

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GKX

Support person present: No

1. My name is GKX. My date of birth is 1985. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Bellshill and brought up in Coatbridge. My mum and dad are and . I was the youngest of five children. was the oldest then there was , and . My dad was a painter and often worked away from home. My mum worked as a carer but was home a lot to look after us. I know my mum and dad did their best for us but it was hard for them.
3. I went to St Monica's primary school and then St Columba's high school. Before I started at school my aunt taught me counting and reading so when I was at school I was ahead of a lot of the other children. Unfortunately by the time I got to secondary school I had fallen in with a bad crowd and they were a bad influence. By then I felt that I was different to everyone else and I always seemed to be fighting and getting into trouble. I think I just wanted to prove myself and be part of a group. Nowadays I believe I would have been diagnosed with ADHD or autism.
4. In my first year at high school I started 'dogging' school, shoplifting and generally just committing crime. I was running about with older guys and often stayed out late, sometimes overnight, either in their houses or just sitting drinking and smoking hash in closes. The social work department became involved with me because of my

behaviour. My mum told them she couldn't cope because of me and I think she wanted to put me in care. My social worker was Elspeth Jenkins and she was with me most of my childhood.

5. I got expelled from school in my second year and no other school would take me. It had been arranged that I would get picked up in a taxi and taken to day schools and community centres but I never lasted for more than a week because of my behaviour. I got kicked out. My mum was trying to arrange a school for me. She did her best for me but I was out of control.
6. When I was thirteen my dad must have had enough of me because he drove me to Coatbridge social work and dumped me there. I don't think they knew what to do with me. I sat about there all day until they found a bed for me. I would have been thirteen, maybe fourteen. I didn't go to a children's panel before I went there.

### **Cecil Street children's home, Bellshill**

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### **Springboig St John's, Shettleston**

12. St John's had one main building and lots of extensions built onto it. I was in a unit called St Mungo's which had about fourteen bedrooms upstairs. Along the corridor from them were the showers and toilets. Downstairs were its own kitchen, lounge, pool room, the office and a toilet. It was a big old house and there was a school joined on to it. It was an extension and separate from the main building and there were other units called Columbus, Ogilvie and St Francis. Opposite St Mungo's another unit was built called St Joes and it contained six flats for older boys about seventeen and eighteen who were getting ready to leave. There was also a day unit

where boys just came in during the day for the school. The school was another extension of the main building.

13. St John's was for boys only. When I first arrived there were about 20 boys in St Mungo's then that dropped to about 14 when they changed the layout to make another unit. The age range was from 13 up to 17. All the other units held roughly the same number of boys. I would guess that there were 60 to 70 boys who were at St John's as residents, but because of the day boys that would go up to about 120 through the day. Although I am saying there were about 70 residents there was a really big turnover of boys who came and went.
  
14. All of the staff were social workers. I don't remember the names of the staff that were good to me. I only remember the ones that were bad to me and some of them I only know their first names. Bill Fitzgerald was in overall charge of the residents and the day pupils. <sup>HKU</sup> [redacted] was <sup>SNR</sup> [redacted]. Other staff were <sup>HKS</sup> [redacted] <sup>HKS</sup> [redacted], <sup>HKV</sup> [redacted], <sup>HKP</sup> [redacted], <sup>HKR</sup> [redacted], <sup>HKB</sup> [redacted] and <sup>HMT</sup> [redacted]. Bridie did the cleaning in St Mungo's. Other female members of staff were Frances and Joanne.
  
15. I had my own room. It had a bed, cupboard and my own television. I rarely watched the television in my room because there was one in the TV room

### **Routine at St John's**

#### *First day*

16. It was a Saturday when I arrived at St John's. Almost all the boys were home for weekend leave so there were only a few in my unit. I met some of the members of staff but I can't remember who it was. In the first few days some of the boys said that I talked posh because I came from Lanarkshire. They were from places like Maryhill and other rough areas. When they got to know me and saw that I carried a knife they didn't want to know me.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

17. Whoever the duty member of staff was woke me about 7am then I would go for a shower. I would get dressed and go down for breakfast then go to school either at 9am or 9:30am. At night we had to be in our beds by 10:30pm and everyone's television had to be off by midnight. The nightshift had started their shift and they let us out onto the landing about 11pm for our last smoke of the day.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

18. There was a woman who came in and did breakfast. This was usually wee boxes of cereal and a couple of bits of toast. There was an urn for tea or coffee. HKQ was the cook that came in and did the other meals through the week. At the weekend the cooking was done in the main building. Usually the school classes would stop at 10:30am and we would go back for a breakfast roll. Lunch was about 12:30 then after school we would have dinner. The food was good and if you didn't like something you could leave it. There were no issues with food. Later on in the evening you could make yourself a bit of toast. Outwith the actual mealtimes there was nothing you could eat as all the food was locked away.

### *Washing/bathing*

19. Everyone showered in the morning when they got up. There wasn't a choice. The showers were not far from the bedrooms. They were individual bathrooms with a shower which could lock for privacy.

### *Clothing/uniform*

20. They didn't give me any clothes when I was there. We got a hundred pounds a year to buy our own clothes. Staff would take me to the shops with the money for me to buy clothes. I got most of my clothes by shoplifting. Most of the time when they were handing out the money to go shopping for clothes I wasn't there because I had run away.

### *Leisure time/ trips/holidays*

21. In the evening we either played pool or sometimes get taken to the pictures or ice skating. Each unit was given allowance money on a weekly basis. This was to take the boys to the pictures or ice skating or something like that. Sometimes we were taken to a fish farm on a Saturday. I enjoyed going there. If you went somewhere that was cheap, like the golf driving range, we might get two trips. We were allowed to smoke cigarettes in St John's.
22. Most of the time we would stay in our own unit but at times there were organised games of football against some of the other units or we would go swimming at the same time as the other units where we got to mix with the other boys. We didn't go on any outward bound courses or on any sort of holiday.

