

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GFX

Support person present: No.

1. My name is GFX. My date of birth is 1971. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Irvine and brought up in Ayr. I have a sister called [REDACTED] but unfortunately she has passed away. She was born on [REDACTED] 1974. I don't know my father. My mum is the youngest of seven brothers and sisters. My granny died when my mum was fourteen so my mum's elder sister and her husband, [REDACTED], brought her up. My Auntie [REDACTED] was quite a strict woman. There was only five or six years between her eldest son and my mother.
3. My mother was [REDACTED]. She was born in [REDACTED] 1952. In the early days, my mum wasn't around a lot so as a young child, my early years were spent round at my auntie and uncle's house. They were like my mother and father and the only stability in my life. Their four kids were like brothers and sisters to me.
4. So we used to spend a lot of time at my auntie's. My sister came along when I was three. Obviously I don't remember that. My mum got a house in [REDACTED] in Ayr when I was five and my sister was two. I started the primary school in Braehead [REDACTED] [REDACTED] When I was in primary three we moved to [REDACTED] which was about half a mile down the road.

5. My mother was always away working. She used to go to the American Navy base in Dunoon to work as a prostitute. She was involved with sailors. She would tell us that she was going away for the weekend but would come back two or three weeks later. My earliest memories are that she would come back laden with presents to try to buy our affection. It didn't really have any impact because we had Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED] as a family unit.
6. Life was relatively normal, we would go to school and play in the street. I had lots of cousins, friends and family. My Auntie [REDACTED] returned from America with her five sons. I had met them once before when I was an infant. They were my first cousins. They moved back to Ayr. They were a big part of my childhood from then on. They were more my age.
7. I had a relatively normal childhood. When I was ten I started to excel at football and other sports. I was one of the youngest pupils in Scotland to achieve a Gold Thistle Award. Between ten and twelve I grew very quickly to six feet two and became physically bigger. After this period, my relationship changed with my mother as she could not physically dominate me in the same way as before. She could no longer give me regular beatings.
8. When I was ten, my mum decided to move to Dunoon. This was the one time I was exposed to the prostitution my mum had been involved in in earlier years in my childhood. I had been going to Braehead Primary School up until I was in primary six. After we moved, I went to Hillfoot Primary School. We returned to Ayr the following year, we were put into emergency housing at [REDACTED] Caravan Park for a year then we moved to Cumnock.
9. There was a chain of events leading up me to going into care, the first was a sexual assault on me by a woman who came to visit one of my mum's friends [REDACTED] at her house in Greenock. This happened the weekend we moved to Dunoon. We spent the weekend at [REDACTED]'s house prior to taking the boat to Dunoon on the Monday morning. The house was full of women and children. I was the only boy. We were all sharing a two bedroom house. The friend of [REDACTED]'s who visited spent a few hours at the house

through the day, I was the eldest so I was still up late. The woman said to my mother that because I was the only boy, that she had a spare room and that if I wanted I could sleep there. My mother asked me if that was okay and I said yes. I wouldn't have had issues. I don't know who the woman was but I know where the flat is because it was diagonally across the street from [REDACTED]'s house. The woman was in her mid to late twenties. I think she was between five foot three and five. She had long brown hair, was rotund and large chested. Once I went to her house, I had a wash. She showed me the room and went into sleep there. I took my T-shirt but left my shorts on. I jumped into the bed and fell asleep straight away. When I woke up she was in the bed next me naked. She had pulled my shorts and pants down so that my penis was exposed. She was touching and feeling my penis. The reason I remember her large breasts because they were on my face and I couldn't breathe. I felt suffocated. I remember her making noises and playing with herself. There was no attempt at sexual intercourse. She told me it was our little secret and that I could go back to sleep. I woke up in the morning and left. I went home and told my mum what had happened. I got a slap on the face and round the ear and told to start causing trouble.

10. Shortly after the incident with the woman, we had moved to Dunoon. My mum was having lots of American sailors to the house. After I had been there for a couple of months, one of my mum's friends, [REDACTED] was in the room with one of the American sailors. My mum made me sneak into the room to steal his wallet. I did it but I got caught. The guy started smacking me around. My mum started hitting me to pretend it had been me and not her who had coaxed me do it. My mum's friend, [REDACTED] had to stop them both hitting me.
11. After being beaten for trying to steal the wallet, I ran away trying to get back to Ayr but it was dark and I was tired. I fell asleep on a bench in a bowling green in Weymss Bay. It was summertime so it wasn't cold. I stole some ferry tickets to get back to my Auntie [REDACTED]'s in Ayr. The police found me and took me back to Greenock. My mum had to come to get me the next day. The police asked some questions about why I was running away. I was always direct. I told them but they didn't do anything and gave back to my mum. My mum told the police that I was making things up so that I could

go back to my aunt's in Ayr. That was her cover, saying that I was unsettled and making stories up.

