Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Allan WEAVER

Support person present: No

1. My name is Allan Weaver. My date of birth is [redacted] 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born and brought up in Saltcoats. I am the fourth youngest in a family of six. My mother is [redacted] and my father is [redacted] My eldest sister is [redacted] who is six years older than me, then there is [redacted], who is four years older. After [redacted] is [redacted], who is two years older than me and then after me there is [redacted] who is two years younger, and [redacted] who is four years younger.

3. I had what I considered to be a relatively normal childhood. Even though my dad was a qualified bricklayer, he never worked much. It was the same with my friends, the people I went to school with.

4. By the time I was probably about nine or ten years old I started to become aware that my father was drinking heavily. I don't know if he started when I was that age, or if I was just more aware of it then. I also started to become aware of his violence towards my mother. It was heavy duty violence and our life became really chaotic. I remember trying to claw him off my mum as he was kicking her face and kicking her in the head. It was horrendous.

5. Looking back as an adult, despite my own young age, I think I felt I had almost a dual role of trying to protect my mother from this, but also trying to shield my wee brothers. It seemed to be that period that then defined my childhood.

6. I started to hang about with guys in the housing scheme and I became involved in local gangs. I remember breaking into houses and shops to get money, although I did always make sure my mum was alright, because she had very little. That was me then involved in that kind of gang life and subculture.

7. I don't know if my pals were necessarily going through exactly the same things as me, but certainly there was a level of dysfunction in their households as well and we all just sort of knitted in together. People can say what they want about gangs, but we had a security with each other. We could trust each other and we could depend on each other. We were always there for each other.

8. As I got older, we became more heavily involved in criminality, starting to participate in more serious offending and then violence. I became a very violent individual and I started to get involved in the criminal justice system. By the time I was twelve and thirteen I had been to loads of children's hearings.

9. I had a social worker called Margaret Clark, who I saw as part of voluntary supervision, but who I also saw independently, when I wasn't part of that requirement. She was really good and, despite my mayhem, I kept in contact with her and I really respected her. I think I first had contact with her when I was about fourteen and right from the start I had a great relationship with her. I remember seeing her give my mum some money one time and my heart melted with her kindness and her generosity.

10. Margaret always treated me well, with kindness and respect. She always seemed to be genuinely concerned about what I was doing, or what I was up to. I don't know if that was just her, but there were a couple of other social workers in her office and, although they weren't bad people, I didn't have the same relationship with them.

11. She supervised most of my friends too, but they used to annoy me because they would try and con her for cigarettes and money. I thought they were taking liberties and they shouldn't do that with her.

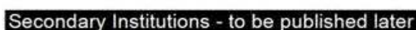
12. Even though she wasn't into football herself, Margaret started a team for us and we were all football daft. We played Kerelaw a couple of times and other care homes too. There were always fights, chasing each other with bricks and bottles and Margaret would be standing on the sideline, trying to get us back playing football. I wonder now what other social workers would do in similar situation? She was exceptional.

13. When I was fourteen I was out playing football and we ended up breaking into the local pub. It was madness. We stole a milk lorry, got into the pub through the skylight in the roof and filled the milk lorry up with alcohol. We then hid the lorry in the housing scheme and the following morning, very quickly, the police came from everywhere and we were arrested.

14. We were put in front of some sort of emergency children's panel and on the back of that particular offence I went right to Kirkland Park Assessment Centre at Darvel, where I remained for three or four weeks.

15. I knew fine well what was happening at the panel. Growing up in that environment, with older boys talking about that sort of thing, I suppose you become desensitised to it. I can't remember if I was allowed to speak at the panel, although I would be surprised if I was. I do recall that it was a very formal setting and I was quite quiet and shy, so I wouldn't have said anything in my defence anyway.

Kirkland Park Assessment Centre, Darvel

16. 
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Leaving Kirkland Park Assessment Centre, Darvel

32. I left Darvel after three or four weeks and returned home where life picked up as I had left it. Secondary Institutions - to be published later Secondary Institutions - to be publis I was back to the same environment, the same problems and the same traumas. In some ways it was almost like my status had elevated too. I had been to Darvel, I knew the score and as a child you feed into that.