### *Schooling*

23. At school we would spend an hour doing gardening then an hour doing bricklaying or mechanics. There were classes teaching subjects like English, maths, computing and history and I think they were proper teachers that came in from outside. In a way it was quite a good school and I wish I had stuck in and at least learned a trade. The computer classes were popular because they had a game on the computer that was about selling drugs in London. Drugs had to be moved all around the country. The teacher in that class just talked about all the local gangsters that were in the newspapers that day and who we should be watching out for.

### *Healthcare*

24. I never saw a doctor at any time when I was at St John's. I wasn't assessed by anyone when I arrived or at any other time. I never saw a dentist either. There was a first aid box in the unit but I am not sure if there was anything in it.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

25. Nothing was done to celebrate your birthday. There were no birthday cards or presents. I might have been given money but I am not sure. I would normally be home for Christmas, but one year I was waiting for a secure placement so was locked up over Christmas. Nothing special was done on Christmas day. It was just like every other day.

### *Visitors*

26. My mum visited me at St John's. There were a couple of days in the week when she came. She brought me sweets and cigarettes. We sat in the living-room or the recreation room within St Mungo's. We were given privacy to chat on our own.
27. Elspeth, my social worker, came in to see me sometimes, maybe once every three months. I got the impression she just thought I was a bad apple. She wasn't there to see me, she came because every three months she had to do a report on me for the children's panel. That's all she came for. She spoke to me in one of four interview rooms in the main building.

### *Weekend leave/Review of care / detention*

28. For the first few months I was at St John's I would get weekend leave and if I was offered it I always took it. I didn't always spend all weekend at my mum's. I would go home then straight away go out and muck about with my pals. Sometimes I never saw my mum all weekend. I had a children's panel every three months. At some point they put me on a secure residential order because I was constantly running away. I was on this order for nine months then it was removed. When I was on this order I didn't get any weekend leave.

### *Discipline*

29. The discipline in St John's definitely wasn't normal. Their answer to everything was violence. They didn't punish children by removing privileges like your cigarettes or allowing you to leave the grounds. Violence was the only way they knew how to deal with anything.

### *Running away*

30. One of my best pals was in another unit and I always ran away with him. They tried to keep us apart so we couldn't arrange to run away but we did regularly. I was sometimes on the run for a couple of weeks at a time. I was running away because the staff in there were out of control. I didn't like what was going on. Any time I could escape I did and I stayed away as long as I could. I felt that I was safer being on the street than I was in St John's. I felt I was in danger and it was human instinct to run away from it.
31. When I ran away my dad would either drive me back or my mum would get me a taxi. If the police caught me they took me to the police station then an emergency social worker would come and pick me up and take me back to St John's. Sometimes I would be in police cell for up to ten hours waiting for the emergency social worker to get there.

### **Abuse at St John's**

HKQ

32. HKQ was the cook and prepared all the food within St Mungo's. He had red hair and had the nickname 'Ginger'. He was about 35 and was ruthless. He battered us for nothing. Sometimes if you happened to ask for more food he would be annoyed and batter you. At 10:30 we would get a break at school and we would go for a sausage on a roll or an egg on a roll. If you were last there would be hardly



anything left. One time I went to the kitchen and I was standing outside the door and I asked him if I could have a fried egg. Without any warning he punched me and I fell to the ground. He then started kicking and punching me to the body and face. <sup>HKQ</sup>

<sup>HKQ</sup> beat me three times when I was at St John's. Some of the beatings I got from him were some of the worst I have ever had in my life.

33. There was one time <sup>HKQ</sup> punched <sup>HKQ</sup> once to the face and knocked him out. <sup>HKQ</sup> was about the same age as me, fifteen, and was a wee skinny guy. <sup>HKQ</sup> was laid out unconscious on the floor. There was a female member of staff there who saw this and she was obviously shocked at what he did. <sup>HKQ</sup> would do this sort of thing in front of all the staff but no one did anything to stop him.

34. <sup>HKQ</sup>, being the cook, had the keys to the store cupboard in the kitchen. He often took out boxes of chocolates and crisps. Sometimes he would let us in and allow us to help ourselves but at other times he gave us nothing. Sometimes he would give sweets to particular boys but then not give them to others. In front of other staff he would give one boy five bars of chocolate then he would call another boy a 'prick' and tell him he wasn't getting anything. He had full control of the sweets.

<sup>HKP</sup>

35. <sup>HKP</sup> was about 45 and lived in the housing scheme <sup>HKP</sup>. He hit me a few times. One time I was trying to get out of the unit to run away and he ended up sitting on me when I was on the ground. He was a big fat guy and I couldn't move. He started slapping me about the face with his open hand. He wasn't hitting me hard but I was really frustrated because I couldn't move. I was getting really worked up.

36. Another time a boy in the unit, <sup>HKP</sup> who was from Fife was talking back to <sup>HKP</sup> and it got quite heated between them. It ended up that <sup>HKP</sup> said we would see how hard <sup>HKP</sup> was in due course. Sometime later <sup>HKP</sup> told us to get in the minibus as we were going down to the chip shop. I was in the

minibus with [REDACTED] and <sup>HKP</sup>[REDACTED] was driving. We stopped outside some houses and he sounded his horn. About ten guys came running out of the house and surrounded the minibus. They were shouting to [REDACTED] to get out the minibus. They were trying the door handles but they were all locked. They were all about twenty. It was frightening.