12. My mum is a very controlling person and due to my personality it created a lot of conflict between us. I used to challenge her and tell her that I wasn't her servant. She used to try to make me go to the shop for her and make other demands. Due to my staying up late with men, in my eyes as a child, she was not doing what a mother should do. I would have to cook for my little sister and work milk rounds to get money for food. I would bring milk, cornflakes and bread home from when I had done my milk round in the morning. My mother wasn't doing her motherly duties. For me, she wasn't being a mother. She had exposed to us to what my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED] had protected us from. It was around this time that I realised that my mother was never going to be a normal mother. Even at a young age I was direct in saying that she couldn't treat people like that. My sister, [REDACTED], was different, she was very easy going and didn't like confrontation. Her nature was to not argue or fight with anyone. The conflict between my mother and I hurt her because she loved us both dearly.
13. The physical abuse from my mum was constant at a younger age. When I went through my growth spurt her physical domination over me literally stopped overnight so that she could no longer slap, punch or kick me. That's when the beatings started with whatever she had to hand. She battered me with brushes, hoovers, anything she had in her hand because she couldn't physically hit me anymore. She would beat me to the ground with brushes and mops. I can remember one time I came home dirty from playing football and she battered with a mop on the floor.
14. We moved back from Dunoon because some sailors made a complaint about money being stolen. A couple of sailors had gone to sleep with her and their money had gone missing. They reported it to the military police. I can remember the military police coming to the door. The local police were notified because my mum was a non-US personnel. Within a day or two we left and went back to Ayr.

15. We stayed in a caravan in [REDACTED] for a while. My mum let me stay with my Aunties so I stayed with my Auntie [REDACTED] and Auntie [REDACTED] during that period as it was difficult to get to school from the caravan site. I went to Mainholm School.
  
16. While I was in first year my mum moved to Cumnock. She was offered a one bedroom house in Cumnock. Cumnock was an old, manky mining village full of punks. I can't even put it into words how bad a place it was. I was a 'New Romantic' boy, who embraced the eighties' music. The people in Cumnock seemed to all be sniffing 'glue' and dressed as Sid Vicious, it was a time-warp kind of place. I didn't fit in and was getting into fights at school because I was different from everyone else, in the way I dressed. It was a terrible couple of months.
  
17. The social work involvement started then but I have blocked out a lot of the social workers. There are things that I can remember so vividly but not social workers names. It was around about this time that my mum put me into Coylton. My mother said she couldn't control me. I didn't get an explanation for what 'out of control' meant. I also think my mother was telling the social workers that I was physically beating her. All I kept saying was I want to stay with my family, my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED] but she wouldn't let me stay with them. I think she was scared that I would tell the rest of the family the truth about what went on in Dunoon. I think they knew already but nobody talked about it.
  
18. I ran away again after one of my mum's boyfriend's friends sexually assaulted me at my mum's house. I came out of the house in Cumnock, got onto the A70 and hitched a lift to Carlisle. I then slept on the side of the road, the M6, in a bush, I got another lift from a truck driver to Newark. I was stopped by the police on the side of the bypass. I told them I was only eleven and they didn't believe me. They arrested me for walking on the side of the road. They arrested me and then took me to the police station. They put me in a men's cell. After a few hours, someone came and took me out and apologised. They gave me a ham sandwich, a packet of crisps and a can of coke. A female social worker came and took me to a children's home in Newark. I can't remember the name. My mother drove to Newark with my cousin, [REDACTED] They

arrived late at night. My mother slapped and punched me the whole way back. She wouldn't let me go to sleep.

19. I think they were trying to get me to go to school through the day being in the home. I was going home to my mother's at the weekend. I was going to Coylton and having to take the bus to go to Cumnock Academy. The issue was that I wanted to go to school with all the people I had grown up with, like my cousins, in Ayr and not in Cumnock. I was going back to Coylton to take the bus to go to Cumnock Academy.

**Coylton, South Ayrshire**

20. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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- 21.
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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34. I went home for the weekends. By then, my mum was working in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in Cumnock. She worked in the bar and would pick guys up and get them to pay for sex. She was always bringing men back to the house late at night. I was twelve then but to the guys I looked much older. It was starting to be a problem for her because I was telling her to stop it. She lived in a two bedroom flat. When I was there, I was trying to be the 'man of the house'. I was starting to assert myself to protect my little sister and mother didn't like it. I was concerned these guys could do something to my wee sister.

35. One weekend, my mother working and she left me in the house with [REDACTED]. I had some pocket money from Coylton so my sister and I bought ginger, sweets and crisps with the money. We were watching films together. My sister went to bed at about ten o'clock and I was sleeping on the sofa. I can remember the doorbell rang at about one o'clock in the morning, my mum came back with one of her boyfriend's, [REDACTED] and another guy who was dressed in jeans and a black leather jacket. At the time, he was a typical punk looking guy from New Cumnock. He had that crazy, biker punk look. [REDACTED] was from New Cumnock. I went back to the sofa with my blanket to try to sleep. They had gone into the kitchen to eat a takeaway and were making a lot of noise. I asked my

mum to keep the noise down as I was tired and wanted to get to sleep as I was returning early to Colyton the next day.