33. I went back to school at St Andrew's Academy in Saltcoats and I remember the deputy headmaster pulling me aside and telling me they didn't want me there. Some of the teachers at the Academy were Secondary I aggressive and abusive Secondary Institutions - to Secondary Institutions I was assaulted by two or three teachers regularly. A couple of times I was really battered. I was punched, kicked and slapped by those teachers whose names I can still recall. One in particular was who, some

years later, was subject of civil court proceedings involving two children who made similar allegations against him.

34. I don't think they were violent to every child, but I think lads like me had targets on our backs because we didn't have the support of our families. We couldn't articulate what we were experiencing and it felt as if nobody cared about us, therefore we were fair game.

35. I was quickly back getting involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. At the age of fifteen I was at a party with my friends and we were all really drunk and about seven or eight of us ended up breaking into our own school. We wrecked the place. We went to town on it and we caused thousands of pounds worth of damage.

36. The next day four of us were arrested, put on an unruly certificate and the following Monday we appeared at court on an indictment. This was the first time I had been in court. We were told we were to be remanded at Longriggend for a week, although before we were taken there we all had to spend a night in Barlinnie.

HMP Barlinnie

37. The police took great pleasure when they dropped us off at Barlinnie, telling us that we were in with the big boys now. Looking back, I wonder what a fifteen year old wean was doing there. My three pals and I were all terrified, albeit we would never have shown that in front of each other.

38. We were put in the young offenders section in D-Hall, which was where any boys who were going to places like Longriggend went. When we got there we were processed with all these adults. We were handcuffed with heavy duty cuffs, which were weighing my arms down and then we were put in what was called a 'dog box' to wait. The dog box wasn't much bigger than a phone box and sometimes there were four or five lads inside it.

39. After that I was taken to see a doctor, or at least a man wearing a white coat who I assumed was a doctor. I had to be checked for lice and was told to drop my pants. The room was mobbed and it was humiliating, but again, at that time, it was an accepted part of the process.

40. Barlinnie was full of all these older guys who had obviously drank all their lives and had mental health problems. As I lay in my dark cell that night I was terrified. Despite my young age, I could feel, sense, hear and almost touch the pain in the screams from those guys.

Leaving HMP Barlinnie

41. The following morning my three friends and I were taken on a bus to Longriggend, where we were to be kept for a week. We knew of Longriggend's reputation on the streets before we went. We all knew that if you're sent there, you were going to know all about it.

Longriggend Detention Centre

42. If I remember right, it was November 1976 and it was a bleak and dark morning when we were taken to Longriggend. I was petrified. I remember crossing the moors and looking up at it sitting on top of the hill surrounded by fencing. It was a terrible place. Even the name sounds like a gulag somewhere to me.

43. The admissions process was the very same as Barlinnie. We were made to strip naked and deloused. What they did in Longriggend that they didn't do in Barlinnie was check your hair and I remember worrying about getting my head shaved, as was the practice. I think I wouldn't have been able to cope with getting shaved and people knowing I had lice.

44. We all shuffled in a line with our trousers down, having our testicles checked, bending over and parting the cheeks of our backsides. Our hair was then checked and we

were sent one way or another. I don't recall any medical care other than that admission process.

45. The guys who were sent the other way to me had to get their heads shaved and I remember the huge sense of relief that it wasn't me and that I didn't have lice. Looking back on that as an adult I am amazed that any so-called civilised society could allow that to happen to children and young people. This was the 1970s, not the 1920s and yet it was an accepted part of practice. It was another dehumanising experience.

46. Nobody explained what would be happening to us, what the routine of the place was. We were off the bus in handcuffs, into admissions and that was us. There was no thought of our welfare. We were each given a uniform to wear, but nothing fitted because we were so small. I think I was the smallest out of the four of us and I had to tie my trousers up and wear shoes that were far too big. It was further humiliation.

47. My pals and I were sent to the schoolboys' section, although I've no idea why they called it that, because there was no school. At first I was in a cell with [redacted] one of my pals, but then we got separated, however we were all in different cells within the one corridor. I drew comfort from the fact that my friends were all nearby, because there was certainly no adult there who I could have spoken to. I don't think I saw any adult in Longriggend who wasn't a prison officer and you certainly couldn't speak to them.

