree to marry my husband until after I had gone to counselling.
179. I took six months off work when I had my counselling because I was struggling with depression during that time.
180. Up until I was about forty years old, I used to have a lot of bad dreams and flashbacks. There would be things that reminded me about the bad things that happened to me as a child. It doesn't happen as much now but it still sometimes happen and I will have bad dreams and see the dark corridors in the home.
181. Still, today, if I am sitting in a room full of people and they talk about their childhood, I can't do that because I feel shame. I find it difficult being a part of that conversation. I can't and won't talk about my childhood and that is something that will always be with me.

## **Records**

182. I contacted Perth and Kinross Council to see my records. I was given a support worker by the council, called Julie Baker, to take me through my records. They could only find my social work files. There was no residential files from the homes.
183. Julie Baker had to contact my brother to ask him for permission to see the social work files, because they were about us both. He was in prison by this time and refused to give permission for me to read them, which meant I could only see certain things and redacted versions of the records.
184. I found out a lot I didn't know from my social work files. I found out that my mum had gone to hospital to have an abortion when she was pregnant with me, but then didn't go through with it. I saw a picture of myself as a child in the files, when I was seven or eight years old, and I realised how young I was when I was in care.
185. I remember reading my records and they said that I was wetting myself. It made me think that the staff must have known something was going on. As someone who works with children in care, I would be able to tell reading those records that something was going on.
186. Julie arranged for me to speak to somebody high up in Perth and Kinross Council. I think the man was called Don Gilrouth who I spoke with. I also spent some time talking to a woman called Joyce in the council. They agreed to pay for my counselling because I had been paying for it myself up until then.
187. The council arranged for Jessie Young, who was my social worker when I was a child, to come and speak with me. I asked her why she didn't know from the signs of me bed wetting and needing to pee all the time, that something was wrong with me. Jessie said that she wasn't my social worker at that time, and I had a male social worker, but I only ever remember her being my social worker. I can't remember a man.

**Other information**

- 188. I think the most important thing for kids in care is having nurture and love. When children do disclose abuse, they need to be believed.
  
- 189. The hardest part for me was leaving care, and having no support as soon as I turned sixteen. I know from my own work in the care system that this has not changed for the better. Kids just get left and forgotten by the system when they turn sixteen, and they are still kids at that age.
  
- 190. Kids in the care system will want to go off when they are sixteen and do their own thing, but there should be some provision for them to come back and seek help when they are ready. Otherwise, they just end up back with their families in often abusive situations. It shouldn't be ok for them to live with their families at home after they are sixteen, when it wasn't considered ok to live there before they were sixteen.
  
- 191. 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..... 14 June 2021 .....