<sup>HKR</sup>[REDACTED]

37. A member of staff called <sup>HKR</sup>[REDACTED] hit me a few times. Normally he was quite a calm, passive guy but he was intimidating because of his size. He was a massive guy and did martial arts. One time I refused to go into class and he grabbed me from behind and put his arm round my neck and put me in a hold and choked me. I passed out and when I came round I was back in the unit. It was about a hundred yards away so he must have carried me all the way back to the unit. That is how big and strong he was. I think he got a bit of a fright when he knocked me out. He wasn't usually like this and he must have lost control. He never said anything to me after I came round. I saw him hitting some other boys at times but he was nowhere near as violent. I think he had a lot more control.

<sup>HMT</sup>[REDACTED]

38. <sup>HMT</sup>[REDACTED] was about forty and only worked part-time but he was a beast. One time at new year everyone else was on home leave for the weekend. I would have been fourteen. I was waiting for a bed in the secure unit to stop me from running away so there was only me and <sup>HMT</sup>[REDACTED] in St Mungo's. When we were in the living-room he started struggling with me and we ended up on the ground. He started pulling my trousers down from the back. He was dry humping me and I could feel he had an erection through his clothing on the back of my legs. I was wriggling and trying to get away from him so he didn't manage to get my trousers right down. I hate to think what would have happened if he had. This lasted for probably a couple of hours then a member of staff called <sup>HKV</sup>[REDACTED] came in.

39. <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] dragged him off me then took me up to my room. I was telling him that <sup>HMT</sup> [REDACTED] was trying to shag me. He believed me I think but nothing was ever done because they are all friends. Nothing ever happened again with <sup>HMT</sup> [REDACTED]. I didn't see much of him in the unit.

<sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED]

40. <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] was about 45. He was around 6ft, skinny and was a golfer. He was always talking about it and swinging his arms like he was practising his golf swing. <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] broke my nose. Myself and [REDACTED], who was from Govan, were in the minibus. I would have been fifteen by this time. I was sitting in the front seat right beside <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] who was driving. [REDACTED] was beside me at the window side. There weren't any other boys on the bus. We were supposed to be going to the driving range but instead <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] drove us to his wife's house which was about an hour away. When we got there <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] pointed out his wife and I sniggered to [REDACTED]. He obviously thought I was laughing at her. When I did that <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] sped up the minibus then braked suddenly and forced his elbow back into my face. He did this a few times each time braking suddenly and elbowing me in the face.

41. After that first time I knew what he was doing so I was ready and had my hands up but he still managed to get his elbow through. My nose was burst and bleeding. I used to do boxing from the age of nine up to twelve so I was quite used to get my nose hit but this was something else. It was brutal. Eventually he drove back to his wife's then eventually went back to St John's. Almost as soon as we got back I ran away.

42. <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] was very moody. Depending on how he was you had to be careful with him. <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] probably hit me about four or five times when I was at St John's. Sometimes it was a slap to the back of the head and other times he would punch or kick me. He hit me when I refused to go into the school class or when I was cheeky to him.

HKS

43. HKS was about 36, 6ft 4 and was an ex-soldier. Only a few days after HKV burst my nose in the minibus HKS battered me. He saw me outside the building when I was running away. He was an ex-soldier and he was really fast and he chased after me. By the time he caught me I was away from St John's and was in Springboig. He grabbed me and started punching me and I fell to the ground. My hands were up at my face to protect it but he was kneeling on me punching me to the side of my face and body. I was lapsing in and out of consciousness. A woman came out of her house and shouted at him to stop hitting me. HKS shouted back to her that if she wanted to complain then she should contact the school. He then started hitting me again.

44. A guy appeared who was delivering catalogue stuff. He ran over shouting at HKS and they started fighting. I now wish I had stayed and helped the guy but I just got up and ran away. I ran to Shettleston train station and got the train to Coatbridge. I jumped about with my pals for a while smoking hash. Later the police caught me and took me to Coatbridge police station. When I was at the police station they came and spoke to me and told me they wanted to interview me about the assault on me by HKS. I was injured but I told them I hadn't been assaulted. It had been drilled into me from an early age that nobody wants to be grass. I eventually agreed that I would give them a statement if they gave me a lift back to St John's rather than me sitting in a cell for hours waiting for the emergency social worker.

45. HKS had slapped me a few times at St John's before this incident. Mostly he just slapped me. One time he beat me up because I wouldn't go into a school class. He punched me a couple of times. I have seen him hitting other boys.

HKU

46. HKU was about fifty and was SNR and had the most fearsome reputation. Even the other members of staff were afraid of him. He was a fit strong

man and was always about during the day. I saw him on a couple of occasions punch a couple of boys for no apparent reason. He hated me because I was always running away. He grabbed me by the collar a couple of times but never really hit me. I later found out he owned a pub in [REDACTED] called [REDACTED]<sup>HKU</sup>. Everyone was petrified of him. He was ruthless too because people were sent to him if they wanted to complain about the staff. He knew what was going on but never did anything to change it or deal with the members of staff.

[REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> and [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup>

47. [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> was a bricklayer and taught us bricklaying in school. [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup> was the gardener. [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> was in his late 30's, [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup> was in his forties. They were always together. There was one time I was with a boy called [REDACTED] who was from Ayrshire and was in Columba unit. He said he knew how to steal the school tractor. I didn't believe him. He jumped on the tractor and started it. I jumped on the back and he drove off. [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> and [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup> must have seen us and jumped in a car. I jumped off the tractor and ran away. [REDACTED] jumped off it too. [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup> and [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> weren't interested in me because [REDACTED] had been driving it. They caught him and set about him.
48. I was never beaten by [REDACTED]<sup>HLJ</sup> or [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> but I know they threatened some of the other boys. [REDACTED]<sup>HLA</sup> used to give some of the boys hash. If boys didn't have any hash they would go to him and he would give them enough for a joint.