Daily routine

48. We were locked up in our cells for most of the day and consequently it wasn't possible for anyone to run away. Part of my daily routine was playing football with rolled up socks with the guy in my cell. I don't recall doing any work or chores. Thinking back, there was a classroom and I think we should have been getting schooling, but we never did. Perhaps we weren't there long enough.

49. At the end of the cell corridor was a communal toilet and wash area where you would wash at the sink and where there were three showers. I don't recall ever having a

shower though. Four times a day we were marched out for 'slop out'. We'd have to take our piss pots from our cells, empty them and then march back to our cells with them.

50. The dining room was just as you might see in an old film. We all had to go up to the servery and get our food in metal trays and then sit at one of the several long tables. The food was terrible, however if you didn't eat it you would go hungry.

51. I do remember going to the gym once in a vest and shorts, which didn't fit, and the prison officer laughing because he made us play 'Murder Ball'. Murder Ball is also called 'Dodge Ball' and involves one boy trying to hit others with the ball by throwing it forcefully at them. It was just violence though and this screw was taking pleasure out of it.

52. I don't think my mum missed a visit no matter where I was and she made it up to Longriggend too.

Discipline and abuse

53. Discipline at Longriggend was really strict. The staff were all prison officers, whose only way of communicating with us was to bark orders at us. They were bullies and they were horrendous. They were aggressive and violent. I saw screws punch lads on the side of the head for talking, or for carrying on. It wasn't uncommon for prison officers to ridicule people, to lash out, punch lads on the side of the head, or kick them. That was part and parcel of the institution and something I witnessed on a regular, daily basis, although I never got it myself.

54. I think there might have been a 'digger' which was a cell you would be put in and locked up in total isolation, if you'd done anything really serious. I never experienced that.

Bullying

55. There was no drugs or substance abuse at Longriggend, but there was a hierarchy and a violence amongst the boys. Secondary Institutions - to be published later Secondary Institutions - to be published later Secondary Institutions - to be published later at Longriggend there were guys from the Gorbals and Easterhouse and it was a different ballgame altogether.

56. It wasn't uncommon to see guys with their faces ripped open, having been slashed by another lad. They would use homemade weapons, which everybody learned how to make with toothbrushes and razors. We would be marched down to the dining room and somebody might be waiting at a bit on the stairs for whoever they were after. If that happened the screws would run in and take the lads away and that was it.

57. Where possible I always kept myself to myself and kept my head down. I realised we were not as hard as we thought we were, Secondary Institutions - to be published later I had started to learn how to survive in an institutional setting.

58. I was in one fight at Longriggend, which happened in the dining room. A guy sitting across the dining table from me said something and I knew I had to say something back. It was one of those situations where I knew if I didn't say something, my life wouldn't be worth living because I would then be a target. He was in there because he had killed somebody by shooting him with a shotgun and everybody was wary of him.

59. I wasn't going to back down to him and he sparked me over the head with a metal tray. I knew that I had to retaliate, although it was tactical because I also knew that we would only be fighting for a few seconds before we were split up by the screws. That again is about survival and knowing how to cope with the whole situation. He was dragged away and I was punished, however I can't remember what the punishment was. Whether I was locked up in my cell for a period, I'm not sure.

Leaving Longriggend

60. After a week at Longriggend my pals and I went back to court and got bail and we were euphoric. Unfortunately our lawyer then told us that the P.F. had appealed the bail decision and we were remanded and taken back up to Longriggend. Within a few days, or a very short time, three of us were given bail again and then the other, [redacted] did too and so, within a fortnight, we were all back out again.

61. We had no shoes when we went to Longriggend because the police had taken them for forensic examination so we had to go to court with shoes from Longriggend on. When we were first told we'd got bail we put the shoes in the toilet and flushed them and then we had to go and fish them out again. We laughed about it for years afterwards, thinking of fishing our wet shoes out of the toilet and squeaking back to Longriggend, crestfallen and hoping that nobody noticed.

62. After we were eventually bailed, I went back home and life went back to normal. I continued getting involved in the criminal justice system and the police were brutal every time I had dealings with them. They all knew me and they didn't like me. They weren't all like that, but there were five or six local officers in Saltcoats who were physically and emotionally abusive to me and my pals. They were widely known to be violent men towards young prisoners, both within the police and within the general community.

