

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HPG

Support person present: No

1. My name is HPG though most people call me HPG. My date of birth is 1975. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in The Southern General Hospital in Glasgow and grew up in Govan in Glasgow. My parents were and and I had four sisters and a brother. Starting with the eldest these were and and I was the youngest. and have since died as has who was three years older than me and is a year older than me.
3. My dad was the gas lighter for the tenements as well as the watchman for the local community centre. I would describe both my parents as alcoholics. I thought life was easy and good as a child and I never went without food.
4. However, I refused to go to the local school, St Anthony's. I did go in one day in primary one but I got kicked out and never went back. I never did go to secondary school other than when I would get hold of somebody's dinner ticket and I would sneak into the dining room and use it.

5. I'm not sure when social workers first got involved with our family but I know some of my sisters ended up in The Good Shepherd in Bishopton, so I assume they were involved with our family by then. I know I was in some children's homes and was in Park Lodge Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I don't know how old I was at this point.
6. I might be getting Park Lodge mixed up with a place I was in in Glenrothes. I was also in Newfield near Johnstone Bridge but wasn't there long. There were probably other places I was in when I was younger but they've slipped my mind and I have no real recollection of these places.
7. I do recall one social worker arriving in a taxi to take me away but I refused to go with him until my mum got back from the shops and he was pushing and pulling me to try and get me into the taxi. I think his name was Joe Pontero. I think he took me to Larchgrove where I was for a short time, then to Cardross for a few weeks.
8. Because of the number of places I was in I get a bit confused about where I was and when. I have been in Larchgrove, Cardross, Park Lodge Glenrothes, Newfield, St Philips and Geilsland and maybe others. By this time I had been to various children's panels but I don't remember much about them and don't remember them saying I was to go to these places.
9. When I was about nine years old I went to Larchgrove with my brother [REDACTED] and that's where I started smoking. I was there for two or three weeks for an assessment, then home for two weeks and then went to Cardross Assessment Centre. In neither of these places did they ask me to start going to school.
10. I was in Cardross a few times for assessment before being moved to other places. I never had a problem with Cardross other than the fact that they took my clothes off me to stop me running away which I did just to get home. When I did run away from the various places I was in I would regularly get picked up by the police who, as often as not, would give me a kicking before taking me back though I would just run away again the next day after breakfast.

11. I would say that I went into actual care when I was nine or ten and was thereafter constantly in various places, including prison, until I was about 37. There are one or two places that I have a decent recollection of but most have just faded into the background of my memory and with regards to some of them I don't remember much at all.
12. I think the first place I remember is St Philip's in Airdrie and that may have been the place I went to in a taxi with Joe Pontero. Joe Henderson was my social worker after that.

St Philip's, Airdrie

13. I think I was around ten years old when I went here. St Philip's was made up of four units. There was Morag, one that became a staff unit, Arisaig and McKyloch. There were also staff quarters where the headmaster and the staff stayed. On the first day there was an argument about a tea pot and I refused to do what I was told. I hit somebody with the teapot and four members of staff grabbed me.
14. If you got into trouble you didn't get home at the weekend. Even if I was doing brilliantly in school I still wouldn't get home which was wrong. My brother [REDACTED] was in St Philip's at the same time as me. He was in a different unit but there were no restrictions about us seeing each other.
15. One of the staff was Mr Clark and another was big John Hewitt. My only complaint about him was the way he would elbow you in the face when playing football which I eventually gave up. I don't remember the names of any of the other boys but lots of them were in a lot of the same places as me.

Routine at St Philip's

16. We would get up, get washed and dressed then go for breakfast before going to school though most days I wouldn't go to school and would just run away. Sometimes the staff chased me but other times they just let me go as they knew I'd be back. In the evening we had some sort of activity and would sometimes be taken out in the mini-bus. We were allowed four fags a day but it was usually easy enough to get more. It didn't matter how old you were, you were allowed to smoke.
17. Sometimes in the summer weeks most of the boys would go home and I think the staff must have rented the place out because loads of handicapped people of all ages would stay there during those weeks.