[REDACTED]<sup>HKW</sup>

49. [REDACTED]<sup>HKW</sup> was about fifty and was a physical education teacher in the school. He used to play [REDACTED] He was violent to me usually because I was quite cheeky to him. When I was cheeky he hit me. One time we were in the gym and I must have said something back to him. He put his open hand on my face and pushed me. I fell back over a bench. Other times he would grab me and throw me about. He never really punched me.

HKT

50. HKT was in his early fifties and took the computer class. He never hit me but I saw him hitting a couple of boys and throwing them about a bit. He dragged boys about the floor in the classroom giving them carpet burns. If boys were doing something that annoyed him he would throw things at you in the class. It might be a big metal pencil sharpener or a computer mouse. Sometimes it hit the boys or it bounced off the wall beside them. Most of the time he was a really nice guy but if he lost his temper you had to keep well out his way.

GGP

51. GGP was an art teacher. He knew that I would go shoplifting and he often asked me to get him certain things. His favourite was videos. One time I stole twenty videos for him and he bought them off me for £5 each. He especially liked Roy Chubby Brown videos. My brother who had been in St John's before me told me that he would buy stolen videos from me so that's how I knew he would.

*Abuse by staff in general*

52. There were three members of staff who often took us out in the minibus and they would say they were going to my scheme and they would wink at me. I knew this meant that I was to score some hash for them. They dropped me off then when I got back in the minibus I would share it out with the staff and the other boys. There were three members of staff who did this who I would rather not name.
53. Almost all the staff used to threaten us when we went to the swimming pool in the evening. They said that they would drown us if we misbehaved. They said they had drowned boys in the pool before and covered it up as an accident. A lot of the boys believed them and were frightened.

54. The staff used to talk between themselves bragging about all the other boys who had left St John's who they had beaten up. They were trying to impress the boys and frighten them. It worked with some of the boys.
55. Things belonging to members of staff quite often got stolen especially mobile phones. Staff would offer money, maybe £20 or a quarter of hash, for the return of the phone. Sometimes the staff would just give you hash if they had some. The staff also went on and on about how no one should ever grass anyone else. They also knowingly bought stolen gear from me. It was all so wrong. There is no wonder that I ended up in a life of crime.
56. All the staff regularly told me that nobody loved me or wanted me. They said that was why I was in care. I think this played about in my head psychologically and made me feel worthless. Violence by the staff was a daily occurrence at St John's.

#### **Reporting of abuse at St John's**

57. Bridie, the lady who did the cleaning, always tried to stop me from getting hurt. She told me not to answer the staff back. She obviously knew what they were like and saw what was going on. There was a girl who worked there called Joanne. She would have been about forty. A few weeks after she started at St John's she came into my room and started crying. She obviously wasn't liking what she was seeing. She spoke to my mum at some point and told my mum that she couldn't believe what went on at St John's. She had previously been at St Mary's secure unit.
58. When I ran away the police would always go to my mum's and search the house for me. Eventually they realised that my mum wouldn't hide me. Towards the end of my time there my mum started to believe me that I was being abused because I told her when I got home and I was covered in blood or had injuries. She sometimes phoned St John's but she was just told to take it up with the management. When she phoned the management she was told that I hadn't been touched and was making it all up.

59. When my nose was broken by <sup>HKV</sup> [REDACTED] in the minibus I ran away as soon as I got back. When I got to my mum's she saw the state I was in. My mum wanted my dad to go up to St John's and sort the staff out but my dad said that I must have deserved it. This is one of the reasons I hate him to this day. My mum sent me back to St John's in a taxi.
60. I gave a statement to the police after the time I ran away and <sup>HKS</sup> [REDACTED] chased me and beat me up. <sup>HKS</sup> [REDACTED] was suspended after that and I never saw him again at St John's. [REDACTED]
61. When I was at St John's I told Elspeth my social worker what was going on. She did reports on me each time before I went to a children's panel. It was brought up at some of the children's panels what I had told her. My mum brought it up as well and told the panel that I wasn't safe in there. They didn't listen.
62. Every six months or so there was a meeting at St John's. This was where they told families how their children were getting on at school and things like that. My mum came. She told the staff at the meeting about what I had told her about the beatings. I told them too. I just said it exactly as it had happened and told them about the violence. They turned round and said that it wasn't true. They made me look stupid but I know my mum believed me.
63. One time [REDACTED] parents came up to St John's. I was there when they were accusing <sup>HKP</sup> [REDACTED] of giving their son hash and for arranging boys to batter him. They were just told that if they wanted to make a complaint they should speak to the management. That night [REDACTED] got leathered by other boys in the unit because they considered [REDACTED] to be a grass.



64. When I ran away from St John's because I had been beaten up, the police usually took me back to the police station. Sometimes I had to wait for hours for the social workers to come and pick me up. The police would have seen my injuries but it was drilled into me, by all the staff, that it wasn't good to be a grass. I never said anything to the police and they never asked me how I got my injuries.
65. When I was sixteen I started going to a charity group called 'Includem'. I was allocated a worker there called Jackie Clinton. One time my mum was talking to her about me getting beat up by the staff at St John's. Jackie said that she knew that went on at St John's because she worked there for a while.