63. I remember one policeman saying "I can't wait till you get to the High Court Weaver, get you off the streets". That wasn't an isolated remark. I remember being handcuffed behind my back and a police officer, a grown adult, punching me. He then grabbed me by the hair and ran me into a cell. It was awful doing that to a young lad, no matter what that lad might have done.

64. I knew that my school, St Andrew's Academy, wouldn't take me back because of the damage we'd caused and, in mid-January 1976, Margaret Clark my social worker found me a residential place at St Andrew's Approved School at Helensburgh. I'd

spent that time from leaving Longriggend in limbo, with no form of schooling and not sure what was happening.

65. I'd heard about approved schools like St Andrew's and, although I'd a rough idea what it would be like, I didn't really know what going there would entail. I went to a children's panel and they rubber-stamped it. I don't recall whether I was given a chance to speak at the panel, but they were never child-friendly and I wouldn't imagine many weans would speak up.

St Andrew's School, Helensburgh

66. St Andrew's was a big house that sat in its own grounds somewhere outside Helensburgh. It used to belong to a tobacco baron, if I remember correctly. On the side of the old house they'd built a couple of units, one of which was the admissions block.

67. There were probably seventy to eighty boys at St Andrew's, all housed in three blocks and I didn't know any of them. I was fifteen and I was put into Douglas block and I was there for five or six months. Douglas block was on two levels with dorms upstairs and a TV room and a recreation room downstairs.

68. It turned out that the staff at St Andrew's were nothing like the screws at Longriggend and spoke normally to us all, however, I remember being really scared when I got there. I had a real sense of foreboding and I was horrified when I arrived. I'd a fair idea what it was going to be like because a few of my pals had been to approved schools and they were terrible places. In some sense, going to an approved school was normalised in my peer group, but it was only when I arrived there that the stark reality sunk in.

Daily routine

69. Each dorm in Douglas had four beds in it and there must have been about five dorms. The door wasn't locked and an old guy used to do the rounds at night. I don't think I ever saw his face, I just remember seeing his torch.

70. I think we had assembly every morning after breakfast and then we would go into the yard outside. It was a bit like the army because we'd all have to stand at attention and then someone would shout for each of us to go into our work squads. There were a few different work squads, like woodwork, or painting, or metalwork. I was in the bricklayer squad.

71. After a morning's work we'd go back to our units and get our lunch and then have some spare time till 1:00 pm. In the afternoon we'd be back out on parade at 1:00 pm and then back to our work parties. After that we'd be back for tea and have free time till bed.

Leisure time

72. Now and again we'd be outside, or in the gym, in our free time playing football, but normally we would be in the recreation room. There was table tennis and pool in there, but much of the time we would just kind of loll about.

Mealtimes

73. If I remember right, the meals were alright. They weren't great, but the food was certainly better than it had been at Longriggend. Again, if you didn't like something you wouldn't eat, but nobody was forced.

Work and education

74. Our instructor in the bricklayer squad was a guy called Mr McCallum, who was really strict and poker-faced. He was almost unapproachable, but I liked him. Nobody messed about with him, but he was fair. We were building walls and mixing concrete

and when you went into his squad you knew he wanted a day's graft from you, but that was okay.

75. There was no education at St Andrew's. The only time I remember being in a classroom was to watch a Celtic game.

Visits and home leave

76. I never had any visits from my mum while I was at St Andrew's, however after you had been in for a period of about six weeks you would start to get home leave. We'd go home on a Friday after work and then go back on the Sunday night. If you were doing okay and there were no problems you would then get weekly home leave.

77. I think Margaret Clark my social worker came up one time. I remember her speaking to the headmaster.

Support

78. The housemaster of Douglas, a guy called Mr Kipling, or 'Kippy', would ask you if things were alright every so often. Kippy was okay. There was a woman in each of the units too, who were the housemistresses. I liked the woman who was in Douglas. Her husband also worked in St Andrew's and he was okay as well. I've no gripe with the staff at all.

79. One time I was in a fight when I was on home leave and got stabbed and I remember the housemistress making a fuss of me when I got back to St Andrew's. I'd been in hospital and it was weeks before I could move my shoulder again and she seemed genuinely concerned.

