

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCE
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GCE [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1972. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I have four siblings. My older sibling was born a boy and was named [REDACTED]. He has changed gender and is now called [REDACTED]. She is one year older than me. I have three other younger sisters. Their names are [REDACTED] who was born in 1978; [REDACTED] who was born in 1981 or '82; and [REDACTED] who was born in 1983. [REDACTED] full name is [REDACTED] but she's known as [REDACTED].
3. My father's name is [REDACTED]. He was a violent man. My mother was terrified of him. She met him when she was only fourteen and he was twenty-two. My mum's mother died when she was only twelve, so she was quite vulnerable. After I did counselling, I sat my mum down and explained to her that the fact my father had gone near her at that age, made him a paedophile and there was no reason to have expected him to change. He should actually have been charged for having a relationship with my mother, and that's before he moved on to any of his other victims. I don't have a single friend from childhood who didn't witness him standing in my house wearing only his underpants and touching himself. His behaviour became normal to us.
4. I went into Bellshill Children's Home in 1984, but before that I spent time in foster care and also stayed with my mum in Women's Aid homes because of my

father's violence. My father always found us in the Women's Aid places and we would then return to live with him.

5. I went into foster care following an incident one night when I was six years old. We were living [REDACTED] in Holytown at the time. My father broke into our house, got us all out of our beds, and frog-marched us in our bare feet to a burn where he put us into graves which he had dug for us. The burn ran through the town and was about a mile from our house. My grave is still there. It's less than a mile from my own house now. My father had a weapon, but I can't remember what it was. I'm sure I've blocked it out. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I were all taken to the burn. [REDACTED] was just a baby in my mother's arms. My other sisters weren't yet born.
6. That is one of my first memories as a child, being sat in a hole which had been dug for me. We were there for about an hour while he played with our heads. He was telling us that if he couldn't have us, nobody could. The police then came. The neighbours would have heard what was going on and called them. There must have been about a hundred police there. I remember seeing them high up on a hill behind him and then they all closed in. The records I've managed to get a hold of say that this happened in 1980, but that's wrong. It was [REDACTED] 1978.
7. My father is a psychopath. [REDACTED] is the only one of us he didn't actually physically, sexually or mentally abuse.
8. I've blocked lots of things out from my childhood. I'm hoping to get my full social work file to go through it with my psychologist.

Foster carers, Wishaw

9. I was put into foster care with [REDACTED] after the incident at the burn. I was there for a few months. I don't remember the names of the foster carers. The house is

in Wishaw, near [REDACTED] Wishaw General Hospital.
There's a school [REDACTED].

10. The foster carers had kids of their own and had adopted a wee boy who was disabled. He basically sat in a buggy all day and was ignored. The man went out to work during the day and lay on the couch at night drinking purple cans of Tennent's Super Lager. The foster mother was a bit timid. She didn't stand up to him. I've tried to block out most of what happened there.

Physical abuse by the male foster carer

11. I can remember [REDACTED] being battered really badly by the man. [REDACTED] had forgotten about it until I mentioned it to her. That really upset her. I told her that I wasn't the only one who was assaulted in that house. [REDACTED] was assaulted for not doing something they wanted him to do, but for me it was always about food. [REDACTED] was a whiny child. He had a high-pitched voice and could set off those key-finder keyrings just by talking. We used to call him Calimero after the cartoon character. That was the man's reason for picking on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was gay and it was obvious; he was effeminate as a child. The man called him a wee poof and all sorts of things like that. He was only seven at the time. It wasn't a very nice place to be. I have really tried to block out most of what happened there.
12. I've always been a really fussy person with food. I couldn't eat porridge and still can't. The man used to try to feed me porridge every day. I think it was really just an excuse to assault me. It wasn't as if from one day to the next I was going to start liking it. He used to pick me up by my face and try to force the spoon into my mouth. He cut my lip and broke my tooth on one occasion. His wife didn't try to intervene. She didn't intervene when he hit his own kids either.
13. I wasn't allowed anything else if I didn't eat the porridge. He would say that I was getting "Fuck all" until I ate it. I still wouldn't eat it. I just went without food. I could go three days without food. He used to leave it sitting out with a big skin

on it. Getting hit became a daily thing for me because of how I was with food. I wouldn't eat tapioca or anything like that either, and he seemed to always pick that food group – food like wallpaper paste. That was the kind of games he played with me. I really think it was just an excuse to skelp me.