### **Leaving St John's**

66. I left St John's before I would have been moved to St Joes' unit. This was the unit where the older boys lived to get used to life after care. After <sup>HKS</sup> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I think they wanted me out of St John's and wanted to bring <sup>HKS</sup> [REDACTED] back. I went to a panel before I left and at this panel they decided that I could leave. I think this was an emergency panel that I didn't actually go to. I was just about to turn sixteen when I left. I can't remember who or how I was told that I was leaving. I didn't say goodbye to any of the other boys and the staff didn't come and wish me well when I left.

### **Cecil Street children's home – second visit.**

67. When I was sixteen and back at home with my mum and dad one day I went mental in the house. I ended up at Coatbridge social work office. They found a bed for me at a foster house in Motherwell. I don't remember much about the couple at this house but I stole money from their house. The next day I was taken back to Cecil Street children's home. I was only in there for two nights and went back home again after. Nothing happened out of the ordinary at Cecil Street.

## **Life back at home**

68. When I was back home I didn't go back to school and the social work department continued to be involved with me. Usually a social worker called Brian came on a Friday afternoon and took me for a McDonald's carry out. We had a chat then he dropped me off. I was never given any advice on how to find a job or how to manage money and bills. There was nothing like that. I was just left on my own.
69. The social workers got support for me from a group called 'Includem' which was a youth support charity. I worked with a woman called Jackie Clinton. I only stayed with this group for a couple of months. I am not quite sure what they did for me.
70. When I was sixteen I got a girlfriend and with her we had a child. I knew how to steal cars and a whole lot of other stuff so my life just continued with my mates committing crime and taking drugs. I was nearly seventeen, when I was taken to Airdrie sheriff court for serious assaults that happened when I was about fourteen and I had been on bail since then. They had just caught up with me. My mum and my brothers were in court with me. I am not sure if there were social workers in court but if they were it was just to do background reports on me. I got sentenced to 26 months at Polmont prison. After that my contact with the social workers stopped.

## **HMP Barlinnie**

71. I was taken direct from Airdrie sheriff court to HMP Barlinnie. I had been told I was going to be there for four days. Prisoners were generally taken from the court and processed there before they are taken on to Polmont. When I arrived I was straight away put into one of the holding cells. They are right at the reception. We called them dog boxes because they weren't much bigger than that. I couldn't stand up in it and I could touch the opposite walls at the same time. There must have been about 150 dog boxes. I was left in there for a couple of hours then I was taken out and examined by the nurse. I was put back in the dog box for about an hour and a half then I was strip searched and given an orange jumpsuit to put on. Every prisoner

who goes into Barlinnie gets put into these dog boxes until they are processed. This happened to me at other times too after I was sentenced on other occasions.

72. Because I was only sixteen and under a supervision order I was put into the health centre within the prison. They were initially going to put me in the suicide cell but I told them I had no intention of harming myself and the prison officer must have felt sorry for me and put me in the health centre. There were around ten other older guys in the health centre who were hard core criminals but were in there for some sort of medical attention. Prison officers sat in a wee room and could see us through the window. They didn't bother us other than to bring us food. I never saw any social workers when I was at Barlinnie.

### **Routine**

73. The prison officers came in about 7am to wake us up. There was a basin where you could wash and if you wanted a shower you had to ask. They would unlock the shower room and let you in. Breakfast was brought to us. We then just sat about all day in the ward and the older inmates told stories and we had a laugh. We smoked and watched the television and played cards too. It was fine when I was in there.

### **Leaving Barlinnie**

74. On the fourth day I was told in the morning that I would be going to Polmont in the afternoon on the bus. There were two other prisoners on the bus with me to Polmont.

### **Polmont young offenders institution, Falkirk**

75. Polmont, just like all the other jails I have been in, was notorious for its violence by the prison officers. There was a lot of violence between the inmates too. The

violence in Polmont was at a higher level than I had ever experienced. It was the same cycle as in St John's with bullying, violence and intimidation.

76. I was sentenced to 26 months and I appealed against my conviction. I got out after serving about nine months. I was out for two months then I got sentenced to another three years. I was still seventeen when I started this second sentence back in Polmont.
77. I was in Lomond Hall which was for the under 18s. The boys in there were aged between 16 and 18. Where I was had 3 levels, A, B and C. Each level had 15 boys. Above that was C, D and E which had 15 boys on each level too. This meant there were 45 boys in my section but 90 overall in that unit. There were some older guys in there who had been put in there for their own safety.
78. All the cells were single cells. All that was in the cells was a bed, a small worktop and a television and a kettle. The cell was warm enough and the bedding was kept clean. My only issue was how many other people had slept on the mattress. It could have been twenty years old but it could also only have been two months old. There was also a sink but the taps didn't work. On our corridor was a washroom which was L shaped and there were twelve sinks in there. There were two toilet cubicles and a bit where you could slop out the pot from your cell if you had used it.

### **Routine at Polmont**

#### *First day*

79. Arriving at Polmont was just like every other prison. I was strip searched when I got there then I was taken to the under eighteen hall. I was put in a cell on my own.

### *Daily routine*

80. In the morning the prison officers would open up the door so I could go to the washroom, get washed and then I was marched down for breakfast. After breakfast I went back to my cell and sat there almost all day. There were a few books I could have got from the library but there were only about ten books which were rubbish. You could also ask for paper to write letters home.
81. Apart from mealtimes the only other time the cell door was unlocked was at recreation time. When I wasn't on a work party I got out for recreation, which we called 'rec', twice every day. My whole section was out at the same time meaning there could be 45 boys out their cells. Rec time was at 2pm for an hour. We could play pool or just sit about and chat. There was a pool table at the end of each section on a landing. After rec we went back to our cells until tea time. After tea we returned to our cells and then got a second period of rec at 7pm for an hour and a half and we just did the same thing as earlier. After rec we went back to our cells and that was us for the night. At no point did we get out for fresh air in any sort of exercise yard. It was 2007 before exercise was introduced at Polmont.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