80. I don't know whether St Andrew's was a place where I could have spoken to any of the staff if I wanted. Part of me would like to think that I could, but I don't know.

Running away

81. Boys often ran away from St Andrew's , although I never did. They would go into the nearest town, Rhu, steal a car and head back into Glasgow or the Central Belt. I don't remember anything overly untoward happening to them when they were brought back. Their home leave would be stopped and they wouldn't get out for football, or up to the gym and they would have to stay within the unit.

82. Some kids ran away in order not to be returned home. You got to know what was going on in some boys' so-called family life, where it was horrendous for them. Some just didn't want to go home and felt safer at St Andrew's. That didn't happen all the time, but I was aware of it and it wasn't uncommon.

Discipline

83. SNR, Mr FQH was a strict guy and was a fair age by the time I got to St Andrew's. He was a decent guy though and I liked him. You knew where you stood with him and if you did step out of line he would deal with it. If I remember he either used a cane or the belt, although I never got it. I remember seeing boys getting punished at assembly before work in the morning. I would say, however, that his punishments would have been considered appropriate and proportionate within the confines of the law and the times.

Bullying

84. Looking back, I don't have any beef with any member of staff of St Andrew's, but the bullying was far more prevalent there than it had been in any other place. Again, I think it was accepted that there was a clear hierarchy within the three units and I remember fighting regularly. Thinking back, the staff must have known about the bullying, because there were often boys crying and in distress. It was right there in front of them and so they must have been complicit in some way.

85. One time I set about somebody with a dart, but I had to do it, because I'd been battered by this guy and his mates. The guy was a lad called ███ and he was maybe a couple of years older than me.

86. ███ was one of the hierarchy and he was a bully. If it wasn't my first night at St Andrew's, it would have been within the first couple of nights that ███ and three or four of his cronies came into my room during the night. I woke up just as they were approaching my bed and one of them started banging a lump of wood off my head.

87. St Andrew's was such a violent place and this was my introduction. You had to live on your wits. After I was attacked that night I wanted revenge. I was sore and I was embarrassed and I ended up fighting ███ the next day and I got some respite after that. If I hadn't reacted like that I would have been one of the victimised boys.

88. I hadn't made any attempt to get in with the in-crowd, I was a loner and kept very much to myself, but I had been attacked in my bed by four of them. I was nowhere near the worst victim though, some boys had a terrible time. ███ used to pour boiling tea down the back of boys' necks and tell the staff it had been an accident and they just accepted that.

89. I never remember any of the staff intervening, which I think was unacceptable practice on their part. I don't, however, recall ever seeing the staff assaulting anybody, or being bad to anyone, but they did let these practices go on.

Leaving St Andrew's School, Helensburgh

90. I went straight from St Andrew's to Polmont. I had been out on bail while I was in St Andrew's, however after about six months there I had to go to court for smashing the school up. Mr FQH had actually gone to court to speak on my behalf and try and get me back to St Andrew's.

91. It was May 1976 and I had turned sixteen only two days before the court appearance and I knew that I was going to get borstal or detention. A social worker had done a

borstal report and I was aware that he had talked to my mum. I knew what the process was, although nobody had sat me down and told me about it. I just knew what was happening through life experience.

92. The borstal report recommended that I go back to St Andrew's, but the sheriff had other ideas and sentenced me to two years borstal training. I'd been in the dock with my three pals, but they were all fifteen so they all went to approved school. This was seen by social work staff and our lawyers as a particularly punitive sentence.

93. I was taken straight from court to Barlinnie and it was just the same as the previous time. I was back in D-Hall getting deloused and processed and waiting on my transport the following day.

94. I was trying to process being on my own and wondering how I was going to cope. There had been a comfort in my pals being in Barlinnie with me previously. I will always remember that there was another guy in Barlinnie who was going to borstal as well and he had a beard. He seemed so much older than me, but that was then my age group too. It was terrifying.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution

95. The deeper I got into the criminal justice system, the worse it got and Polmont was my apprenticeship. Just when you think things can't get any worse, they get more severe, more harrowing and more traumatic.