36. I don't know how much time passed but I fell asleep again. My mum had one of those big chairs which hung from the ceiling. I heard a noise and turned in my sleep as I could sense a presence of somebody in the room. A short time later, I woke up and the punk rocker man had pulled my pants down and was masturbating me. He had his trousers down round his ankles and was kneeling down on the floor, rubbing me with one hand and touching himself with the other hand. It all happened really quickly, it was dark but the light was on in the hallway. As I realised what was happening I pulled my legs up towards my body and kicked him with both my feet, I hit on the chest and he fell onto the floor, I screamed "what the fuck he was doing" and called him a "kiddie fiddler". I reacted aggressively and kept shouting "what are you doing?" and he pretended he was drunk and kept saying he didn't know what had happened.

37. My mum and her boyfriend, [REDACTED], came running through and started shouting "what's going on?". I remember [REDACTED] grabbed the guy and dragged him away to the other side of the room and my mum took me out of the living room and into the hallway. At this point, the guy kept saying that he was sorry and that it had been a misunderstanding. He started offering my mum money to forget about it. The man who sexually assaulted me then left the house. My mother never called the police. She sent me back to sleep on the sofa.

38. I remember the man kept saying to my mum that he would pay money if she didn't say anything or call the police. The next day, my mother walked partially on the road to school with me and stopped at a house where I saw the same guy come out. I now know that she had taken the money. On the Monday evening I went back to the home

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

The following weekend I sent back to my mum's as normal but I never stayed, I ran away. I climbed out the window on the second floor of the flat and started walking on the road going towards Carlisle and

got a lift from a truck driver who dropped me off in Carlisle. I then slept on the side of the motorway overnight. I didn't really know where I was going, I was just trying to get as far away as I could. I was eventually picked up by the police on the A1, near the town of Newark. They took me to a local children's home and the next day my mother and my cousin [REDACTED] came to take me back to Coylton. About a week or so later, I was on my way to Kerelaw.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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**Darvel Children's Home, Darvel, East Ayrshire**

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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**Kerelaw Residential School, Stevenson, Ayrshire**

46. After about two weeks in Darvel, a different social worker came and picked me up and told me I was going to Kerelaw. I remember the day vividly and asking her "what's Kerelaw?" and "why are you taking me there?" but she never gave me a proper answer. I remember we drive via Kilwinning into Stevenson and drove up a country lane and arrived at Kerelaw. There was a playing field at the back of the grounds behind the staff houses and to the right at the entrance was the secure unit. We drove past the buildings and the unit and we stopped at the middle building of four at the bottom of Kerelaw. I remember there were two buildings in the middle that were connected and two separate buildings one on either side. There were four units in

Kerelaw. It was like the two buildings which were connected by a hallway and then there was another two on the other side.

*First impressions*

47. My first impression was bleak and the first staff member I met inside was a large English guy called [zFSB]. He was a key worker who run the unit I was in but also helped out with the sports with [FSR]. As my time passed in Kerelaw I realised [zFSB] was a horrible man and almost from day one, I saw how he bullied, physically abused the other boys including myself. [zFSB] liked to taunt the boys including myself with phrases such as "your life has changed now" and "we'll teach you to be a man". He would continuously say told me "things were different now" and that this "wasn't in a children's home now". In retrospect, I believe that [zFSB] was a He was a control freak and thrived on the power and physical domination he had over most of the boys in the unit.
48. The first time I ran away from Kerelaw I'd only been there for a few days, [zFSB] had given me a proper beating in my bedroom. The reason he gave me the beating was a boy from Hurlford who was called [redacted] had jumped on my back in the recreation room. I spun him around and threw him off my back where he fell and hurt himself off a table. [zFSB] came in and saw [redacted] lying on the floor pretending to cry saying that I had beat him. [zFSB] then grabbed me by the back of my hair and started to drag me down the corridor towards the bedrooms. I told [zFSB] he was hurting me and to let my hair go but he did not. I tried to explain to him that [redacted] had jumped on my back without provocation and I had simply thrown him off my back. [zFSB] continued to drag me by the hair upstairs to my bedroom which was at the far end of the right hand corridor. Once in my room, [zFSB] closed the door behind and he started raining punches on my body. I fell to the ground and curled up and tried to protect myself and [zFSB] continued to punch me in my back, legs and head for about another two minutes.

49. zFSB was a big, heavy man, probably about twenty-odd stone, a big, bulky man. After the beating my legs and back had bruises. He told me that "eventually I would learn the hard way if I did not play by his rules". Later that evening I climbed out of the window and dropped down the two floors. I was followed by two other boys, one I only remember as [REDACTED] and another boy from Glasgow.
50. I think I was fortunate that I had run away that night with [REDACTED]. He came with me when I said I was leaving. We ran towards Ardler plant avoiding the main roads going cross-country. We ended up crossing into Irvine bay which is between Stevenson and Irvine as I had said to the others we should keep off the road. As we started to head towards Irvine, we ended up getting stuck in the marshlands where it was very wet and boggy and boggy. [REDACTED] couldn't swim and he started to panic. We finally reached the edge of Irvine harbour where the water was getting higher, and coming up to our chest as I was a strong swimmer I swam to a rowing boat, I loosened the rowing boat from the boat it was tied to and rowed over to get [REDACTED] and the other boy. As we were rowing towards the harbour side a police car passed, saw us and picked us up. I think my actions helped cement my friendship with [REDACTED]
51. After the events at Irvine Harbour, on our return to Kerelaw, I shared a room with [REDACTED] who was a physically dominant boy for his age. He was a skinhead covered in tattoos. He was so tall that he made me look small. Sharing the room with [REDACTED] and having his friendship made my time in Kerelaw somewhat easier as indirectly being a friend of [REDACTED] meant that a lot of staff and boys did not physically confront me thereafter. The teachers and social workers were terrified of him as everybody knew he had stabbed teachers in school and stabbed his father. These were the reasons he was in Kerelaw. That was predominately the kind of kid who was in Kerelaw. They were mostly in there for violent behaviour either at home, in school or outside. I was not like them, I was only sent to Kerelaw for refusing to go Cumnock Academy in my mind.
52. After we ran away, we were taken to the headmaster's office. I remember his name was John Muldoon. During the meeting, he admonished the three of us for running away and bringing police attention to the school. When he was telling us off, I sniggered at something he said and he smacked me with the back of his hand twice