Living at home, [REDACTED], Holytown

14. I was returned to my mum because the foster carer had been assaulting me. My father was in jail for a few months when [REDACTED] and I first went back, and then he returned to live with us. I think he had been jailed because he had been carrying a weapon when he marched us to the burn. I don't think it was for anything he did to us.

15. All three of us were back with my mum. I'm not sure how long we stayed there. Sometimes we were in foster care or with Women's Aid. My father used to find us in the Women's Aid places. I remember being in hotels in Motherwell and Strathaven and he found us there. He used to climb up drainpipes and come in our bedroom windows and terrorise us. You'd be lying sleeping and all of a sudden you'd feel him grabbing a hold of your hand with one hand and covering your mouth with the other, which would stop you breathing. He would whisper in your ear "It's okay, it's only me". But, it wasn't okay at all. Your heart would speed up and then slow down and then you would pass out. He made us pass out in our beds repeatedly. It happened hundreds of times. We were conditioned into believing that that was normal life. I don't actually know what he did to us when we passed out. It was actually safer for him to be living with us. At least you knew then where he was, and when he was coming. As an adult, I now have a problem with the fact that he always found us. None of my mum's siblings or anyone else in the family knew where we were; only the social workers knew.

Foster care – Mr and Mrs ██████, Shotts

16. We got put into foster care because my mum had to go into hospital to get sterilised. I don't remember exactly when that was. I was placed there with ██████. She was only about two or three at the time. The couple had a son and daughter. I don't think we were ever told the foster carers' first names. We were only there for a few weeks.
17. The couple had a big back garden where they kept geese, ducks and bantams. There were hundreds of them. The ██████ daughter was jealous of ██████ so she locked her outside with all the birds and they pecked the life out of her. She was terrified. The girl was about fourteen or fifteen. I battered her for doing it. I don't remember her name. Mrs ██████ was livid with her daughter. I ran away with ██████ the first chance I got because I was worried that she wouldn't be safe when I was at school. I don't remember anything else happening at the ██████

Living at home, ██████ Bellshill

18. I went back to live with my mum and dad after the ██████, and was then assaulted by my father. The paperwork I've got shows that my father was done with a schedule one offence on ██████ 1984. I think that was the assault on me. He grabbed hold of me by the hair and back of my trousers, and then ran me into a room where he hit me off a stone wall. When I came to, his trousers were undone and he had a belt in his hand which he had been using to lash me. I was covered in blisters from my knees to my neck. My mum had been putting a washing out and ran upstairs to help me when she heard the sound of the belt. She put a towel soaked in freezing cold water on me, and I passed out again with the shock of the cold.
19. The next thing I remember is being in the police station. My mum had taken me there. The police physically removed me from my mother and took me into a room with about twelve men, where they put me on a bed like a hospital trolley and faced me to the wall. Two of the policemen then pulled my dress up over

my head, pulled my underwear down and took photos. After that, I was taken to Bellshill Children's Home. I'm sure my father also got done for a schedule one offence on [REDACTED]. He whacked his face off the latch on the side of a door. He nearly lost her eye. He had to wear an eye patch for eighteen months.

20. My younger siblings went into foster care and [REDACTED] then joined me in Bellshill. He had been in another children's home before that.

21. My mum was never called to court when we were taken away from her. She didn't even know that she was entitled to a lawyer. I really don't think that's right. She was never made aware of her rights. My mum thought that she had put me under a 'place of safety' order for six weeks only to keep me safe. She thought she could take me out of the home at any point. She didn't know there was a court order stopping her from doing that.

Bellshill Children's Home, Bellshill

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after Bellshill Children's Home

68. I was basically kicked out of the children's home and sent back home. They didn't have space upstairs in the teenage unit for me or [REDACTED] so rather than going to the local council to try and find us somewhere safe to live, they just gave us back.

69. My dad went back to his normal violent ways. The only physical contact we ever got from him was violence. There were never any cuddles or any kind of emotional stuff. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in front of him and had to go into hospital to get it removed. We were only home a couple of weeks when he did that. That's hardly the behaviour of someone who was happy with family life.