96. I was shitting myself going to borstal because of the reputation, particularly going into the allocation wing, which was known as 'Alicali'. Alicali was the detention period of borstal and it was like the 'short, sharp, shock' treatment of old. Everybody went into Alicali for six or eight weeks to be assessed and then they would either go to another wing within Polmont, or to a semi-open place like Castle Huntly, or to an open place like Noranside.

97. I knew of Polmont's reputation, but I didn't really know what I was getting into. I was on my own, my pals weren't there and I was filled with fear and apprehension.

First day

98. Again I was subjected to the same delousing on my arrival at Polmont and had my testicles checked and again I had to bend over and part the cheeks of my backside. What struck me as different at Polmont was that the prison officers seemed to bark things at the inmates. They were really aggressive in the way they communicated with everyone.

99. I was processed and given my gear, which was my chamber pot, knife, fork and bedding and then I had to sit in a waiting room with everyone else who had just arrived. After that, we were each hauled in front of the Governor, who barked out "Name?" to me.

100. I think because I never said "Sir", a big prison officer came over and smacked me right on the side of the head. I was stunned and fell back into a filing cabinet or something. This guy was 6' 2", or thereabouts and it felt like he hit me full force. I was dazed for ages afterwards and wondered how I was going to survive this for two years.

Daily routine

101. Polmont was regimented, like an army training camp. We were all in individual cells and all the doors would need to be open in the morning before we could get out. Once the doors were all open a prison officer would shout us all out and we had to burst out and stand to attention. There was a lot of emphasis on discipline and it was very much like a military operation.

102. The first thing we did was slop out and then return to our cells before we marched down to breakfast. We had to hold our trays in a certain way as we marched into the dining hall, where we had breakfast and then we went out on parade.

103. We had to march and do drills and that kind of thing and then we were notified what we were to be doing each day. We would either be cleaning or in the workroom. I remember being in a workroom with a squad of guys, stripping radios and taking the copper out. It was a mindless, mind-numbing job. If we weren't cleaning the shower area, we would be cleaning the corridors.

104. One of the corridors in one of the other wings of Polmont was really long and was known as the 'mile long corridor' and we had to scrub it. A squad of us would be taken from Alicali and dropped off at various intervals. We would get down on our hands and knees and scrub and every now and again a prison officer would come along and make sure there were enough suds and that we were doing it properly.

105. I don't remember anything about healthcare and I don't remember there being any schooling in Alicali, but then we were seen as young offenders. Even though I was still a child, I wouldn't have been viewed as one.

106. After lunch we would be in our cells for another period until the prison officers changed shift and then we'd all be out doing more cleaning or in the workroom again. After that we'd have our tea and then be back in our cells again until recreation time.

107. There was a recreation room where, like everywhere else, there was a table tennis table, but I can't remember if there was anything else. You didn't have to go to the recreation room, you could stay in your cell if you wanted, which I did most of the time. I liked to read and there were some books provided and people would also get books sent in that did the rounds too.

Washing and bathing

108. Slopping out was done four times a day and we washed in communal showers. I used to be very embarrassed at the age I was with all these guys walking about naked and a screw standing nearby.

Visitors

109. I think visits were monthly and we could write and receive letters as well. My mum visited regularly and my sister and brother came too. Mum could bring sweets for me and I used to try and eat them all during the twenty minutes of visiting time because you weren't allowed to take anything away. I don't recall any official visitors.

Running away/escapes

110. There were the odd escapes from Polmont, but not from Alicali. The only time we got out of that particular wing was to scrub the corridors, but that was the idea of it, to get you into the regime.

Abuse at Polmont YOI

111. What happened to me in front of the governor when I arrived is exactly what borstal was like. Everybody knew it, police, judges, everybody. It was an accepted part of practice. They knew exactly what they were saying when they used to say, "You'll know all about it when you get to borstal".

112. Getting punched, kicked and beaten by a prison officer was common. I was slapped right across the face by a prison officer for not being quiet when I had been told. I saw other guys get terrible beatings from prison officers. Other lads would be watching, rooted to the spot, terrified that they were going to get it next.

Leaving Polmont Young Offenders Institution

113. After six or eight weeks in Alicali I was told that I was going to Castle Huntly. I can't remember exactly how I was told.