82. At meal times all ninety boys ate at the same time in the dining hall. There were rows and rows of tables for four people with plastic seats. Breakfast was cereal and milk. It was collected then taken to the table. The prison officers told us where to sit because we had to fill the tables up in order. Lunch was at 11:30 to 12 then the evening meal was 4:30 to 5pm. Prisoners who weren't on work parties got fed at 4:30. Work party prisoners got fed at 5pm. There was nothing else to eat after that.
83. The food was disgusting. There was no choice. After being there for three months there was a menu we could choose from. You were then given the same food every day for the next four weeks. Sometimes there was cake and custard and that was alright. If you were still hungry you could buy noodles from the canteen. You had to cook them in the kettle in your cell but that meant you couldn't use the kettle for tea

or coffee after that. I felt there was never enough food and I was always starving. We got fruit every day. The choice was usually either a treat like trifle or a bit fruit.

#### *Toilet routine*

84. If you needed the toilet you could release your cell door by pressing a button inside the cell. You could then go to the toilet along the corridor then return to your cell. This was called 'night sanitation' which was shortened to 'night san'. When you got back in your cell you closed and locked the cell door then put in a code onto a keypad. You had to do this within ten minutes of opening the cell door otherwise this privilege was withdrawn. You then had to use the pot that was in the cell.

#### *Washing/bathing*

85. Before we went down for breakfast we went to the bathrooms where we could wash and shave in the sinks. We were supervised in there by prison officers. We were given razors to shave and they were supposed to be counted back in, but it was easy to steal a handful of them, which some boys did.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

86. After I had been in Polmont for a week the prison social worker came and told me that the social workers outside the prison had withdrawn my supervision order. This didn't really make any difference to me apart from I wasn't allowed to wear my own clothes. They gave me prison uniform to wear. I was provided with two pairs of jeans, two T-shirts and two towels. We weren't given any pyjamas or underwear. I had to get visitors to bring me underwear.

#### *Healthcare*

87. There were nurses at Polmont. There was a lot who came and went. I don't think they could handle the level of abuse that they saw. All the prison officers stuck together and the nurses would be too frightened to speak out to anyone about what

they had to deal with. I never had to go to the hospital with any injuries. My mental health was bad when I was in there but I was never offered any sort of help, support or counselling.

#### *Chores*

88. There was a rota of when inmates worked. They were called 'pass men'. Work might be doing things like dishing up food, mopping the floor, tidying up after meals, doing laundry, working in reception or things like that. They would do it for six days in a row then get a day off. This was a privilege and you had to be backed by someone to be chosen to go on this rota.

#### *Work Parties*

89. There were work parties to go on if you wanted. There was engineering, joinery, VT hairdressing and VT painters and things like that. VT stood for vocational training or something like that. I applied and I was on the waiting list but I was never chosen when I was in the under eighteen wing

#### *Visitors*

90. My mum came to visit me. She was allowed to come twice a month. Even when I was in segregation I was allowed two visits a month.

#### *Discipline*

91. If you weren't back in your cell within ten minutes when you let yourself out to go to the toilet they removed that privilege. You had to use the pot in the cell. If you did something more serious they would put you on report in front of the governor. Depending on what you had done you might get put in the 'digger' which was segregation cells. You were given a radio in the cell but there was no television and you would lose out on your wages for fourteen days. They sometimes would give you a newspaper but they would give you it just before midnight just so they could

say they gave you a newspaper on the day the paper was printed. You never got to see anybody and they brought your food to you. Some of the cells had a toilet and a sink but in some there was only a pot to use for the toilet. You didn't get out at any time apart from to wash and empty your pot or when you got visitors.

92. There was a local rule that they could put you in segregation for up to three days. Often they told me there was intelligence that I was going to do something like get a prison officer slashed and I was being held until they investigated it. Most often they would say that I was involved in subversive activities. If they wanted to keep you in there longer than three days they had to apply to the Scottish Government headquarters for a Rule 80 to get this extended to a month. The longest I was in there was for three months. That was when I was in the over eighteens wing. I know of prisoners who have been in segregation for five years.

#### **Transfer to over eighteen wing, Polmont**

93. After about four months I was transferred to the over eighteen wing because I had been fighting with someone. I went to Argyll hall in the North wing. My brother [REDACTED] was already there. I was still only seventeen. This wing was absolutely nuts and from the moment I walked in it felt like a zoo. The other prisoners in there were between 18 and 21.
94. I shared a cell in the over eighteen wing. There was no electricity in the cells on three of the floors. There was electricity in the enhanced section and you only got put in there if you kept out the prison officers way, were not on reports for three months and were of good behaviour.
95. The routine was much the same in this wing but you only got recreation every second day. We got out to get washed in the morning. In the washroom there were ten sinks down one wall and ten sinks down another. There was a shower room downstairs which was a row of about ten showers. We were able to shower during



our rec time but because we only got rec every second day you could only shower every two days. You were never made to shower.

96. In each cell was, what was called a 'porta potty', which was basically a chemical toilet which we had to use in the cell. You didn't get 'night san' in this wing where you got out the cell for ten minutes to go to the toilet. The toilets were emptied every Friday and by then they were stinking. Sometimes they leaked onto the cell floor.
97. Being in the over eighteen wing was actually better than being in the under eighteen wing. In the under eighteen cells there were televisions so some guys sat up all night watching the TV, listening to music or stood at their windows talking to the guys in the other cells and having a laugh. It was very antisocial. They would then stay in their beds nearly all the time during the day. In the over eighteen hall you were up early and there was much more of a routine and a structure. It was also better in this wing because the other inmates were better and you got the chance to use a mobile phone. I managed to get into a work party when I was in the over eighteen's and worked in joinery. This meant I had a reason to get up in the morning and get out my cell.

