

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[QV
██████████

Support person present: No

1. My name is [QV ██████████]. My date of birth is ██████████ 1976. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

1. I was born and brought up in Bellshill, North Lanarkshire. My dad is also called ██████████ and my mum is ██████████. I was one of six children. ██████████ was the oldest and was eight years older than me. ██████████ was about five years older, ██████████ three years older and ██████████ about a year and a half older. ██████████ was eight years younger than me. He died a couple of years ago.
2. From what I remember about my childhood I know I was a bit of a handful but my mum has since told me that I was a happy, content child. We never had a lot when we were growing up. My dad was violent towards me, it only seemed to be me and not my brothers or sisters. He had a very short temper and was worse when he had been drinking. He was sometimes vicious and he was scary. I took the brunt of the violence. He never really hit my brothers and sisters although he did once hit ██████████. My dad did manual work and he often tried to get me and ██████████ to work with him. I think he had health issues with his blood pressure and things like that. I developed a sense when it was better not to go near him.
3. I went to Cardinal Newman high school and it was around my second year when I was thirteen that I started stealing out of the shops. I didn't have what a lot of the other kids

my age had, so I was stealing just to try and keep up with them and impress the girls at school. When my dad found out he would beat me to a pulp. It wasn't all bad. We did have some good times.

4. I broke my leg when I was fourteen or fifteen and it was a long recovery. I was off school for a long time after it happened and I was going back and forward to school. By that time, I had started drinking alcohol quite heavily. People would buy it for me or sometimes I would steal it at home.
5. I was around fourteen or fifteen when I went to the children's panel. I only ever went once or twice. It was in North Road in Bellshill. There were three people sitting at the panel. I had stolen a pair of Celtic shell suit bottoms. At this children's panel I was put under a supervision order which was in force until I was eighteen. Part of the conditions were that I wasn't allowed to leave my house out-with school hours. I wasn't able to stand up at the children's panel and say why I was getting into trouble and that I was unhappy at home because my mum and dad were sitting there. If I had said anything my dad would have beaten me.
6. My dad started taking me to work with him but I ended up losing my job. I was still living with my parents but was regularly getting kicked out the house. This had been going on since I was about thirteen or fourteen. I quite often stayed with my sister [REDACTED]
7. I had a social worker from around the age of twelve, John Gillock, and I don't know why but I think he knew what was going on in our house. I had never told him though. Both my mum and I liked him. My dad had it beaten into me that I wasn't to say a word to anyone. I was always too frightened of him to say anything to anybody. I went to his office in Bellshill Main Street once a week but sometimes he came to the house.
8. One time when I sixteen I was staying with my sister, even though I was still subject to the supervision order, and I robbed a shop. I wasn't even wearing a mask. I had been drinking heavily and was steaming drunk. Nobody picked up on the fact that I was crying out for help. I walked into the shop with a pretend gun. I handed myself in

to the police a few days later. I appeared at court the next day and was remanded to Longriggend for seven days.

Longriggend Detention Centre, Airdrie

9. I don't remember much about that week in Longriggend. All I remember was that it was all new to me. I was just a young boy and I was terrified. I didn't know what was going on or what I was supposed to do. I was taken back to court after the seven days and I was released on bail. I then went down to England but I got a return ticket because I knew I had to come back for my sheriff and jury trial.
10. It must have been just less than a year later that I came back up to Glasgow to appear at the High Court but I missed my bail appointment. I handed myself in on the Monday morning so that I didn't have to spend all weekend in police custody and I was taken straight back to Longriggend.
11. This time I was in Longriggend for three or four months until I was dealt with at court for the robbery. Most of the memories I have about Longriggend come from this second spell there. I think I was seventeen, nearly eighteen by the time I went back there.
12. Longriggend was just a remand centre. There were no convicted prisoners there. There were boys from Lanarkshire and boys from Glasgow and usually we got on okay together. When I first went in, I felt quite alone because no one knew me. Initially I was in D Hall, which was for remand prisoners. After I was put in the digger for three days, I was moved to A Hall which was better because I knew someone in there who came from my area.
13. I remember there were A, C and D halls. I guess there might have been 200 boys in total at Longriggend. I shared a cell with another boy. I can't remember his name but we got along okay.

Routine at Longriggend Detention Centre

Mornings and bedtime

14. In the morning when I got up, the first thing was to slop out. There was no toilet in the cell. It was horrible. I would then go for breakfast. After breakfast I would go to wherever I was designated to go that day. My designated place at first was to the school.