114. Like everybody else, I knew I was in Polmont to be assessed, but I've no idea what the assessment process was. I don't think anybody was told what the assessment process was. I certainly don't recall ever having a face-to-face meeting with anybody

for any sort of assessment. Some people went to an open borstal, some went to semi-open and some were contained within the closed part of Polmont.

HMP Castle Huntly

115. Castle Huntly, semi-open borstal, wasn't as regimented as Polmont and it wasn't as brutal. There wasn't any standing to attention and marching, it was slightly more relaxed an atmosphere.

116. There were probably a couple of hundred boys there, divided into two groups of blue shirts and red shirts. Boys in blue shirts were doing the first six months of their sentence. Boys who were reaching the end of their sentence would be moved into the red wing and would wear red shirts.

117. There was no difference in how boys were treated between the two wings although there might have been a difference in the whole psychology of the red wing, because this was people in their last stretch. Perhaps those boys felt a bit less pressure than those that were new in and finding their feet.

118. We slept in single cells which were within a corridor of ten separate cells. The cell doors weren't locked during the day, just at night and you could lock it yourself for privacy if you wanted, however the door to the corridor was locked.

119. I wouldn't say I made friends at Castle Huntly, but I certainly made acquaintances. You obviously get to know people, however I was still a quiet and shy boy and I was always a bit guarded.

First day

120. Castle Huntly was a semi-open borstal, kind of the middle ground. I suppose there was some sense of relief that I was escaping the environment of Polmont. It was up at Dundee though and new territory for me. I wondered what I was being driven into.

I was apprehensive and, particularly at that age, sixteen, I was fearful. I think I was the youngest guy there and I felt well out of my depth.

121. If I remember right, I don't think there was the same admission process, being deloused and whatever, but that would be because everyone went there from another institution. Nobody ever said what the rules were though, or what was expected of me. I suppose having been everywhere I had, I had a fair idea of the workings of the place and you pick up any new things very quickly.

Daily routine

122. We didn't need to slop out at Castle Huntly because there were actually toilets in the corridor our cells were on. That was the first time. After we got up in the morning we tidied our cells and then shuffled into the dining hall, which was in another part of the prison and was where everyone ate.

123. After breakfast you joined your work party. There was no schooling at all. There were gardening squads, an engineering squad and a squad that went into Dundee to collect newspapers. Whether they recycled them or not, I don't know. I was stuck on the engineering squad, doing metalwork in a kind of factory. I was in there for my full time and I hated it.

124. We made things like hinges for toolboxes and one prisoner made wallpaper tables. It was meaningless. The only respite from the monotony was if a fight broke out, which was a pleasant distraction if you weren't involved. We worked all morning until we went for lunch in the dining hall and then we went back to our cells for a while before heading back out on our work squads again.

125. We would be fed again at teatime in the dining hall and then we'd all go back to our cells before recreation, Recreation was within either the blue unit or the red unit and you could go to the TV room, or you could play pool, snooker or table tennis. You could also opt to stay in your cell and read, if you wanted. We were also entitled to

our recreation on a Saturday and Sunday between 2:00 pm and 4:00 pm and then from 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm.

126. We never got out much at all and I only remember playing one game of football at Castle Huntly. There wasn't a lot going on in terms of sports.

127. Bedtime was maybe 8:30 pm or 9:00 pm, it wasn't late. The main door to the corridor would be locked, but you could socialise with each other in different cells if you wanted.

Washing and bathing

128. If I remember right, we had full access to the toilet within our corridors and there was a shower in there. There was never any problem with that and you could shower in private.

Mealtimes

129. At best the food was poor, but sometimes it was even worse. It felt like they were maybe withholding the sugar from the pudding or something. You could taste it for a couple of weeks and then it got slightly better again.

Healthcare

130. There would have been a health centre at Castle Huntly, but I never had any health issues and I don't know the setup.

Birthdays and Christmas

131. Birthdays were never celebrated at any of the institutions I was in. The only difference at Christmas in Castle Huntly was you were allowed a parcel from your family. There was a weight limit attached to it, which was perhaps 8 lb. I remember my mum sending me a big parcel of chocolate, but other than that there was no celebration, or recognition of Christmas in any way.

Visits and home leave

132. My mum came once a month to visit me at Castle Huntly before she and my dad moved to Hartlepool. After they moved, she wrote regularly.

