

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

MOJ
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is MOJ [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1957. My details are known to The Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Lennox Castle and brought up in Kirkintilloch. It wasn't a happy childhood as my dad was an alcoholic and we sometimes went without food. My mum was [REDACTED] and my dad was [REDACTED].
3. I have two sisters who are [REDACTED] who is now 62 and [REDACTED], who is 56 and a brother called [REDACTED] who is 65. I also have a step-sister called [REDACTED] who is in her mid 40's and a step-brother called [REDACTED] who again is in his mid 40's.
4. When I was eight years old my parents divorced and me and my brother [REDACTED] moved in with my dad's parents though [REDACTED] moved in with a friend soon after. I stayed with them until I was twelve.
5. My mum moved to Condorrat with [REDACTED] and my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went with her. When my mum and dad separated my dad's family cut her off completely. I attended St Flannan's primary school then St Ninian's secondary, both in Kirkintilloch.

6. I was playing truant a lot and stealing and it was decided that I needed care and protection. I was attending St Flannan's primary school and one day when I was returning from school two policemen drew up in a car and took me to a children's panel.
7. I had already been to a couple of children's panels and in those days it was "three strikes and you're out". I was put on probation and David Hunter was my probation officer, my social worker and was based in Kirkintilloch. Although I was stealing I was only doing it to survive as I was always hungry.
8. My grandad died and my granny was dying so I was left with an alcoholic father. I broke my probation and got told I was going to a remand home which was Bellfield in Dumbarton. My uncle [REDACTED] came to the hearing as a responsible adult for me. I was about thirteen years old.
9. I was in Bellfield for three weeks then another panel sent me back there for another three weeks until a place became available for me in St Joseph's in Tranent. I was in St Joseph's for about fifteen months, maybe more, before I thereafter lived with my mum.

Bellfield, Dumbarton

10. I was taken to Bellfield by my probation Officer, David Hunter. It was a big mansion with a recreation area that was about the size of a tennis court and there were about thirty boys there. I don't know who was responsible for the place but about ten male staff ran it and one name I recall is Mr ^{AIA} [REDACTED] and another is Mr ^{GVZ} [REDACTED] who I remember was ex-military.
11. Mr ^{AIA} [REDACTED] ran the strip down electric shop that was on site and was some sort of teacher. I liked him though that was mainly because you could get a cigarette off him. We called all the staff "Mister" while they called us by our second names.

12. We slept in dorms and there were about five of us in each dorm. I hated being there because I just wanted to be with my family. [REDACTED] is the only other boy who was there whose name I recall.

Routine at Bellfield, Dumbarton

13. I have no recollection of my first day at Bellfield. The usual routine was that we got up at about 7:30/8:00 am being woken by the night watchman. We then got washed, dressed and made our bed before waiting to be shouted down for breakfast.
14. There was no schooling so after breakfast we would go up to the park at the back of the mansion and play football or do whatever you liked. We were always supervised when we were doing this.
15. The second time I was in Bellfield I was working in the kitchen making food for the others which is what I would be doing while the others were out playing football or whatever.
16. If it was raining we were put into our dorms as there was no playroom. In the evening we would do the same things we had been doing in the morning before going to our beds at about 9:00 pm. There was no talking allowed after lights out.

Chores

17. At about 11:00 am we would help clean up the home, the showers, the dorms and the living room. There weren't any other chores that we did. I worked in the kitchen during my second time there and was the only boy who did. It was considered a privilege as you could more or less eat what you wanted.

Mealtimes / Food

18. The food was alright, especially the potatoes, pie and beans. I don't recall anybody not liking the food and I don't know what would have happened to any of the boys who

either didn't like the food or didn't eat it. If anything did happen I doubt if it would have been done in front of others.

Washing / bathing

19. In the morning we washed in sinks. There were showers which we got once a week. You would get your shower by one dorm going at a time and this was supervised by a member of staff who would be standing in the general vicinity of the showers.

Trips / Holidays

20. We never went on any trips and I think the main reason for that was that they probably didn't have sufficient funds to finance such things.

