

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GZU

Support person present: No

1. My name is GZU. During part of my time I was in care I was known as GZU. That's what I was known as up until my time in St Joseph's. It was around that time that my mum remarried and that is when I started to be known as GZU. My date of birth is 1972. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My father's name is. My mum's name is. She remarried later on and became known as. My stepfather's name was. I have four brothers and two sisters. My big sister's name is. My brothers are called, and. My mum went on to have another two children by the names of and. and never ended up in care.
3. My mum went through a hard time. She was abused a lot by my real father. He was nothing but a drunk. My mum had to try and bring five children up whilst he was out gallivanting. My stepfather came into our lives when I was at a very young age. I would have been at primary school but I can't remember exactly what age I was. My mum was beaten up a lot by my stepfather too. The police were around a lot because my stepfather would beat her up and smash the house up.
4. I ended up in care after going to a children's hearings. It was around about the time that our stepfather came into our lives that we started getting put in homes. It was

one of the panels that sent me to St Helen's. I don't know why I was sent there but it could have been because I was getting into trouble or something. I can't remember why I ended up there the two times I went.

St Helen's, Roseburn, Edinburgh

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after leaving St Helen's before going to St Joseph's

16. I was in foster homes after I went to St Helens. I can't remember why I was in those but it was the same as before with panels putting me there. I was also at one point in a home called Clerwood which was based in Costorphine in Edinburgh. I can't remember anything happening in Clerwood and don't want to speak about that home in this statement. After primary school I never went to a secondary school. I went to a special school called Canonmills instead. I went to there right up until I went to St Joseph's.
17. I can't remember what happened in the lead up to me going to St Joseph's. I got into trouble and was attending children's hearings. I really can't remember exactly what happened. It would have been a panel that put me into St Joseph's but I can't remember why they put me there.

St Joseph's, Tranent, East Lothian

18. When I first started going to St Joseph's I was a day pupil. That would have been when I was either nine or ten years old in either 1981 or 1982. I could have been younger. I can't remember how long I was a day pupil there before that turned into me being a residential pupil.

Layout of St Joseph's

19. There were three separate bits to St Joseph's. It was like different blocks in a prison. The front of the building was a care sort of home which also held some classrooms. It was where the school was. The Brothers had their own residence in that middle bit of St Joseph's too. There were then two buildings to each side of that. I can't remember the names of those bits but one of them was called something like Benelders. That was the part that I was in.

Staff

20. I don't remember what the headmaster of St Joseph's name was but he was an old man. He was a Brother rather than a civilian. As far as I was aware he was the head of the Brothers too. That's what I thought when I was at St Joseph's. He never assaulted me.
21. I can't remember the name of the man who was in charge of the Benelders part of St Joseph's but he had a beard and glasses.
22. Brother Benedict was in charge of one of the bits in St Joseph's but not the part that I was in. I don't know what his proper name was but we called him Brother Ben.
23. There was a man in there who taught joinery. I don't remember his name. He had a beard with a moustache. He had black hair. For some reason I remember him building a boat in one of the sheds in St Joseph's.

24. There were two brothers, in the sense they were siblings who did the mechanics. They were basically handymen. I think their surname was ^{ZHKN} [REDACTED]. One of those brothers was alright. He looked out for me. As far as I remember he was a nice guy. I don't remember the other brother much because I didn't really speak to him.
25. There was a matron who lived in Benelders. She stayed at the top. I don't remember her name. She had a boyfriend who was also a staff member. He stayed with her in her part of the building. I can't remember his name. He had a beard and was a different person to the person who was in charge of Benelders.
26. There was a woman who cooked the meals. She was the only person in there who was really alright. I don't remember her name. She was just a nice lady.

Routine at St Joseph's

27. I am sure the Inquiry has the routine from other people they have spoken to so it is not something I really want to go into in this statement. I remember my first day at St Joseph's. I was shown about. I think I was shown around Benelders that day. That was the part of St Joseph's that was the furthest away from the entrance.
28. We used to go to classes during the day. If we didn't go to classes we would do things like joinery. There was a hall that we used to go to at the start of the day where they told you what you were doing or what classes you would be going to. That was an assembly. I think we were told at the top of the gym. There were pool tables in that part of St Josephs.
29. I used to go home for weekends sometimes. That was taken away a lot from me as a punishment. I remember weekend leave home being taken off of me when I tried to report things. They never made any effort to speak to me either in a one to one or at any time. I never saw any of that crap. All I experienced was bullying and hurt.