Mealtimes/Food

18. We would all eat in the dinner hall for all our meals but the only meal I was usually there for was breakfast before running away. I don't remember what the quality of the food was like.

Washing/bathing

19. I don't remember anything about the washing facilities because I was rarely there and spent most of my time running away.

Trips

20. We would also be taken to the pictures but I would jump out to the toilet then just run away from the cinema. Sometimes when we were taken out in the mini-van by Mr [REDACTED] he would get us to steal wheel trims from cars. I don't know what he did with the trims we gave him.

Schooling

21. I can remember where the classes were in St Philip's but the only thing I recall of the education we got was the teacher reading *The Lion, The Witch and The wardrobe*.

Religion

22. While I was in St Philip's they made me get confirmed and I had to take the middle name of HPG [REDACTED] which was my brother's middle name. I wasn't given a choice in this matter and had to go along with it.

Running away

23. I was never in St Philip's that often because I ran away almost every day. Every time I ran away and then got taken back, I would just be told I wasn't getting home that weekend. When you didn't get home, you would just sit and watch a video or go out in the mini bus.

Visitors

24. While in St Philip's I never had any visitors either from the family or from Social Workers. If any officials came to inspect the place then I wasn't aware of it.

Abuse at St Philip's

25. The only thing I recall about abuse in St Philip's was the needle. I went to see the matron, a wee old woman with grey hair, when I was grabbed and injected in the shoulder with a needle. Apparently, it was a BCG jag but nobody warned me about it.
26. There was a punishment they used to do which was when you misbehaved they would take you out of the dorm in the middle of the night and make you stand in the corridor for hours and hours.

27. That's all I recall other than the way big John Hewitt played football. He was a big guy with black hair but I'm not making a complaint about him, it was just the way he played football.
28. Staff allowed and encouraged older boys to bully the younger ones to try and stop them running away. This did stop some running away but it never stopped me. One of them threatened me by saying if I ran away he would kick my head in when I got back but I just stuck the head on him and ran away the next morning. I never got any hassle after that.

Leaving St Philip's

29. I was in St Philip's for about three years but I would say that I was on the streets for about three quarters of my time there. Sometimes I would stay for a week and I think there was an occasion I stayed for about three weeks. I don't know why or how I came to leave but I think I went straight to Kerelaw. I was about thirteen years old because I was at Kerelaw for three years and they kicked me out when I was sixteen.
30. I know that at some point around this time I was also in Longriggend for about three weeks but I don't really have much of a recollection of my time there.

Kerelaw

31. I got lifted by the polis one night and they said I was being held until the social work showed up. He took me to the open school in Kerelaw. However, as we drove in, we passed the open school which meant I was going into the locked unit.
32. Kerelaw had both boys and girls all aged about thirteen. We slept in single cells with just a bed. The only real communication between the children was talking through the windows at night. I remember you would be repeatedly sent to bed at 4:00 pm for silly things like swearing or being sarcastic.

Routine at Kerelaw

33. You would be woken up then get washed and dressed, have breakfast then go to school. If you didn't go to school you went back to your cell. After school you went back to your cell until dinner. What happened after that depended on which staff were on but the last things we did at night was have supper, then a smoke then bed at 8:30 pm.

Food

34. The food was good. I'm a fussy eater but the food in Kerelaw was good. You took what you were given and you simply went hungry if you didn't eat something.

Washing

35. You got washed in the morning. They had two baths upstairs one of which had a shower and you used them when staff told you to. I think we were supervised when we showered because the showers were communal and sometimes fights broke out.

Personal belongings

36. You didn't have any personal belongings and anything you did have were taken off you by staff.

Health care

37. I cannot recall any health care at all in Kerelaw. Park Lodge was the only place I was ever in that I remember getting dental care of any sort when I got a tooth out.

Schooling

38. I never attended any school while at Kerelaw or if I did I didn't cooperate with them though I know some of the others did.