Mealtimes/Food

15. We all ate at the same time. The food was poor. I suppose they had a tight budget and it was terrible. I suppose we were criminals and were there to be punished and not to be nurtured.

Washing/bathing

16. I am not sure when we managed to get a shower, I think it was in the morning then after work. Through the day the inmates would be 'door scratching' just to get out their cell for a shower. They were desperate to get out even if only for a few minutes. 'Door scratching' is when boys constantly bang on their door or ring their buzzer. You would get a hard time from the other boys for 'door scratching' because it was frowned upon. It didn't affect me because I was out my cell working. It didn't work anyway because the prison officers didn't let them out.
17. There was no privacy in the shower. Some of the showers were open, maybe four in a row, and some were cubicles but there was no door, curtain, or screen.

Clothing/uniform

18. I was given prison clothes to wear. I was allowed to wear my own T-shirt but apart from that I was given a pinstriped shirt and jeans. The prison officers wore a uniform.

Leisure time

19. After our dinner at 4pm we got recreation. I got to chat and meet other boys who were from different places and everyone had their stories to tell. There was lots of bravado with boys trying to outdo each other with their stories. There was a pool table and there was a television so we could watch a video.
20. We got an hour of exercise every day too. Usually, we played football on a grass area.

Healthcare

21. There was a lot of self-harming in Longriggend. I still self-harm to this day. It does things to your head, even though I had lots of things going on in my head from before I went to Longriggend. The mental health of a lot of the boys in Longriggend was bad. The staff knew but they don't have the staff to watch them 24/7. Young people that go into prison are full of pride. They wouldn't want to talk to anyone about personal things and certainly not anything that indicates they are weak. I would never break down and open up fully to anyone because it shows weakness.

Work

22. I was given what was called a school pass when I first went in. This was a job I was given to do and it was good. It meant I wasn't locked up in my cell all day. I was in the classroom and basically, I was there to help the other boys write letters and things like that. I got a lot of satisfaction from helping other people. The teachers in there were decent and nice to me. After a while that changed and I was given a landing pass. This was basically a cleaning job. This was cleaning the toilets and the sinks. I was quite happy working on my own.
23. Because I was out my cell and a lot of the other boys were locked up, I ended up taking stuff and passing it from one boy to another.

Birthdays

24. Birthdays weren't recognised in any way. It was just another day.

Bed Wetting

25. I never wet the bed at Longriggend but I know that loads of boys did. I don't know how the staff dealt with it but the boys that did got quite a slagging from the others.

Visitors

26. My mum visited me regularly and she rarely, if ever, missed a visit. She was a strong woman. If it hadn't been for her, I would have suffered a lot more. She tried her best for me but I know I am the one that made bad choices. She kept my spirits up and my heart warm.

External Inspections

27. I don't remember anyone from outside coming into Longriggend and doing any sort of inspection or coming to ask me anything. That would have been a good idea if they had.

Discipline/Rules

28. The rules were never explained to me by anybody. I think everyone just picked things up as we went along. One of the ways I learned that they punished you was the digger, which was solitary confinement in the cell block. This was usually the governor that gave you this punishment. The only other thing was the restraints when the prison officers pushed your thumb against your wrist.

Deaths

29. I was aware of some deaths when I was in Longriggend. I never saw it but I knew of one wee guy whose mum had missed a visit. Because of that he ended his life. There was no support offered or given to any of the other young offenders.

Abuse at Longriggend Detention Centre

30. Longriggend was just full of toxins. I had the same fear all the time, just like I had when I had been there for a week. I had constant stress and anxiety and the adrenalin in me was pumping all the time. I was hypervigilant because I didn't know what to expect and I didn't know what was coming next. There were lots of new noises and lots of banging and clattering. The banging was something else. My emotions were heightened. I would never have shown how frightened I was. I was terrified to speak and not to speak. I just had to put a brave face on it.
31. One day I had been shouting on another prisoner out of my window because I had heard he was from Bellshill. He was in his cell too. I had heard other boys shouting out their window so I thought that was the thing to do. Lots of boys then started shouting back at me, attacking me because I was shouting. The next morning, at breakfast, I was sitting with a couple of boys from my area, Coatbridge. This one eejit, when he was passing sort of shoulder barged me, I knew it was coming because he had told me before. When he barged me, I jumped up and hit him. I didn't know what the rules were back then or what I was supposed to do. Apparently, it wasn't the right thing to do by hitting another prisoner in front of everyone else. This was one of the rules amongst young offenders.
32. The prison officers jumped in and restrained me. They bent my thumbs up my wrist and had my arms behind my back and carted me off to the digger, which is solitary confinement in the cell block. It was sore at the time getting my thumbs bent back to my wrist but I suppose I got used to it. I liked and got on well with most of the prison

officers. The next day I was taken up in front of the governor and my punishment was three days back in the digger.