70. My mum was a good parent. She never hit me. She got my dad charged for every assault on me that she knew about. My mum never actually knew half of what was going on in her house.

71. After a few months, I presented as homeless and moved into a homeless flat. [REDACTED] moved in with me.

Records

72. I've provided the Inquiry with some of my records, which include some social work reports and reports from the children's home. That's all I've managed to get so far. They were stolen for me by someone who used to work in the social work department.
73. I applied to North Lanarkshire Council in 2010 for my full file, but still haven't received it. I've tried everything to get it. I've had help from Sandra Toyer from In Care Survivors Service Scotland, and I've also been in touch with a lawyer and the Information Commissioner's Office. Sandra was told by the data protection officer at North Lanarkshire Council that if there's any hint of any kind of wrongdoing, the files are automatically pulled and sent to their lawyers. So, even although I paid the administration fee to get my file in 2010, I'm not allowed to get it because I was assaulted in care. My sister [REDACTED] hasn't managed to get her records either. She was told that she was assaulted in care so she can't have them. They actually said that to her.
74. In March 2015, Stephen Henderson and Gerry Campbell took me into an office at Bellshill social work department and told me that my file had accidentally been destroyed. I recorded them on my phone and I've still got the recording.
75. I now know that they were lying to me because I went to the police in December 2016 to report both my dad and Bellshill social services, and the police have now obtained my file. Gail Sillin, who is a police sergeant at Bellshill police station, walked into the social work offices and got it handed to her straight away. As far as I know, she got the file in its entirety. It looks to me that they're withholding stuff to attempt a cover-up. I don't know what they're trying to cover up. The only thing I can come up with is that they don't want it to come out that they took all those kids out of school and strip-searched them.
76. Social services also kidded me on that they would hand my file over to my psychiatrist so that she could go through it with me. I've provided the Inquiry

with a letter dated 23 March 2016 from North Lanarkshire Council telling me that they would pass the file to her so that she could read it to me and then shred it, but that's still not been done. That letter is yet more proof that my file hadn't been destroyed.

77. I did get to read my file a few years ago in an office at Bellshill social work department, but I was told that it was not allowed to leave the office or ever be in the public domain. According to them, I'm not allowed to share my story with the Inquiry as that would be putting it in the public domain.

Impact of experiences

78. I suffer from sleep problems. I wake up about ten times a night and look around to see where I am. I have to make sure I'm safe before I go back to sleep. I can be woken out of sleep by somebody walking by and casting a shadow over me. When something like that happens, I sit bolt upright in my bed. It frightens the life out of people. I've had input from psychological services a few times as an adult because of sleep problems.

79. I've been diagnosed with PTSD. I have flashbacks and nightmares about being taken out of school and strip-searched. It astounds me that they got away with that. To take a kid out of school and remove their clothing is grooming. It distorts in your head how the real world should be; it makes it normal for kids to have their clothes taken off them by adults.

80. I have flashbacks and bad dreams about what we did to those kids in the home. It really bothers me that they used me to abuse those kids. We were used to play with their heads and cause even more damage to them. Before the dirty disputes, those kids did actually have friends in the home but they had nobody afterwards. They got told all day by us and the staff that they were dirty wee bastards. I also threatened to beat them up. I actually feel physically sick whenever I think about it or wake up from a nightmare. Those kids will have more psychological damage than the rest of us as we were used to put the boot

in when they were at their lowest. I've seen wee [REDACTED] sister and I've said to her that if [REDACTED] ever wants to talk, he knows where I am. He's still suicidal over all this. I've never had any physical contact with him. I've only spoken to his sister. I'm aware that just looking at me might cause damage to him.

81. Being told by social services in 2015 that my records had been accidentally destroyed made my mental health much worse. It caused me to have a nervous breakdown. I went to see a psychiatrist after that. Withholding information and covering things up makes it worse for me.

82. The psychiatrist, Dr Bashir, referred me on to a psychologist as he felt that she had better credentials than him to provide me with the help I need. He also thought that it would be better for me to see a woman, as getting treatment from a man might make things worse for me.