on the head. Generally, if the boys were put in front of him, there was a fear there. Thereafter, I didn't personally have a lot of interaction with him.

53. There was a lot a of kids in Kerelaw. The units were separate. The classrooms were on the grounds. We tended to go to classes with the boys from our unit. The classes were not held by age groups which I think made learning difficult due to the big differences in age and ability level. We didn't really interact with boys from the other units except from during sport. We played lots of sports against the local schools in the area. I played in the Kerelaw school football team. That was an uproar because we were the boys from the "bad school". So it wasn't always a nice experience.
54. I think they started bringing girls there after I'd been there for a while. There were maybe twenty to thirty boys per unit. There were three or four bedrooms on each landing on each side. There were two boys to each room. There were also a couple of day boys too. I remember one guy from Saltcoats. His name was [REDACTED]. He was a day boy. Another boy I remember was [REDACTED] from Blantyre, he had a big machete scar down his back. The other guy I remember was called [REDACTED] and he from a really rough area in Greenock. I remember he was a really good footballer. All the boys were rough and violent and tended to come from violent backgrounds. The boys were Academy school age and up. There were no young kids. I was one of the youngest there.
55. The other staff I remember were Matt George and [REDACTED] FSR. I think most staff rotated around but Matt George, [REDACTED] FSR and [REDACTED] zFSB were permanent staff. I think they also did sleep ins. Some staff stayed on site. There were staff houses on the grounds where [REDACTED] zFSB stayed. That's probably why he stands out more for me along with his physical and mental abuse. I did not have as much interaction with [REDACTED] FSR and Matt George as I did with [REDACTED] zFSB.
56. John Muldoon was the boss. I don't know what his exact job title was but he seemed to me to be the headmaster. He was always dressed in a suit, the other staff were all very casual. [REDACTED] FSR was the PE teacher. He was Scottish but I think he had an English accent because he had football in England and had been there for a long time.

I remember he said it was [REDACTED] he played for. He was five eight or nine and had blondish hair. I also remember he was balding at the front. I can't remember [REDACTED]'s surname. [REDACTED] was about six two, six three and looked like 'Jabba the Hut'. He had short, dark curly hair and in his mid-thirties I would say. Matt George had long, dark hair, a sharp nose and a moustache. He looked a bit like Bono from U2. From my perspective, they were the main abusers towards me.

#### *Daily routine*

57. The routine was we would get up in the morning, get washed, have breakfast and go to school. The school was within the grounds. You would go to your different classes. It was like a kind of normal school day. I can't remember there being loads of subjects or teachers. We went to classes which were done by unit, not based on your ability or age. I genuinely can't recall there being lots of classes like English. I only remember PE and Art. I don't remember being taught anything religious. I am sure there was but I can't recall them. There were some female teachers there but I didn't have any confrontation with them. The things that stick out are the four people who I remember. The worst person was [REDACTED] then Matt George, then [REDACTED] and then John Muldoon.

#### *Mealtimes/food*

58. The food was pretty basic, even for back then it wasn't very pleasant. A lot of the time, I wouldn't eat it. Even as a youngster I was interested in sports nutrition. I didn't eat chips or big plates of tatties. It was chips or tatties with something every day. You would eat with your arm over your plate because if you didn't someone would spit in it or steal it. There were punishments for everything, it was just constant, if you didn't eat or didn't help with the washing up etc., you would get forfeits. I remember there was like rotas for doing things. If you didn't do them, the staff would take away your pocket money.



*Personal possessions*

59. We had shared bathrooms. You had your own space in the room. The rooms were split up by a dresser and chest of drawers. You could take your own belongings in. I think they got grants to buy us clothes so you did get clothes from them. Back then I didn't have a lot of stuff. I tended not to stay in the games room because that's where a lot of the trouble was. I used to get a lot of books from my Uncle [REDACTED]. If you took stuff in, it generally got stolen or broken. It was that kind of environment. You were constantly on guard.

*Trips and holidays*

60. The only trips I can remember were sports trips to play local schools. I can remember playing St Columba's in Greenock and Auchendarvie in Saltcoats. I played football, rugby and basketball. I ran as well. There was a lot expected of us with the sport. I think maybe it was an attempt to help integrate the kids back into normal schools. I feel it didn't work because the other children from normal schools always down at the kids from Kerelaw. I remember they were scared of us. They were scared to tackle us at football. I remember we would always win the games easily.