30. I used to run away all of the time. There must be loads of police reports because I was either caught by them or they were informed each time I ran away. The police assaulted me each time they caught me after I ran away. They always battered me. The only time I wasn't assaulted by the police was the occasion where the matron's boyfriend came to pick me up at Wester Hailes police station and physically assaulted me in front of them. Those police officers were actually alright on that one occasion.

Abuse at St Joseph's

31. I just wish that I had never been at St Joseph's. I was in fear of my life all of the time I was there. The staff were physical and violent with all of the children a lot. That's the way that they kept discipline. Doing that wasn't the answer and it didn't work. Violence isn't the answer for anything when you can talk to somebody instead.
32. I was punched a few times by staff. When I say "punched" I mean full blown punches to the head. I was slapped, grabbed, shoved and put in headlocks. A lot of the staff did that sort of thing in there. They never tried to hide what they did. They did it in front of everyone including staff members. I would find it hard to believe that other staff members, if they were spoken to by the Inquiry, could say that they hadn't seen that stuff going on.

Staff member [REDACTED] Benelders

33. The man [REDACTED] Benelders part of St Joseph's who had a beard and wore glasses was very 'hands on' all of the time. He was just a horrible bastard. He never spoke to us, he just used his hands. I remember him punching me in the head and giving me full force slaps.

Staff member who taught joinery

34. The man who taught joinery was a horrible violent bastard. For some strange reason he used to bully me all of the time. I don't know why he did that. He used to punch me and other children. He would kick the shit out of us. I remember him punching me in the head. He gave me full force slaps. I don't think I would have been the only one he bullied. He must have done the same sorts of things to other boys there.
35. I remember that he once took us out somewhere. It was either a visit or we were out camping. I can't remember where it was but there was a big park there. They had a zip line. Just as a joke I climbed into the front of the van and pressed a button that stopped the engine from starting. What a doing I got for doing that. He gave me full punches in the van.
36. I remember that one of the ZHKN brothers who was one of the handymen looked out for me. He was aware that the man who taught joinery was out to get me. For some reason he looked out for me because of that.

Staff member who was also the matron to Benelder's boyfriend

37. The matron's boyfriend was just a horrible bastard. He was a bully. He physically assaulted me all of the time. I can't remember specific things he did when he physically assaulted me or where that happened in St Joseph's. All I remember is him doing that all of the time.
38. I remember an occasion when I ran away. I was caught by the police and they took me back to their police station in Wester Hailes. The matron's boyfriend tried to assault me in front of the police at Wester Hailes police station when he came to get me. I think he called me "a scumbag" then grabbed me and put me into a headlock. I remember that the police officers were alright. They said to the matron's boyfriend "he's only a wee laddie" when they saw what he was doing and asked me whether I

wanted them to press charges. However, I said no. I don't know whether the police made a record of what happened.

39. I remember that when the matron's boyfriend got me back to St Joseph's he made me clean the yard. I remember him making me do that at 2:00 am with a brush. That happened more than one time. I remember doing that in the rain, sleet and snow after times I had ran away. I remember being exhausted and just wanting to go to bed.

Brother Benedict

40. Brother Benedict would do horrible things to me. He was just a horrible weirdo. He started doing the things he did to me after the time the matron's boyfriend assaulted me in the police station in Wester Hailes.
41. I think I said to the police that I was scared of Brother Benedict after the first time I was handed back to him after running away. The police didn't listen to me and just put me into Brother Benedict's hands. After that first time I was brought back to Brother Benedict he made me do the same sort of things as when I was brought back by the matron's boyfriend. I was made to sweep the yard and so on.
42. Later on, after running away, Brother Benedict would take me out of the Benalders part and into the school part of St Joseph's. I can't remember exactly where he took me but I remember being taken down a corridor. I don't know whether where we ended up was his chambers, the back of a classroom or whatever. Wherever it was it was at the front of the home and it would only be me and him in the room.
43. When I got into the room he would make me stand in the corner of the room. He would then hit me with a stick. I don't know whether it was a bamboo stick or some sort of cane. Whatever it was it was fucking sore when he hit me. He then would tell me to strip down to my Y Fronts. The first few times I didn't know what he was doing behind me because I was facing the wall. I later discovered that he was fondling

himself behind my back. I know that because I turned round and could see his semen on the floor.