Religion

39. There was no religion discussed or taught at Kerelaw.

Chores

40. There were no chores for us to do and I wouldn't have done them anyway even if there had been. I would never have helped out in that way.

Pocket money

41. I don't recall us getting anything in the way of pocket money.

Trips

42. I was taken on a trip to Arran where we ended up being snowed in for a month. None of us enjoyed our time there and we saw it as some sort of punishment. About twelve of us went but I don't know why we were taken there or how many staff went with us.

Abuse at Kerelaw

43. They had a silent cell up the stairs which you would be put in as a punishment. If you did something wrong you would be restrained and taken to the cell. It was just a bare silent cell where you would be locked up for several hours and it had no toilet. They took all your clothes off you and also made you spread your legs and carried out an invasive search of your backside. I think every such place in Scotland has one of these cells which is just wrong.
44. On one occasion four of us decided to escape but it turned into a protest. We made our way to the roof but realised we couldn't go anywhere from there so instead stayed there to protest about the way we were being treated. We stayed up on the roof for

about two hours but when we eventually came down there was no punishment handed out to us for what we had done.

45. Among the kids were what we called a King and Queen, kids considered favoured by the staff. They got to stay up a lot later at night but as often as not it was only the Queen who got to stay up. I don't know if anything was going on but it was very suspicious. I do know consensual sex was going on between the boys and girls in Kerelaw.

Leaving Kerelaw

46. I remember staff telling me that there was no reason to hold me anymore and even though I didn't know what I was going to do or where I was going they let me out. I must have been under juvenile supervision because a few months later I got five months. I was supposed to then go back to Kerelaw but went to Kibble.

Kibble, Paisley

47. I think I went to Kibble shortly after being in Kerelaw. I don't think I should have been there but I was clean, fed and clothed so I suppose it wasn't too bad. I spent most of my time on the streets and would go back at night. Staff would give me cash in the morning to get the bus to Govan.
48. I was in Kibble for about five months. Both me and my lawyer were convinced I should only have been doing a three month stretch but I agreed to do the five months if they gave me weekend leave and they gave me money to go out each day to go to the job centre. I normally went back each night at about 7:00 pm. There's really not much I can say about Kibble which was burned to the ground by some of the inmates. I was there at the time but not involved.

Leaving Kibble

49. After I left Kibble, I went home with my mum and dad for about three months before being arrested again. I was fully committed to Longriggend then got a seven year sentence followed by a six year sentence which was served consecutively.

Life after being in care

50. Most of my adult life was spent in and out of prison until I was 37. That was about ten years ago when I stopped getting into trouble basically because I began smoking weed which helped to calm me down. I also smoked heroin for years which started when I was in prison but I am now off that. Instead, I take tablets every day which, if I take opiates of any kind, make me very sick. I have never been employed for any length of time.

Impact

51. I find it difficult to explain the impact that my time in care has had on me. It made me what I am, a violent sociopath. I have been diagnosed with PTSD. It is the same with so many people of my age that I know. We all just moved from one institution to another and it continued into adulthood. It's as if we were all on a conveyor belt.
52. I find it difficult to have relationships with people other than my family and I keep myself to myself. Nobody but my dad ever sat me down to find out why I refused to go to school as a child. The complete lack of education afforded to me while I was in the various establishments has meant it has always been difficult for me to find work. Any time I look for work I'm asked about my qualifications and I have nothing to offer so don't get the jobs.

Treatment/support

- 53. I don't see counsellors or doctors but I do go down and pick up my prescriptions every six months.

Reporting of Abuse

- 54. I have never reported anything that happened to me in the various places I was in.

Records

- 55. I have never sought my records though I would be interested in getting them, to better explain the places I have been in and the reasons why I was put in such places.

Lessons to be learned

- 56. I would like to think that a lot of things have changed and that more things will be disclosed these days. People working in such places should know how to deal with children who are smart arses and not just be kicking the shit out of them.
- 57. 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. HPG

Dated. 30 JANUARY 2023