*Healthcare*

61. I don't recall seeing a doctor or dentist when I was there. There was nothing like that. I used to always brush my teeth. I didn't eat sugary stuff. I had designs on wanting to be the next Allan Wells. He was my hero. I also loved cycling and the Tour De France. I loved sports in general. For me, my body was a temple back then. I was always trying to eat healthily in those days, but at Kerelaw the food options were very limited.

*Work*

62. We had a rota to do chores such as cleaning rooms, hoovering the landing, cleaning the toilets and doing the dishes. If you did not do what you were rotated to do they

were quite strict. I think pocket money was scaled depending on how you did your chores.

*Christmas/birthdays*

63. I think I would be at home for Christmas. For birthdays, I don't recall any special treatment. I certainly don't recall any birthday parties. I think there were boys who were kept in there because they couldn't go back home.

*Visitors*

64. Visitors were not allowed at Kerelaw and the only time I got to see family or friends would be by using pocket money to go visit them. I spent my pocket money which was a couple of pounds a week. I think it was linked to your age so I wasn't getting much. I used to keep my pocket money to use as a bus fare to get to Ayr to go to my Auntie [REDACTED]s because they would only give me a bus pass to go to Cumnock. I used to save my money.

*Culture*

65. In my opinion, the general culture in Kerelaw had a constant underlying threat of violence. Most of the children came from violent backgrounds and in my opinion, due to this most situations ended up with a physical altercation. Kerelaw is where I learned to fight. I had never really been in a fight until I was in Kerelaw. I had only ever had one or two scuffles as a young boy. In Kerelaw I had to learn to defend myself. I was tall and looked older than I was so I think the boys didn't know me saw as a boy around sixteen instead of a twelve year old. As I looked older and was tall, older boys wanted to me fight me to prove themselves. I remember every day in Kerelaw it felt like you were only seconds away from some kind of violence like a punch or a kick from another boy or a member of staff. For me every day was brutal and full of physical and psychological abuse.

*Discipline*

66. Discipline in Kerelaw was tribal. If you were in the wrong place at the wrong time and other boys starting fighting for example in the pool room and even though you had nothing to do with it everyone in the room would be punished. So simply because you were in the wrong place at the wrong time Kerelaw staff would take away your pocket money or your weekend leave on a whim. For me this type of discipline made me reclusive and want to just stay in my room away from the other boys as my weekend leave was too important for me mentally during this time.
67. Eventually I realised I was going to be in Kerelaw for a long time and to get through day to day you had to be complaint to an extent. I would fight back and react at times but ultimately it became the type of life where your daily routine was simply to avoid getting your privileges taken away from you. You always expected things to happen, there was always going to be something that you would get dragged into or blamed for, even if it was somebody who stole something or fights between the boys. One of the other forms of punishment was the staff would take away smoking privileges for children who were underage but staff were giving them money to buy cigarettes. This is unthinkable today.
68. During my time in Kerelaw zFSB in my opinion was the worst staff member for this type of collective punishment. zFSB thrived on creating animosity between the boys and he would enjoy turning the majority of the boys onto one kid by blaming them for the punishment given out to all the boys. The result of this is that that boy would be isolated from the rest of the boys and bullied and beaten on occasions. In my opinion, zFSB enjoyed this power and used it as some kind of narcissistic game to create a 'conquer and divide' environment. After this type of discipline the sad boy oy boys would be bullied and beaten until the next time zFSB chose to do a similar thing.
69. For me, I had the misfortune of a couple of swift 'backhanders' to the head from Muldoon after I'd run away. He wasn't happy about the fact I'd run away and brought the police there. He didn't like the attention to Kerelaw so he wasn't happy. He made it clear that if I brought the police there again there would be trouble. He threatened

us with the secure unit and being locked down. He hit me and another boy called [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] but he didn't hit [REDACTED]. It was enough to show me he meant business and think twice about it. I didn't run away again but I did not return after a weekend break. The social workers would come and pick me up from my Auntie [REDACTED]'s. From my memory there was no set rules or discipline each staff member seemed to have complete atonomy on how they chose to discipline the boys and if anybody complained about being punched or hit they were always either threatened with further physical violence or the threat of getting locked up in the secure unit.

### **Abuse at Kerelaw**

70. [FSR] [REDACTED] was the PE teacher at Kerelaw. His approach was always very physical, if we were playing football, for example, and a boy made a mistake or we had lost a game, he would get angry and aggressive. I remember he said he had been a professional footballer and had played for [REDACTED]. He said his nickname was [FSR] [REDACTED] because of the way he used to tackle. In my opinion he was the most adept at hiding the physical abuse, in the form of a tackle or any other contact sport or physical activity. Ultimately it was a man hitting a kid/s.
71. [zFSB] [REDACTED] used to help teach rugby. When he did, like [FSR] [REDACTED], he used rugby and the physical contact within rugby to inflict serious injuries on the boys. When I look back on it and recall the way he was tackling the boys when he was a twenty stone hooker it was staggering for me.
72. [zFSB] [REDACTED] was just an animal, you would be walking down to go to the games room and he punched you on the back of the head for no reason. He would just walk past as if nothing had happened. He was an antagonist. He always took things off the kids, such as cigarettes, bus passes or pocket money. He thrived on that, he loved it. He was my main antagonist.
73. [FSR] [REDACTED] and [zFSB] [REDACTED] were taking out their frustrations on boys, if they didn't do what they were saying. They took it out by being physical.