Visits / Inspections

21. Mr Daniel Traynor, a teacher from St Ninian's in secondary school in Kirkintilloch, visited me every week and brought me sweets. He was a lovely man who has since died. He was the only person who ever visited me. I don't think anybody was allowed to visit. I would talk to Mr Traynor in the dinner hall.
22. No social worker ever visited me and if Bellfield was ever visited by official inspectors or anything like that then I wasn't aware of it.

Running away

23. If you ran away you got put in the cooler which was a room at the back of the mansion. The boys who ran away were also given a beating by staff. It never happened to me but, when I was working in the kitchen I could see this happening to other boys.

Bed Wetting

24. As a result of being forced to stand at the open window all night on one occasion I started to wet the bed. If you did wet the bed you got a slap and the staff called you "stinky" and made you wash the sheets yourself.

Abuse at Bellfield, Dumbarton

25. I didn't receive any abuse in Bellfield but I did witness it. However, there was one occasion that I was caught talking in the dorm and I was told by the night watchman to stand at the open window for hours with my top off. It was winter. I'm sure that's what led to me wetting the bed.
26. If you did anything untoward you got a slap but that was about it. As I said earlier, those that ran away got a beating and put in the cooler. I had to feed the boys that were put there but I wasn't allowed to speak to them. They could be in there for days and would only have a mattress to sleep on.
27. I don't recall the names of any of the boys put in there. The cell was right next to the kitchen which is why I was able to see the boys being dragged in there. They were stripped naked before being beaten by the staff who were mainly ex-army and one of those was Mr ^{GVZ} [REDACTED].
28. I didn't actually see any of the boys being beaten but I saw the boys when I brought their food to them and I saw the injuries, especially the black eyes. I felt so sorry for those boys and thought it was terrible the way they were treated.

Leaving Bellfield, Dumbarton

29. I was taken to a children's panel after three weeks in Bellfield and they sent me back there. After another three weeks I went back to a children's panel and they said they had found a place for me which was at St Joseph's in Tranent.

St Joseph's, Tranent

30. I think it was the probation officer David Hunter who took me to St Joseph's. When we got there we went through the gates and I was then taken to see Brother ^{MJF} who was ^{SNR}.
31. A woman then came in and took me to the kit room where I was given my uniform and bedding. She allocated me a number and I was [■]. She then took me to the dorm I had been allocated to and told me "just behave". The place had a gym, a dining hall and dorms.
32. There were about 120 boys in St Joseph's and the place itself was massive and was run by The De La Salle Brothers. The ones I remember were Brothers Benedict, ^{MJF} and ^{MJC} who was ^{SNR} and was the one who meted out the punishment. There was also Brother ^{MBZ}.
33. The Brothers I have named are the only ones I recall but there must have been others. There were also civilian staff including Mr Clayton who taught English, Mr ^{GVX} who was the woodwork teacher, Mr ^{MJK} who taught metalwork and Mr McCallum the PE Teacher. Others I recall were Mr ^{GVW}, Mr ^{GZI}, Mr Kennedy, Mr McKinnon and Mr ^{MJM} who was the gardener.
34. We were split into houses and each house wore its own colour of uniform. These were De La Salle (yellow), St Andrew's (blue), St Columba's (green) and St Ninian's (maroon). On days like sport's days the houses would compete against each other.
35. My house for a year was De La Salle and Mr ^{GVW} was the house-master. Mr Kennedy was house-master for St Andrew's. Mr McKinnon was house-master for St Columba's and Brother Benedict was house-master for St Ninian's.
36. There were two other cottages on the grounds called Savio House and Ogilvie House. These houses held boys being prepared for release or who were of exemplary

behaviour. After a year I was put into Ogilvie House which was run by Mr and Mrs Burns.

37. I didn't know at the time that St Joseph's was a List D School but I soon cottoned on. I was told to behave by Brother ^{MJF} who told me what the basic rules were. The Brothers and staff called us by our numbers unless we were on our own.
38. There were about four of us in each dorm though we weren't split into our houses when in these dorms. I recall my dorm was above the headmaster's room. You weren't allowed photos in your dorms and all you had was your bed and a wardrobe.