44. I have this picture in my mind of me in the corner crying and that bastard standing behind me. For some reason he used to get more excited when I was crying. I don't know why that was but for some reason it seemed to turn him on. I remember him saying after he did what he did that if I said anything then my family would go to hell. I ended up not saying anything for a long time because of that.
45. All this happened numerous times after the times I ran away. As soon as he took me out of Benelders and took me down the corridor to that room I just knew what was going to happen. It was the same every time. I found out later on after leaving St Joseph's that he used to do the same thing to other boys. I've heard that he also did things with boxes that gave kids electric shocks. I never experienced that sort of thing. If that did happen then I don't remember it. I think it was the police who told me that was happening.
46. The police have told me in adult life that Brother Benedict was done for abuse in the sixties but had been reemployed. I was told that after I was told he wasn't getting prosecuted by the procurator fiscal in 2014. Apparently, it was the same sort of thing he was doing with me that he was doing with other kids. I think he was with one church then moved on to another church. He was allowed to do this, that and the other and it was all just brushed under the carpet. If Brother Benedict has been doing things since the sixties then it's hard to think just how many lives he ruined

Reporting of abuse whilst at St Joseph's / Leaving St Joseph's

47. I would see my mum, my brothers and my sisters when I went home at weekends. I never told them about anything that was happening. That would have just been insane. It would have just been too much for them. We didn't talk about these kind of things amongst ourselves whilst we were in care. I certainly didn't. I can't

remember sitting down and saying to someone else who was in these homes with me. It's not something that you would brag about.

48. Outside of my family and the other children who were in care with me, I used to go on all the time about what was happening with Brother Benedict. I would talk about it to anyone I could speak to. I spoke to the police, care workers and social workers whilst I was at St Joseph's. No one I reported things to believed me.
49. I remember the occasions when I reported it to the police. I told them on numerous occasions that the reason I was running away was because I was terrified of Brother Benedict. I was always on my own when I reported what was happening. They would just batter me when I told them that and say that I was lying. I received punches to the head for reporting those things. Sometimes I was hit with a stick. My head is covered in scars. It's like a road map from the number of times I was hit by truncheons as a child. I remember a couple of times when the police took me straight back to St Joseph's they handed me back to Brother Benedict and said "enjoy." That didn't happen every time but did a couple of times. The police allowed these things to happen back then. They're ones who are most at fault. It was like they encouraged it.
50. I remember speaking to people who came into St Joseph's. I assume that they were social workers but I don't know. I spoke to a couple of the workers at St Joseph's too. I know I said to whoever it was a few times about what Brother Benedict was doing. Every time I ended up being hurt at the end of it. Nobody believed me. That led to me just thinking it was part of my life and that was just the path I had to go down. It then became my whole life. I think I then stopped trying to report what was happening for a while.
51. Towards the end of my time at St Joseph's I spoke to the headmaster of St Joseph's in his office about what was happening. I was alone with him when I first reported what Brother Benedict was doing. I told him that was the reason I was running away. The headmaster then brought Brother Benedict into the office. I remember

wetting myself because I was that scared. The headmaster must have seen the fear in me.

52. After that meeting happened Brother Benedict stopped doing what he was doing for about a week. He then started doing what he was doing again. I think I then started trying to report what was happening to anyone I could again. It wasn't long after that that I was moved to St Mary's. It could have been about three months later.
53. I remember that just before I was moved they woke me up in the early hours of the morning and made me sign something. I didn't know what it was that I signed then and still don't know to this day.

Kenmure St Mary's Boys' School, Bishopbriggs

54. I don't want to talk about St Mary's. Speaking to the Inquiry about that place as well as the other places I have been would be too much for me at this time in my life. All I want to say is that I was placed in the secure block there.