74. Matt George, the Art teacher, tried to sexually assault me. It was an 'open secret' that he was a 'kiddie fiddler'. He had a dark room in his art classroom where after taking photographs, he would choose individual boys that I now know that he took a liking to and he would make sexual advances whilst under the pretence of teaching the kids to develop photographs in the dark room.
75. I think it was the second time I was in his classroom, he asked me to come into the dark room. After about five minutes in the dark room he came up from behind me, and started groping me and trying to touch my testicle areas and my bum, he was all over me like an octopus with his hands going everywhere. Fortunately I was big enough to push away from him. I managed to get to the door and get out the room. I can remember coming back out and the other boys were all laughing. I vividly remember [REDACTED] laughing and when I walked towards him [REDACTED] asked me "did you try to touch you up?" I remember saying no because I was embarrassed. I sat down.
76. After that incident in the darkroom, while in his classroom, Matt George became very aggressive towards me he would hit me with dusters, rulers, anything he had in his hand. He would whack me on the back of the head or the ear. He was a terrible man. He was very physical but that wasn't just towards me, it was to others who also spurned his advances.
77. The boys laughed about what went on with Matt George. They would warn other boys and say things like, "you better watch him in there". He would brush it off and laugh. Looking back, we accepted it in an ironic sort of way. Obviously it wasn't acceptable but I think we looked at it like, if he was paying attention to 'weaker boys' then we were okay. It was that self-protection thing because you're focussed on yourself.
78. Over a period of time Matt George used to try to lure boys that had rejected him along with other boys by saying that he could take you to his nice, big house in Largs or out on his boat. He also used to select boys to go out on day trips to paint outside or do art projects. The boys who went out on trips tended to boys who hadn't spurned him. I didn't go out on those trips and I didn't go to his house. I don't know if he even had a big house or a boat but I do remember he used to say that. I think inside I knew myself

not to go because I had already had the experience with my mum's friend and with him in the darkroom. Retrospectively, Matt George was a constant menace in a sexual manner by using his position to try to constantly try to get boys isolated in his own space.

79. There was a high turnover of boys, coming and going all the time, so there were probably a lot of new victims, but his attention would still turn to the boys who had been there for a while and try to 'sweet talk them'. So there was a perpetual cycle of violence, hitting you if you rebuffed him. I didn't talk about it with other boys about what he done to them but it was open knowledge.
80. After a period of time in Kerelaw, I learned that when I tried to fight back against the physical and mental abuse they took away your privileges. You were leaving yourself open to more abuse. This was an extremely vicious, violent circle and for me my main antagonist zFSB and being stuck there with him with nowhere to go is something I will never forget.
81. On the physical abuse side, all of the staff didn't hit me or any of the boys when [REDACTED] was in the room. [REDACTED] had a presence that put fear into them, he was never openly aggressive. However, my thoughts are that they knew he had committed violent acted in the past and therefore, never wanted to antagonise him.
82. On the mental side, staff would constantly use their inflated power to take away would take their cigarettes, pocket money or bus passes for going home at the weekend, if you complained and didn't do what they asked for the slightest reasons. That was a form of control. That form of control and power over children wouldn't be acceptable today.

### **Reporting of abuse**

83. The first time I reported abuse was at Coylton children's home after the sexual assault by the friend of my mother and I then further reported that the police and social work in England when I had been picked up after running away and the police took me to a

children's home in Newark in England. I'm not aware of anything happening as a result. I feel that this will be mostly because my mother told the police and social work in England that I was making this up and I had never been sexually assaulted.

84. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

As an adult that was the catalyst for me, I don't know what I had done to deserve what was happening to me, and nobody was listening to me, nobody believed me, they believed my mother . I wondered what I needed to do to show people that these things were true and happening in my life.

85. It had got to the stage that no one listened to what I said and nobody believed what I said because of what my mother saying that I was making it up and lying. Even as a twelve year old child, I quickly realised that futility was not worth fighting. That whole period of my life was futile. I remember telling my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED] that I was being hit by the staff at Kerelaw but I think they just thought it was part of being in a borstal.

86. My mum is a great manipulator, she obviously had the ability to make social workers believe that I was fabricating the things that were happening. I remember they tried to do mediation but as a child I went quiet in front of her in these meetings because I knew I would get a hiding at the weekend. I didn't speak in front of her in the meetings because it meant I got a hiding at the weekend.

### **Leaving Kerelaw**

87. I left when I was fifteen. They let me out in [REDACTED] 86 because I was going into fourth year. My mum had moved back to Dunoon and social work had decided that I should spend my last year at Dunoon Grammar. I was sent back to Dunoon to stay with my mother and I think that lasted for about a month before I realised that she was up to her old tricks. I fell out with her because she was up to her old tricks. She was managing a hotel called [REDACTED] which was owned by an Irish guy whose first name

was Charlie. The rooms were rented out to prostitutes who had American sailors coming back. I decided I wouldn't be staying there and I left and went to my Auntie [REDACTED]s in Ayr. This time my mother didn't try to stop me or intervene with social work.