83. I also suffer from lupus, which is an autoimmune disease. I've lost [REDACTED] [REDACTED] because of it. I don't think the stress I've been under has helped either. I'm also deficient in iron and vitamins B12 and D. I tried to get on the sick, but they say there's nothing wrong with me. I've also tried to get PIP and ESA but they say I'm not entitled. I've been to three tribunals since March 2015. I was told at one that I was a liar, and that I didn't have PTSD and hadn't been in Bellshill Children's Home. I had to go into a room with a doctor and prove that I was one of those kids. Putting me in situations like that stresses me even more. I also can't cope with being in front of a panel of people. People don't understand how that affects me. They think I'm having a nice day out.

84. My ability to form relationships with other people has also been affected. It's been a long time since I was in a relationship. All I do is give other people my sleep problems, and I want to fix my problems not give them to someone else. I don't trust people. I don't actually like people that much. I prefer animals; they don't let you down as much. My relationship with my kids' dad broke down because he drank. As far as I'm concerned, if you drink, you're volatile and I don't want to be around that. I broke up with him just before the millennium and

I've been on my own since. It's easier being on my own. I've got some good friends and I don't mind being on my own.

Treatment and support

85. I have been seeing the psychologist since I was told that my records had been accidentally destroyed. I see her every couple of weeks. Speaking to her helps at times, but she says that the sleep problems probably can't be fixed because I awoke from my sleep to pandemonium in childhood, and I learnt to sleep in a particular way to keep me safe. It's like I'm on a knife-edge. The behaviours have gone on for a long time now. My full family has sleep problems.

86. Speaking to Sandra has also been beneficial. I don't see her often but she is at the other end of a phone if I need to talk to her. I can phone or text her.

Current life

87. I have two adult sons, who are both good kids. [REDACTED] is a chemistry graduate. He finished university last summer, but he's going back again this year. [REDACTED] a supervisor in a warehouse and an in-house trainer. There's never been any involvement from social services in their lives. I don't trust Bellshill social work department.

88. My father has no access whatsoever to me or my kids. He wouldn't even be able to identify my kids. None of my siblings have contact with him.

89. I'm not in receipt of any benefits at all. My son has paid for everything for me for the past two years. He pays my rent and my keep. The benefits agency tried to get me to engage with welfare rights, but having to deal with them and Bellshill social work department isn't good for me. It makes my mental health worse. The welfare rights person didn't even stick up for me when the doctor at the tribunal said that I wasn't one of those kids from Bellshill Children's Home. I've provided the Inquiry with two letters written by psychologists. They confirm how the abuse

I suffered as a child now affects me. I can't use them for anything, not even employment support. Nobody seems to think they're of any value. The jobcentre wouldn't even take them from me or photocopy them.

Reporting the abuse to the police

90. I went to the police in December 2016 and reported my dad and Bellshill social work department. I want the social work department to be investigated as well. I asked the police to get my social work file to see if they could actually charge them for what they did to me. The police said that they would need to work through the file systematically and they'll get back to me once they get what they're looking for.

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

91. I think the Inquiry should put an advert in one of the papers asking for all the kids who were strip-searched by Bellshill social work to come forward. I know that it was normal practice for them. It happened to loads of kids. There's six years between me and [REDACTED] there's ten years between me and [REDACTED] and there's nearly twelve between me and [REDACTED]. That practice was in place throughout all those years and they still haven't moved on. They're still taking kids out of school and removing their clothing. They're still grooming kids, and it's still wrong. Things have to change. They shouldn't be allowed to take kids out of school. There also needs to be an advocate in the social work building who watches what they are doing.

92. I would also like to see something done about social services hiding files when they've done wrong. That has to stop too. They bend the data protection laws to suit themselves.

93. Social services wrote in a report about me as a child that my behaviour was giving cause for concern. You shouldn't just write that and do nothing about it. If you have to write those words about a child, then there is a problem and

something needs to be done. You have to talk to the kid: ask them what's wrong and find out if there's anything you can do for them. Sometimes, because of what's involved, they don't want to ask the right questions. They don't want to embarrass themselves. I don't know why they kept it a secret that I was being taken out of school to be strip-searched. There should be no secrets. Kids need to be told that you do not keep secrets, especially when it's an adult who wants you to keep the secret.

94. 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.. GCE

Dated.. 25/4/17