### **Abuse at Polmont**

98. At Polmont if I did something like swore at a prison officer then I wouldn't be allowed any visits. This meant my kids were getting punished for something I did and they didn't get to see me. I don't see that this is fair.
99. Some of the prison officers had real favourites too. What sometimes happened was that parcels would get thrown over the wall. If there were prisoners who were pass-men the prison officer <sup>HJU</sup> would let them out to get the rubbish bins and basically let them steal the parcel knowing that it was for someone else.
100. The prison officers manipulated everything to suit them. They did it through bullying and intimidation. It was worse in the under eighteen hall. They stirred things up and

encouraged bad feeling and fighting. They would tell me in my ear that I shouldn't let someone from Edinburgh or wherever talk to me like that. They would let people fight and just sit and watch us fighting. Sometimes they would watch it for a while then break it up.

101. Often I saw the prison officers open someone's cell door and let inmates in purely for the purpose of battering whoever was in that cell. This included the prison officer HJU. I would never grass for the screws or batter anyone for them. All the other prisoners knew that about me. The prison officers hated me.
102. HJV was a prison officer and he was violent. One time he came in my cell and he pulled a lock-knife from his shirt pocket. He implied that he could say that he found it in my trainers and I would have to serve another year of my sentence. He then put it back and said he might do it the next time. He was just playing mind games.
103. Boys were encouraged to fight each other and as long as it happened in the toilet area that was fine. The prison officers would just watch from their office. Before you started fighting you would just go in and tell them that you were going to have a fight in a few minutes then that was allowed. The prison officers I remember were HJW, IVH, HJU, HJV and another guy with the nickname HJX. It was all sanctioned by the management and I am saying that because they did it too. They encouraged the others to do it.
104. There was a big divide between the east and the west coast prisoners. The prison officers really stirred this hatred up. They would incite us to react to things that had been said or things that had happened, and make out that you were weak if you didn't. Sometimes they stirred it up too much and there was a riot. The prison officers were ready for it and reacted. They would be in there hitting everyone with their wooden batons. One time the prison officers really battered the ring leaders and had one or two pinned to the ground. They then asked everyone there if they were the top men. It was all a big show of bravado. There were broken jaws and broken arms. It was brutal.

105. They didn't like us fighting in the cells. It had to be where they could see you. If you were fighting in a cell they would burst in really heavily, restrain you then throw you in the 'digger, which was the segregation block. Any time they restrained me the force was excessive. They bent my wrists right back and there was no need for it. When they put you in the digger they stripped you naked and left you there to humiliate you. The first time I went in there I was beaten by the prison officers. I was punched and kicked to the face and body. I regularly had black eyes and bruises all over my body.
106. I was put in the digger the first time for three days because I was fighting. When I was put in there for those three days I was beaten by the prison officers. They punched and kicked me to the head and body. They tried to snap my wrists too by bending them back too far. They were kneeling on me and I couldn't breathe. I thought I was going to die. That time it was <sup>HJW</sup> [REDACTED] and another prison officer whose nickname was <sup>HJX</sup> [REDACTED]. <sup>HJW</sup> [REDACTED] was the main man for giving beatings and he was brutal. <sup>HJX</sup> [REDACTED] died [REDACTED] when I was at Polmont.
107. There was another senior prison officer, <sup>HJY</sup> [REDACTED] and he too was always willing to beat the prisoners up. I have heard that he was transferred from loads of prisons following complaints about his violence. He used to be a boxer and he used to go on about the number of fights he had won. Personally I think he was punch-drunk. He was about fifty.
108. One time he was searching me when I was in segregation. A few prison officers would come in to search us before we were allowed out for exercise. The prison officers regularly did this and they were supposed to just pat you down. It would always be him that did the actual searching. He wasn't just patting me down, he was heavily touching me up in my private area over my clothes. This happened to me and a few other prisoners. We complained and I told a female governor what he did. He ended up getting suspended but as far as I am aware nothing ever happened about it.

109. In the over eighteen wing the prison officers had the same mentality. They were just as abusive. A lot of them worked in both the under eighteen and over eighteen wings. When they were restraining you they were pretending they were using proper restraint and control techniques but they were going right over the top and breaking guys wrists. I saw the prison officers doing this.
110. When they were taking you to segregation there would be one prison officer holding your head down in front of you. There would be one on each arm and one behind pushing you. There would be another one barking orders to them. They would then pin you down and undress you until you were naked and I think they did this just to degrade you.

### **Reporting of abuse at Polmont**

111. The only person I ever told about what was going on in Polmont was my mum.

### **Leaving Polmont**

112. Leading up to me leaving Polmont, I was never given any careers advice. I was still seventeen when I got out but it wasn't long before I got another sentence. Crime was all that I knew so two months later I got another three year sentence when I was almost eighteen. I went back into the over eighteen's wing at Polmont. Most of the staff were the same as before.
113. I think by that time things were worse at Polmont. I was put into a hall for unruly or violent prisoners called Nevis hall. The divide between the east and west of Scotland was intense and the violence between prisoners was greater. It wasn't safe to walk about at rec time unless you had two weapons. You had to carry two weapons because if someone grabbed one arm you always had a free hand to use the other weapon. It got to the stage it was just safer to stay in my cell. There was little

security checks by the staff in fact they more or less encouraged it. They knew weapons were being carried but they did nothing to try and find and confiscate them.