### **Life after care**

88. After leaving Dunoon, my now lifelong friend [REDACTED] secured me a job as a trainee chef at the [REDACTED] in Sandbach in Cheshire. [REDACTED] parents like [REDACTED] were aware of my background and allowed me to stay with them to give me a chance in life.
89. After leaving care and leaving my other in Dunoon when I was sixteen, I did not return to Scotland until 2007. From 1987 to 2007, I left Scotland and never returned. The main reason for staying away was that I didn't want to have any relationship with my mother. However I kept in touch with her purely to keep a relationship with my young sister.
90. I qualified as a flambé chef but chose not to pursue that career. I moved to Bristol in 1989 and got a job with the Bristol Evening Post. This was the start of a long career for me in the media world where I went on to work for newspapers such as the Sunday Times, the Daily Mail group and the herald. I now have my own digital marketing consultancy.
91. In the early 2000s I met my wife when I was living in France and in 2004 we got married. In 2005 we had a son. His name is [REDACTED] I divorced from her in 2008 and I met my second wife in 2017. We got married in late 2021.
92. After I left Scotland I didn't speak much with my mother and had no real relationship with her. However, when I returned to Scotland my sister and my cousin convinced me that I should not deprive my mother or my son of having a relationship with each other. As my son got older he realised that things were not good between me and my mother. When he started school I would drop him every day at my mother's house but I would never go inside. He asked me on many occasions why I wouldn't go up to



gran's. I was ashamed and I didn't know how to explain to a ten year old child what my mother had done to me when I was a ten year old child.

### **Impact**

93. I have learned that my time in care had a larger impact on my life than I believed. Since I opened up and spoke about my experiences with my family which in turn led me to psychiatrists, the police and the Inquiry, I now realise that something that I thought in my mind I thought that I had put behind me was actually a huge burden I had carried my entire life. Unlike a lot of kids at Kerelaw, I was fortunate to have the unwavering support of my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED]. Fortunately for me, my family has been very supportive.
94. I can't complain about the life I've had in that I've lived and travelled around the world. I felt rage when I was speaking to the police about this. However, I've since spoken to a psychiatrist so I think I've channelled that better. Indirectly these experiences spurred me on to not allow people to be able to do these things to me. I've fought hard for equality. I think working for newspapers meant I gravitated towards truth. In those days when I was younger newspapers were pillars of truth.
95. For me, it's been a difficult journey to bring back many dark times in my life as a child that I had locked away. As an adult, I'm learning that for 35 years, I hid something that I was deeply shameful about. Through my journey in telling people about my time in care I now realise that I have been lying to myself, I have compartmentalised all of those experiences and surrounded myself with emotional walls. I wasn't aware that I was lying to myself until a series of consultations with a psychiatrists. None of my close friends knew that I had been in Kerelaw or care. To them I appeared as a smart guy, educated and was good at my job and this how my friends saw me but always in the back of my mind, I felt like no one really knew me and I felt like I was lying to my friends.

96. This emotional self-protection thing stuck with me my whole life. I don't think it's a good trait in a human being however this is the result and the impact of my four years in care at Kerelaw Secondary Institutions - to be published later
97. For me the legacy of Kerelaw was one of embarrassment and shame because if people knew you had been in a borstal they just assumed you had done something bad.
98. I think I've always felt it was an injustice that I essentially went to jail for three years for refusing to go to school and stay with my mother even though I had reported sexual, physical and mental abuse to social work. There were options there for social work, they could have chosen to let me stay with my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED], and they knew that support structure was there. I served time for nothing. That's why I think social work failed me massively as much as mother did when I was a child. My childhood was taken away from me by social work and my mother.
99. The impact on my education was hugely significant. Whilst in Kerelaw I do not recall doing any exams or preparing for any type of exams. In Kerelaw there was no structure to the education. Once I left Kerelaw I had to work very hard to give myself a proper education as a young adult. For me it was never that I didn't want to go to school or be educated it was simply because trying to run away from the mental, physical and sexual abuse that was happening in my home. I think a lot of my anger towards social work and the establishment is because they took away a really important part of my life.
100. I feel massively let down by the system. I was lucky that I had my own personal determination to make something of my life. A lot of other people crumbled. I can remember going for a job in Bristol, I lied and said that I had six O-Levels. They checked my school background. I was ashamed. I obviously didn't get the job. It had a massive impact on me. I realised this was going to affect me for the rest of my life unless I changed it. The injustices put on me by my time at Kerelaw were never going to get in the way of my dreams and what I wanted to achieve. The shame of losing that job I carried along with the shame of being in Kerelaw for all of my adult life but it

drove me to get educated, have a degree because I never wanted to experience feeling that small in front of someone again and I never wanted to be a liar because integrity is such an important thing for me as an adult. I think that was when I closed up more. This experience made me realise that my dreams and what I wanted to do could not be built by trying to hide my past.