Routine

39. The night watchman woke us up at 7:00 am. We then showered and shaved before going back to our dorms where we were told to stand outside our rooms. We then got dressed and went for breakfast before going to assembly which was at 8:45 am. There we would be told what was happening that day. After assembly we went to class.
40. Mr ^{GW} ^{SNR} took assembly and if he caught anybody talking he would take them out of line and slap them.
41. In the evening we would play football or whatever. Later at night we would go to bed about 9:00 pm.

Food

42. I remember we would get cereal or porridge for breakfast and the food was alright. You were never force fed if you didn't like something. I don't recall anybody not liking the food which was cooked by the dinner ladies. We would sit four to a table in one big room.

School

43. All I recall about school was arithmetic which was taught by Brother ^{MBZ} and English which was taught by Mr Clayton and you really only learnt you're A,B,C s. The classrooms weren't in the same building as the dorms and there were between fifteen and twenty boys in each class. There was also woodwork, metalwork and you would help out in the garden.

Health

44. The only ill health I had was mental health due to the fact I never had anybody to speak to, nobody to turn to who I could explain what was happening to me. I never saw a doctor. If you hurt yourself you just went to the kit lady. I never saw a dentist during my time at St Joseph's.

Trips

45. We would go to Forfar to pick berries for four weeks for which we would get 1p per pound and while there would stay forty to a billet. A skeleton staff would accompany mainly made up of the Brothers. I think the Brothers made more money out of it than us.
46. We also went to the pictures and went swimming in Lockerbie, Edinburgh which was run by nuns. That was also the place you went to on a Sunday if you didn't get to go home.

Recreation

47. We did the high jump, the long jump, played football and went on runs. During recreation we played a lot of football but you could more or less do what you want as long as you stayed within the grounds. There was also table-tennis and a pool table.

Religion

48. St Joseph's was very big on religion, the whole place was run on it. If you had been in trouble for swearing or whatever you would get woken up at 5:00 am to go to the chapel to repent. The headmaster took the service and you had to show him you were repentant.

Possession/pocket-money

49. We didn't have any personal possessions and while we weren't given any money we were allowed so much a week with which we could get sweets. We would be given the sweets and whoever served us would deduct the cost of the sweets from a total we were allowed.

Christmas/birthdays

50. I don't recall Christmas or a birthday being celebrated in St Joseph's. I do recall that if you sent a letter home that it would be censored especially if you spoke about being assaulted. If you did that they would make you change what you had written.

Visits

51. I didn't get any visitors while there and I don't recall anybody ever getting a visitor though that was probably because most got home for the weekend. Sometimes I didn't get home for months at a time because I hadn't achieved the necessary thirty points.
52. I didn't get any visits from social workers and if there were any official visitors who inspected the place then it was something I was not aware of.

Running away

53. I never ran away. I wouldn't have known where to go.

Bed wetting

54. If you had wet your bed you had to take your wet sheets down to the kit room having to walk by all the other boys as you did. They would call you “stinky” and it was really humiliating.
55. If you said you hadn’t wet the bed when you had then whichever Brother was on duty would punch and kick you for lying. This happened to me two or three times a week until I stopped wetting the bed. I think I stopped out of fear of being further assaulted.

Discipline

56. There was a points system whereby every boy started off with twenty points and if you got to thirty points you were allowed home at the weekend. They would add points for good behaviour but also deduct points for anything deemed to be bad behaviour.
57. You would also be given the belt for certain offences like swearing, smoking or fighting. Basically you could get the belt for anything they thought you did that was breaking some rule or other.

Abuse at St Joseph’s, Tranent

58. Brother ^{MJF} [REDACTED], ^{SNR} [REDACTED] was alright but life in general in St Joseph’s was horrible. You couldn’t wait until you got home for the weekend.
59. If you had a complaint you took it to your housemaster. On one occasion I had been beaten up by Brother ^{MBZ} [REDACTED] in class simply because I struggled to do my sums. He punched, kicked and slapped me as if I was an adult calling me a “thick bastard”. He hit me wherever he could and I was bruised to bits. Not on my face, he wasn’t daft.
60. So, I complained about this to Mr ^{GVV} [REDACTED] my housemaster who said he would record the incident. The next thing I knew I was called to see ^{SNR} [REDACTED] Brother ^{MJG} [REDACTED]

who gave me six of the belt in front of Brothers ^{MBZ} and Benedict for making false accusations. It was agony.