Impact

55. What happened ruined my life. The impact all of this has had on me has been disgraceful. I have not had a life at all because of this. I don't think anybody can move on from the things that happened. I've never escaped it. It has always been on my mind and always will be. I do have flashbacks. They're horrible. I've been trying to get this out since I was a kid. My life has been fucked up ever since.
56. I've never been steered to the right place in my life. I've always been surrounded by people who I don't know whether they are genuine or not. I definitely wouldn't have hung around with the sorts of people I hung around with in care if I hadn't been put there. I was actually a nice kid before I was put in these homes. Those homes changed me in a lot of different ways.

57. After I left care I started hanging around with some of the kids I was in the homes with. I ended up on drugs. I used drugs to block it all out and try to forget about it. That led to me getting involved in crime. That led to me getting involved with undesirables. The drugs never worked. It was always there at the back of my mind.
58. I have been in and out of prison ever since I left care. I've spent over twenty six years of my life in prison. I was a problem prisoner about twenty years ago because of the shit that has happened in my life. At that time I was in the old jail in Peterhead. That was a jail where they put problem prisoners. I was only twenty-one or twenty- two years old when I was like that. That was a long time ago.
59. I mistrust everybody. When I say everybody I really do mean everybody. The only person I fully trust in this world is my mum. Even then I think there have been times when I haven't trusted her because of all the shit that has happened to me.
60. What happened a million percent has affected my relationship with my family. I don't have a relationship with my family any more. That's both from what happened to me but also how I acted afterwards. I know right from wrong but I've made too many bad decisions.
61. I've never had the opportunity to have kids. I just wish that I had have a chance to have a family. I've always wanted kids but that's it. I haven't really had a relationship in my life. The only thing that came close was a relationship I had with a nurse who worked in HMP Edinburgh for ten years. I was in and out of jail during the time I was seeing her. I told her about the things that happened in care. I used to sit and talk with her about what happened inside the prison. I then found out that she was sleeping with "Tom, Dick and Harry." She has now been sacked but it wouldn't surprise me if she had been taken on again because of this Covid-19. Looking back, I think she was just using me to build up her confidence to do other things with other prisoners.

62. These places affect the way you think when you get older in a big way. It makes you more depressed, sad, suspicious and alert. It's broken me and fucked my life right up. The only thing I have got going in my life is I am fit and nothing else. I've grown up in life to believe that I was always on my own. I shouldn't believe that.

Treatment and support

63. The only people who have ever really helped me are my mum, my stepfather, my brothers and my sister. The system is a joke when trying to get support. You don't get any help in prison. Whenever I have tried to get help they just sit and laugh at me. For some reason none of the establishments I have been in have ever helped me. I don't know why that has been. You hear of all these courses that are supposed to reform prisoners. I have never once been allowed to go on any one of these courses. I have never had help from anybody. I have been denied help in the past and continue to be denied help to this day. People like me don't ever get help.

Reporting of abuse after leaving care

64. It felt like I was hitting my head against a brick wall when trying to report what happened in my childhood. It was just the same during my adult years. Secondary Inst

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Instituti

As usual nothing happened.

65. I tried to report what Brother Benedict did to a sheriff called Sheriff Crowe in 2014. He asked me why I was in and out of trouble because he couldn't understand it. I ended up telling him what had happened. He then spoke to me to say that he saw it

was a cry for help and asked why I hadn't told the police. I told him that I couldn't tell the police what had happened because every time I had tried in the past they had kicked the shit out of me. I said that every time I came forward with something like this I was told that I was lying. Sherriff Crowe then told me that the police I would be speaking to would be a different type of police. Speaking to Sherriff Crowe was the first time in all the times I told people what happened to me that anyone seemed to believe me.