33. In the digger, I just felt anxious all the time and felt sick from the pit of my stomach. I suppose I was used to that kind of feeling. I never saw anybody apart from the prison officer who brought me my meals. I got my breakfast early, probably about six in the morning. There was no exercise in those three days.
34. I saw one boy getting 'whelped' in one of the corridors. I didn't see what led up to it but the boy's face was being pushed to the floor and the prison officer slapped him several times to the face. You could see the venom in his face. I don't know who the boy was or the name of the prison officer hitting him. There was another prison officer standing there watching. His name was Mr McKetchin and he was a good guy. I don't think he agreed with what was going on but he had to follow the others to fit in. I was standing quite a distance away.
35. It was like every boy in there was gasping for air, trying to survive. Inside, everyone's emotions were all over the place. It is quite difficult to remember what went on at Longriggend because it is a long time ago and I am trying to forget this period of my life. Bad things happen in prison and that's just the way it is. I think I try and minimise them in my head.

Reporting of abuse at Longriggend Detention Centre

36. I never spoke about my feelings or told anyone about Longriggend because that had been beaten out of me at home. I had learned to not open my mouth and shut my feelings off. There was no one I could have spoken to anyway.

Leaving Longriggend Detention Centre

37. I was at Longriggend for three or four months. My time at Longriggend finished after I went back up to court where I pled guilty to the robbery. I was sentenced to four years with an additional nine months or a year added on to my sentence for failing to turn up at the bail appointment. I don't remember seeing a social worker when I was at court. From the court I went back to Longriggend or possibly Barlinnie prison for one night then I was transferred to Polmont.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution, Polmont, Brightons

38. When I was sixteen, I'd got seven days at Polmont for an unpaid fine. I spent Monday to Wednesday there. I don't remember much about that except going to the train station with a couple of guys when I was released.
39. I was seventeen or eighteen when I went back. There were about 170 people in Polmont. I stayed at Polmont for about a year. My first impression was that it was horrible. I got a shock but then you put a face on it. It was different from Longriggend. The prison officers were different. Everybody was different. Things kept changing and I always hated change. It caused too much anxiousness. You end up broken.

Routine at Polmont Young Offenders Institution

General Routine

40. When you first go to Polmont, everybody goes to a wing that we called 'Alloc Alley'. I was there for a week or two. Then you go to North Wing. I was doing five years and everybody else was doing three months. That was torture. There were no windows in it. I stayed in North Wing for a couple of months. The prison officers wore a uniform.

41. The day to day routine was the same as Longriggend. Every day was the same. The prison officers' attitude was different, in the way they talked and acted. You couldn't talk to the prison officers the way you could talk in Longriggend or be civil. Their attitude was bad. The way they talked back at you was bad so you ended up not speaking. The prison officers put you down. I suppose you get used to that and I was used to that. Trying to deal with it as a young offender, it destroyed you. It destroyed your soul.
42. You share a cell with somebody and we were still slopping out. The food was worse than Longriggend. The layout of the showers was different. I can't remember if there were doors or if the showers were open. There was no-one to see if you were not well. It was like a cattle market. They did nothing to improve people's mental health.
43. We never had education in Alloc Alley or North Wing. That's how things started changing. I didn't have a job. There were too many people. I did nothing during the day. You were locked up. At recreation time, everybody sat down where you got your dinner. It was open there. They had a telly and they'd stick on a video. You didn't get outside for exercise.
44. I moved from North Wing to West Wing. West Wing was alright. There were more long term prisoners. Things were organised and I was more organised. I can't remember what I did to fill in my time and I don't want to remember. My mum still visited me.
45. There were deaths in other wings but not next to me. There were deaths all through my time in prison.

Discipline

46. I tried to keep out of bother but it was hard. If you got into trouble then you'd be taken to the Governor. I was never in the digger.

Abuse at Polmont Young Offenders Institution

47. There was no abuse of me at Polmont but I remember things. Some things are better left where they are and I don't want to talk about them.

Leaving Polmont Young Offenders Institution

48. I was about eighteen when I left Polmont. I was transferred to Dumfries but I am not really sure why. A prison officer got right in my face, saying I was going to Dumfries as if I'd be terrified. I was terrified but I never let him know that.