61. My housemaster Mr ^{GVV} also deducted points from me and I had to get up at 5:00 am to go to chapel and repent. I also wasn't allowed to go home which all meant that I was punished in four different ways for something I hadn't done as the accusations I had made against Brother ^{MBZ} weren't false. They were true.
62. Because of the way I was treated that became the only occasion I ever complained after being assaulted by a member of staff.
63. Mr ^{MJK} was the metalwork teacher and would whack you on the backside, over your shorts, with a metal ruler which was extremely painful. The woodwork teacher, Mr ^{GVX}, did the same only he used a length of wood. That sort of stuff happened every day to one boy or another.
64. If Brother Benedict caught you talking in the ranks he would batter you in the ribs with his knuckles. The civilian staff stood and watched this but did nothing about it. He used to also have two brass bars that he would get you to hold in each hand. He would then wind this machine up and give you an electric shock.
65. This happened on a regular basis, every week, and was extremely painful and made you nauseous. I would be sick after each time it happened to me. He did it to all the boys.
66. Brother Benedict was probably the most evil of the Brothers and I often saw boys crying and when you asked them what had happened they would say "It was that Brother Ben" which was how the boys referred to Brother Benedict.
67. Brother ^{MJF} was alright and was sympathetic to us. He showed us empathy and kindness but was the only Brother at St Joseph's that I would describe in such a way. He died about six years ago. The rest of the Brothers were dreadful and made our time in St Joseph's one of humiliation and degradation.

Leaving St Joseph's, Tranent

68. After being in St Joseph's for just over a year I was put into Ogilvie House run by Mr and Mrs Burns. One day Brother ^{MJF} [REDACTED] called me down and told me that they had found my mother and he asked me if I was willing to stay with her. I immediately said yes and he then told me I would be going home the next day.
69. I was the happiest boy in the world at that point and thought I had won the lottery.
70. I found out later that my mum had never been told that I was in St Joseph's. She and my step-dad came to collect me the next day and took me home with them. That was the first time I had seen her in about five years. I was actually taken home by a member of staff called ^{GZI} [REDACTED] who went into my mum's house to make sure it was clean and fit to live in. My mum and step-dad followed us home in their car.
71. My mum's house was in Condorrat and my two sisters and my step-sister were there. My step-brother [REDACTED] hadn't been born yet. I was so happy to be there with them. It was only when I got to my mum's that she told me she hadn't known where I was and that it had actually been the staff at St Joseph's who had traced her. Apparently if they had traced her earlier then I would have left St Joseph's earlier.
72. While staying with my mum I worked in a shop called [REDACTED]. Part of my work involved opening boxes using a Stanley knife. One night I was heading home and still had the knife in my pocket. I did not know it at the time but the local police had an ongoing feud with my step-father.
73. So I got off the bus one night and was immediately grabbed by two police officers. They searched me, found the Stanley knife and arrested me for possession of an offensive weapon. I was taken to Dumbarton Sheriff Court and, despite my boss appearing as a witness and explaining why I would have had the knife on me, I was convicted and given three months and was sent to Glenochil Young Offenders Unit.

Glenochil Young Offenders Unit

74. I was sixteen when I first went to Glenochil. It was a dreadful place that was very regimented and run like a boot-camp. When I arrived I was processed by them taking all my details and was then put in a small cell called a dog-box, so called because they were only big enough to hold a dog.
75. The routine was strict as, I believe all the staff were ex-army. I recall a Mr ^{GVY} [REDACTED] and a Mr ^{KFL} [REDACTED] though the only reason I remember their names is because they were the ones who assaulted me. I don't recall the names of the other staff.