66. When I did speak to the police after that it took me four hours to go through my statement. They were from a police station in Dalkeith in Edinburgh. They came to my house to interview me. I can't remember the names of the police officers who spoke to me but they were two women. I told them what I have said in this statement but I went into more detail. I then had to sign the statement. I can't remember how many pages I had to sign.
67. There was then a big rigmarole trying to get what I had reported to court. I ended up under eight stone of weight because of all of it. I remember that during a later hearing in Edinburgh Sheriff Court Sheriff Crowe said he couldn't understand how it was all taking so long. In the end, I was told by the police and the Procurator Fiscal that the things I was reporting had taken too long to get to court. I was told that there were time failings. Brother Benedict got let off of everything.
68. When I first came to HMP Grampian I tried to talk about what happened again. They just didn't care. They're not into that kind of thing up here and I am not just saying that because I am a prisoner and they are screws. I have been messed up with anxiety trying to speak out about my history in care. They just don't care in prison.
69. I've tried over my life to report things till I've been both black and blue in my face. I am the victim and I have had to go over the things that happened to me umpteen times. I am sick of talking about what happened to people and nothing getting done. Speaking to the Inquiry is the last time I'm going to try to formally report what happened. The next thing I want to do is write a book about how I have been let down by the system.

Lessons to be Learned

70. I just don't understand why I have been put through what I have been put through. I'm not a horrible person. I am a kind person but for some reason life keeps flinging bad things in my direction. A lot of it has to have been because of that fucking horrible bastard.
71. The system is a joke and has let me down. It is like the system likes certain people who have been abused and not others. They will only try to prosecute abusers when they like the person who had been abused. It feels like the system is set up to say "we'll let it happen to these people and just make it look like we're really doing something." That is what happened to me. If I was rich or famous things would have been different.
72. The law needs to be changed so as people like Brother Benedict can be prosecuted. It isn't right that something like that can be time barred. I see them trying to prosecute footballers and celebrities and the only reason they're picking them is because they are famous. I remember when that football coach started to be investigated. One minute he was being charged and the next his prosecution was done and dusted. I couldn't believe that when I saw that and compared it to my experience of trying to get my abuser prosecuted. It took years to get something done for me and in the end nothing was done.
73. There was nothing good about St Joseph's at all. St Joseph's wasn't a place that benefited anybody. Nobody there helped me in any way or allowed me to get on with my life. My time there was one fucking big nightmare. It was hell. I wish I could take that nightmare away from that part of my brain. Putting all these kids together in big homes didn't work. The system worked like a car engine that produced criminality. These homes were just a stepping stone for people to go on to crime. I don't know anyone who went to that place who went on to have a good life.
74. I don't understand why that abuse was allowed to happen at St Joseph's. People shouldn't have done what they did to me. They shouldn't have been allowed around

children. In my experience, care homes were just places where children were abused and where kiddy fiddlers worked. Horrible people worked in these places. I'd like now for people to be screened before they work in these places. The people who should work in homes should be genuine people who have had a history of working with kids or helping people properly. They shouldn't have people who work there who hurt kids. I don't know whether that will ever happen.

75. The people in the places I was in should have been more thoughtful. There should have been a structure that managed that but it was all over the place. It all still goes on to this day. I know people who have children who have ended up in care and they're pure junkies. I don't get it. What kind of life are these kids going to have?
76. There should be structures and things available for people like me who have gone through what I have gone through. There isn't though. There's no help and no safety net. I am forty seven years old and I have had absolutely nothing.
77. I remember asking the police during a time I tried to report what happened whether the sort of things that happened to me at St Joseph's were still happening. I know the police have told me that the crap I suffered happens right to this day. That stuff shouldn't still be happening. There shouldn't be places still like St Joseph's because that place was just a hell hole.

Hopes for the Inquiry

78. I really don't think anything is going to come of me speaking to the Inquiry. I don't think it is going to do any good. The only way things would happen is if I was rich or famous or something. I don't think the things I have said will go anywhere or anything will happen. I don't think things will change in the future for children in care. I don't think people like the police will ever change.
79. I was only a child at the time I was at St Joseph's. It doesn't matter what age you are, abuse is abuse. The reason I want my name out there is so that people,

especially my mum, can find out why I have turned out the way I have turned out. I want people to know why I have become the person I have. People don't just turn out the way that they turn out. What happened in my teenage years had a bad effect and made me do what happened in my adult years. I would never have done what I went on to do if I hadn't experienced what I did in those homes. I want people to see the things I experienced, and what happened afterwards, so that younger generations can learn about these things.

80. 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.

GZU

Signature

Dated

15/12/20