Time as an adult prisoner

49. I went to Her Majesty's Prison Dumfries (HMP Dumfries) when I was eighteen. I took my stuff and went in a van to Dumfries. It looked nice, like an old castle. I remember bits and pieces. I stayed in B Hall and my life's a blur after that. You lose yourself through it. After Dumfries, I went to HMP Shotts and HMP Barlinnie. My behaviour in prison got worse as an adult prisoner. I was released from prison when my sentence was finished.

Life after being in care and in prison

50. My life's been a blur since I left prison. At first, I wandered. You realise things are not right and you start trying to figure it out. You open yourself up and think, what do I do? I've always tried to work, focus, leave everything behind me and keep moving forward. You are existing. You try and do work on yourself. I help out wherever I can and keep myself busy. I have lived in Inverness for the last ten years.

Impact

51. The young offender institutions don't care at all. They try to dehumanise you. I wondered if that was what they meant to do. The way young people were treated is a disgrace. You wonder why these prison officers are taking the jobs. You would think they'd be understanding instead of bullies. That's what they are, bullies. I wouldn't wish that on anybody. It knocks you down and you keep fighting to get back up, until you get to a point where you can't and you think about ending your life. You're not wanting to die. Some things happen in life and prison, and you think that there's got to be something. It used to be easy to get into trouble but I try to work out if things are right or wrong.
52. I had a brain scan about two years ago. The psychiatrist I was seeing at the time organised it. A few years ago, I got a serious knock to my head. I have had a few knocks to my head over the years. I was told by a nurse who did my scan that my brain had shrunk. I believe, and a friend of mine told me, that it had shrunk because of the trauma. You want your memories back and you've got part of them but some things are better left where they are. You have to find a way of dealing of with them.
53. I panic all the time and that has affected me being able to work. I've had a bad couple of years with my dad and my brother passing away. It all happened at one time and it was too much. You end up giving up. I've given up a lot of times in my life. Some days I was lying down, oblivious to it. I couldn't get out of bed. I'd tell myself to get up. Some days you get peace and quiet. I don't know if prison does that or one too many bumps on the head. I'm always trying to work that out.
54. I have hardly had anything to drink since I have been in Inverness. I just don't want to end up like my dad. I fight it. You end up taking something else. I had a burst artery in my nose in 2014 and I started taking painkillers. I've only recently learned that it's my own anxieties I'm trying to calm down. I got moved to a place where there were drugs everywhere. I knuckled down but my dad died and then my younger brother.

55. There's been a massive knock-on effect in my relationship with my brothers and sisters. I never spoke to my mum or anybody about things for years because I was numb. I'm just getting back to talking with my mum now.

Treatment/support

56. In doing work on myself, I've done a self-management course and a course about how to cope with anxiety. That was helpful. When memories come up, you try to deal with them but it drags you back down until you give up. I've got another course coming up which I'm hopeful about. I take medication and it helps a lot too.
57. I have a community psychiatric nurse. He's alright and one of the better ones I've had. It does help. I see him once a month.

Records

58. I've thought about getting my records but then I think, what's the point? I don't know what to think about it.

Lessons to be learned

59. I think it was wrong that I was a teenager and my mum and dad were with me at the children's panel. I couldn't be honest and tell the panel what was going on at home and tell them reasons why I was unhappy. I didn't want to stay at home because of what was going on. I ended up running away from my parents and they would contact the police. I would get caught by the police and was taken back home. I couldn't tell the police what was going on because I was terrified knowing my dad would beat me if I said anything. It was a vicious circle and I felt trapped.

60. There should be someone there for young boys going into prison. Someone that will listen to the boys and support them while they are in detention centres or young offenders. If things haven't changed since I was in Longriggend and Polmont in the 1990s then there is no hope for any boy going through the system.
61. Boys in there should be given advice on how to keep themselves straight and out of prison. Trying to tell the boys to keep good company and away from the boys who are doing those things would help. If boys hang about with others who are up to no good, they will end up doing the same thing and end up in trouble.
62. Being a young offender is like being caught in a revolving door. You become cannon fodder in the jail. You have to try and break the cycle. No one ever tried to find out my history or my background to try and help me.
63. There's loads of things that could have made things better for young offenders. If you start going down that road then you're going down a rabbit hole. I don't want to go down too many rabbit holes.

Other information

64. Where young offenders are concerned, ninety per cent of them don't need to put to prison. Ten per cent do because of the heinous things they do. An alternative to prison needs to be found. Too many of them are souls lost.
65. 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. IQV

Dated. 28/8/2023