Routine

76. We would get up at 7:00 am and make our bed-block up. We would then get washed and dressed and go for breakfast. After breakfast we were on parade in a big square on the grounds. At parade the Governor would tell us the agenda for the day and we would then go to our work party.
77. We would clean the dinner-hall, strip old phones, clean the gym and clean the place in general. We would go for lunch about midday and then back to work in the afternoon. Tea would be about 5:00 pm and then you were locked up till 6:00 pm when we would have about two hours recreation which was really just reading newspapers. You would be back in your cell after that and lights out would be at 9:00 pm.

Food

78. The food wasn't great but was alright. You ate whatever was put in front of you as you were always hungry.

Washing

79. You washed in the morning and showers were available more or less whenever you wanted though you had to ask permission to get out of your cell to have one. The rules said you had to have at least one shower a week.

Doctors/dentists

80. The medical treatment was dire and basically involved getting a paracetamol for whatever was wrong with you. I don't recall doctors ever coming in to see us. The place had a dentist who would come in from outside once a week. If you had toothache you had to suffer it until the day he came in.

Trips/visitors

81. We never went on any trips outside the place and you weren't even allowed visitors though that may have been because we were only in for a few months.

Christmas/birthdays

82. I don't think I was in Glenochil at Christmas and I have no recollection of a birthday being celebrated.

Abuse at Glenochil Young Offenders

83. I was in the dining-hall one day and, having only been in for a week, was not aware of the fact that we weren't allowed to talk. I tried to talk to one of the boys who was sitting opposite me and thought he was just being ignorant by not talking to me. After dinner I went back to my cell.
84. Shortly thereafter two prison officers, Mr ^{KFL} [REDACTED] (who was about 70) and Mr ^{GVY} [REDACTED] who had red hair, came into my cell and gave me the kicking of my life. I was only a

wee boy but they attacked me as if I was an adult. They battered my ribs especially and my nose was bleeding after it. They used both their fists and their boots on me.

85. Afterwards I was in agony but there was no suggestion that I would receive medical treatment. I certainly didn't talk in the dining room again. The other boys warned me not to make a complaint as it would just happen to me again.

Leaving Glenochil Young Offenders.

86. I left Glenochil simply because I completed my sentence.

Life after being in care

87. After St Joseph's I went to Our Lady's High School in Cumbernauld but I wasn't interested in education. I left school at sixteen and stayed with my mum until I was 23 when I moved to Kirkintilloch.
88. By the time I moved to Kirkintilloch I was an alcoholic and getting into a lot of trouble being drunk and getting into gang fights. I ended up in and out of borstal and jail. I now stay alone in a flat.
89. I worked at various things during my life like in a foundry and at McVitie's but, mainly, I worked as a labourer. I have two daughters from relationships with two different women. My oldest daughter is 43 and the youngest is 23 but I don't keep in contact with either of them.

Impact

90. When I came out of St Joseph's I just wanted to forget about it. I took to drink because it helped me forget though maybe I just had my dad's genes. Being in St Joseph's affected my relationships, my ability to make friends and my ability to get employment.

It also affected my education though, later in life, I went to college and obtained qualifications.

91. I even helped out on children's panels for three years but had to give it up because I simply couldn't be part of anything that was involved in putting children into the sort of place that I had been in. I am actually now a qualified care worker though I haven't yet put that qualification to use.

Reporting of Abuse

92. I never did tell anybody about the abuse I endured until the last couple of years. I didn't even tell my mum. A solicitor called Cameron Fyffe was a person I told. Then I got told about INCAS by my nephew who suspected there was something wrong with me, especially because I was drinking so much, and he became the first person I spoke to about my time in care.

Records

93. I got told that I had to go to an archive place in Edinburgh to get my records but I never followed that through. I'm not really interested in getting them now.

Lessons to be Learned

94. No child deserved to be brought up in such conditions. They said that what we got was corporal but it wasn't, it was child abuse. Children shouldn't be treated like that. Things have improved as in those days children's panels were punishment exercises, now it's about rehabilitation.
95. Things can be further improved by the proper inspectors being sent in regularly to these places and the proper records of such visits being kept. Children should be treated with respect and be seen as human beings.

96. 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.....
 MOJ

Dated..... 13/6/2019