### **Life after care**

114. I served eighteen months of my second sentence to Polmont so would have got out when I was nineteen and a half. After that I was out for seven months then got a seven year sentence. I am currently doing a ten year sentence. My time in adult jails has been much the same as it was in Polmont.
115. After my seven year sentence I tried to straighten myself out. I got a job as a painter and got a house and a car. When I was twenty-five, between my times in jail, I had another child with my partner. At one point I was recalled to prison for four years for something I had already been acquitted for. Every year I could have asked for parole and I asked the first year but it was refused. I didn't bother asking the next year. I tried the next year but the social workers for some reason told my partner that I hadn't applied to get parole the year before. Because they told her this she left me. This was another example of how the social work department have tried to ruin my life.

### **Impact**

116. I would steal things for staff when I was at St John's or sell them hash so that I would be liked. That was the only way I got any positive attention. St John's taught me how to commit crime and ultimately that was all I knew. I had no chance.
117. When I gave a statement about <sup>HKS</sup> [REDACTED] assaulting me at St John's and he was suspended I should have been moved to a different unit. I got a hard time in there and was called a grass. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

118. The male staff at St John's were animals. I didn't stand a chance in there. As far as I am concerned they have ruined the rest of my life. Because of how I was brought up in there I was always going to turn to a life of crime. It was all I was taught and knew.
119. Violence was there every day in St John's. It was much worse in there than anywhere else I had been. I ended up being violent because that was all I knew. I have been convicted of serious violence and have been acquitted at court of ten attempted murders. I am now immune to violence and it is perfectly normal to me.
120. Because I was in care I missed being brought up with my brothers and sister in a normal family setting. My brother █████ ended up in prison with me. He died from a drugs overdose. I still keep in touch with them and they were visiting me in the prison until Covid started and now I get virtual visits with them on the computer.
121. I lost out on a proper education because I was in care. They did provide some useful practical stuff and I wish I had applied myself better and might have at least learned a trade.
122. I used to take drugs and drink alcohol just to block out the bad times in my life. Other things in my life happened that were upsetting, like my brother dying, but the reason I turned to drink and drugs was to block out my time at St John's. I was diagnosed with depression about three or four years ago when I was in Barlinnie. For years I have had great difficulty sleeping at night too.
123. I can account for almost everyone that was in St John's with me. They are all either in prison or are dead. A lot have died because of drugs. I think a lot of the boys will have taken drugs to block out their life in care.
124. Because of the wrist restraints I was put in when I was at Polmont my wrists are incredibly flexible and my ligaments have been stretched so much I can bend my hand over so my fingers can touch the inside of my wrist. By the end of my time at Polmont I couldn't feel any pain when they were bending my wrists back because

they were so stretched. For months after I had been injured I had great difficulty lifting up a fork to eat. They were so sore I couldn't write letters home.

125. Since I had been at St John's my mental health has been bad. This was made worse at Polmont. Nothing was ever done at either of these places to help me. Because of the beatings I got at St John's and at Polmont I now don't feel empathy for anyone.
126. At Polmont I was taught and learned that violence was always the answer, and it never fails you. The motto I was taught to adopt was that if you lash out first you will always win. This has stayed with me the rest of my life. This is probably why I have spent so long in prison.

### **Treatment/support**

127. I should have been offered psychotherapy and counselling but it has never been offered to me. Every day I think back to things that happened to me in St John's. There are so many things that trigger unhappy memories for me. I have asked for counselling when I have been in prison but it never materialises. Private jails are the worst because they have a budget and are profit making so getting me counselling would cost them money.
128. I am on medication to help me sleep at night. It also has an antidepressant in it.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

129. Since I left care I have never reported anything that happened to me to the police.

## **Records**

130. I have never tried to get any of my social work records. I didn't know I could get them.

## **Lessons to be Learned**

131. I wish I had been listened to when I was in care. Everyone knew that I didn't want to be there but they kept putting me back. My mum told them I wasn't safe in St John's but nobody listened. The social workers must listen more to the child and the child's family. My life would have been completely different if they had listened and tried to find out what was happening within St John's. I would have taken the chance of going to any other care home and run the risk of getting abused there but it couldn't have been any worse than St John's.
132. I am not sure what kind of training staff had then on how to deal with children but better training for the younger staff in reporting abusers would be helpful. I am not sure what would have stopped the violence at St John's. Basically they were just bad people. The prison officers in Polmont were the same. It was a power thing for them.
133. It might have worked if there was someone outside that I could have told what was going on but it would be difficult to trust anybody. I told my mum and she was telling the authorities but nothing ever changed. Another way to pass information would be to give all children in care access to an app on their telephones where they could anonymously pass information so something could be done without compromising the child.
134. If there had been more women at St John's then things might have been different. My experience of women is that they are nowhere near as violent as men. Women tend to be a bit more motherly. There was a real macho image of male prison officers and it might have been better to have more women.



135. There should be an independent external body that comes in and does spot checks on how these places are being run.

**Other information**

136. The social workers <sup>HMT</sup> and <sup>HKB</sup> who were both in St Mungo's used to take two boys who were weaker boys on trips. I would rather not name these boys. <sup>HMT</sup> and <sup>HKB</sup> separately used to take them fishing for the weekend. Looking back I think they were probably up to something sexually with these boys. We used to joke about it that the staff were up to no good but they probably were.

137. St John's has shut down and I believe it was because of all the stories that were coming out of the place. I saw <sup>HMT</sup>, who sexually abused me at St John's, a few years ago on the television.

138. I know that before I went to Polmont the prison officers were caught putting prisoners into segregation on false Rule 80s. They had apparently said that they had applied to government headquarters and been granted authority to keep them in segregation for a month. They had made it all up and some prisoners got big pay outs in compensation.

139. 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. <sup>GKX</sup> .....

Dated. 26.8.22 .....