101. In my adult life I have created many friendships that exceed 25 years plus. For me friendships, trust and loyalty are very important things. This comes from the stability that was given to my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED]. They have now been married for 63 years. My experiences in Kerelaw have not impacted on me starting relationships however almost all of my close friends and many of my close friends now still don't know about my experiences at Kerelaw as a child.
102. Since speaking to my psychiatrist after opening up about childhood experiences this has led me to see that I've lied to my friends because I've avoided certain subjects with them such as growing up when I was a kid and talking about my sister and my family. It has made me feel like part of my life has been false. However Once I started opening about my childhood experiences my very close friends were extremely supportive.
103. The sexual assaults didn't impact on me mentally as much as the physical and mental abuse suffered throughout my life because they were isolated incidents and not sustained abuse. I think the main reasons I never had sustained sexual abuse was due to my physical stature.
104. In my opinion social work have not changed much over the last thirty-odd years. They are like most government departments that have to go through reform, however everything is 'knee-jerk', and they go from one extremity to the other. For me, when people like social workers and the police have an element of power a lot of them don't know how to use it proactively. People, like social workers and the police, for me have forgotten their role in society. They forget that they are gatherers of information, however they like to act as if they are 'judge and jury'.

105. For me the impact of social work in my life has been immense both as a child and an adult. I have explained the shocking experiences in this statement about the lack of care that I received from social work and the amount of physical and mental abuse that I received at the hands of social workers during my time in care.
106. Today the two key antagonists in my life, my mother and the social work, have yet again worked together against me and have created a web of lies that I had assaulted my son. This allegation was taken to a children's panel and to a child welfare hearing where the case was dismissed out of hand by the sheriff and he made a special statement that my mother was one of the most unreliable witnesses that he had come across in his career. After the case had been thrown out of court I assumed that I would be able to see my son and have him returned to my home. After losing this case, social work, their lawyers and my mother set up another legal case for my mother to get parental rights to my son.
107. I am now in a position thirty five years later where social work along with my mother have blamed me for things that I have never done and have continued together to destroy my adult life and take away my right to be a father without any basis or foundation and in my opinion an important part of his government inquiry must consider that social work as an organisation does not have the power to dismiss the comments and the result of a hearing in a court and continued to involve themselves and take away the human rights of a father.
108. This Inquiry should not just focus on the abuse, physical, sexual and mental, it should also focus deeply on social work an organisation that in my opinion is not fit for purpose and is allowed powers which reach beyond the legal limits of a court and they are allowed to act with impunity and because of these reasons this is why ongoing abuse in social work run homes like Kerelaw happened 35 years ago and continues to happen today. If this review really wants to stop children being abused in care at the hands of social work then they must seriously consider disbanding social work as it stands as an organisation for the impunity it acts with both when I was a child and as an adult should not be allowed to supersede the law of the land and for me because

they have this power to destroy the lives of families and children is why we are having this type of Public Inquiry. You have to cut out the badness at the root.

### **Reporting of abuse**

109. I reported the assaults to the police about a year and a half ago. I have been interviewed by them on three occasions. They've also interviewed my Auntie [REDACTED] and Uncle [REDACTED], my cousins [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are looking at the incidents separately.

### **Treatment/counselling**

110. I am not getting counselling. I spoke to a psychiatrist which has been a big help. It was an education for me. I was still a bit uncomfortable talking about all of this. It has really helped me. I'm not overly fragile, I like to get on with things. I was closed emotionally about these things. However, I'm not a cold, emotionless person but if I cut off closed off and put up a brick wall. The sessions were extremely revealing for me, learning about myself and his perspective. He taught me to look at things in certain ways and to open my eyes to things I had hidden away. It was classic behaviour for someone who has been through significant abuse.

### **Records**

111. I got some compensation from the redress system because of my health and my illnesses. My lawyer has requested my records from the council. My files were with East Ayrshire and not South Ayrshire so there has been a delay. There is a hearing early next year.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

112. The systems have to be more robust because if these people are falling through the cracks then somebody has to ask why this is happening. The employment of carers

has to be more robust and more training and development. There should be more scrutiny in terms of government and how they oversee these organisations because they have a lot of autonomy. Ten thousand kids coming forward and showing systemic abuse varying across the whole of the country. Although I wouldn't point the fingers at the politicians, now we know it happened, we have to collectively make sure that it doesn't happen again to any child, that the system doesn't have any injustices that they are rooted out and dealt with swiftly.

113. For me, my mother and the social work were the catalysts for everything that happened in my life. The system is so heavily dominated and one sided against men. Men are seen as ogres. The social work do not record conversations, they hand write everything and that is why I call them 'corrupters of information' at the children's panel hearing. The system isn't fit for purpose. They have certain powers and if you are meek and don't challenge them they will maybe work with you a bit more.
  
114. I find it astonishing. They can basically say what they want and there is no proof. It's like 'he said, she said'. I find it staggering that they are allowed to do that in a modern society that social work are allowed to deal with such sensitive issues without recording information and it becomes their word against yours and given their power their word is listened to by the establishment. It's okay to put laws in to protect children and people from abuse but what is proved in a court is not what is happening in families lives'. I think that is where you have to learn more about reality. They are dealing with raw emotion and human beings and interpreting that into a form of law is never straight forward.

**Other information**

115. 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.....GFX.....

Dated.....02 June 2021.....