133. About a month before you got released you got a weekend leave so, like everybody else, I had my one weekend. By that time my parents were in Hartlepool and so I went to visit them there.

134. I remember not having a jacket so I had to go and get one from some storage room and the screw gave me one that Val Doonican would have worn. I was mortified, but I was threatened that if I didn't come back with it on I could forget my release date. I can laugh about that now, but I was nearly in tears and there's no doubt that prison officer was trying to humiliate me.

Support

135. Nobody official came to see me at Castle Huntly at any time and there was no welfare aspect attached to the whole experience whatsoever. I don't remember any female staff at all and there was certainly nobody who I felt I could have gone to for any support or guidance. Perhaps it might have been the case that a woman might have been easier to speak to. Perhaps a female presence might have addressed the macho environment in some way, I don't know.

136. I don't think I had any contact with Margaret Clark, or any other social worker either. I think it was the case that I was dubbed up there and, because no assessments or reports were required, I was left to it.

Running away

137. Lads ran away a couple of times that I was aware of. You used to get day releases into Dundee and I remember a couple of guys went on day release and never came

back. When they were arrested they would have been taken back to Polmont and gone into one of the closed halls there.

138. It never crossed my mind to run away from any of the places I was in. I never saw the point in it. I knew that if I did, when I was caught and taken back things would be worse.

Discipline

139. There were two punishment cells at Castle Huntly, which were bare of anything. I think a mattress was only handed in at night, there was nothing else otherwise. These two cells were frequently used for misdemeanours of varying degrees. I would walk by them and more often than not somebody you knew would be in the cells for fighting, or for being cheeky to a prison officer, or whatever. Boys could be in there for two or three days at a time. Those cells were never empty for any period of time, although I was never put in them.

140. If you had done something really serious you would be shipped back to Polmont and to one of the closed halls.

Restraint techniques

141. There were no recognisable restraining techniques used by staff. There was less need for that than in approved schools. If the prison officers were stopping a fight, they would just grab a guy and put him on the deck. It was like they were breaking up a pub fight.

Abuse at Castle Huntly

142. There were quite a lot of instances of violence and aggression from staff at Castle Huntly towards the prisoners. They were brutal, although perhaps not as brutal as Polmont. One time in the dining hall, I remember a wee guy from Greenock called ███ was beaten viciously by a prison officer. We were all sitting at the tables when the

officer grabbed ████ by the hair and kicked him up and down the length of the kitchen servery. I don't recall the name of the prison officer.

143. ███ was slighter than me and a couple of years older, seventeen or eighteen, and he was squealing. He would fall over and the prison officer would pick him up and punch and kick him more. I often think of that incident, the level of brutality and where it happened. It has never left my mind after all these years. I wonder how that prison officer got away with that with all the other boys and prison staff there, but such was the level of violence.

144. That same prison officer used to assault quite a few lads just before they went on home leave. It was a standing joke amongst the prison officers. He got me the night before I was about to go on home leave. He grabbed me and seized hold of my nose between his fingers and started to twist.

145. He did it in a half jovial way, but my nose was bruised and I had to go home with a big, ridiculous looking nose. He did it as a form of humiliation, even though he sold it in the form of a joke.

146. I was also assaulted a couple of times by the SNR of Castle Huntly. I can't remember his name, but he had a reputation for violence. I'm sure it happened more with other prison officers, but I remember two occasions in particular.

147. Even though we were entitled to quite a lot of recreation at the weekend, there were often times when we didn't get it because the screws didn't want us to have it. They would have a cell inspection and you could hear them going round looking for anything out of place or for any dust. If they found something they would tell the lad there would be no recreation for them.

148. I heard them checking under another lad's bed so I cleaned mine with a damp hankie. Sure enough, the SNR came in, lifted my mattress up and checked for dust. There was none there, so he called me a "smart bastard" and pinned me up against the wall. I was a small boy of sixteen and this man towered above me as he

held his hands around my throat. I could feel myself starting to panic and lose consciousness before he let me go. I had spoiled his plan and that was why he assaulted me, however I was the only person that got recreation that evening because I'd done nothing wrong.

149. The other occasion was when I came back from Hartlepool after visiting my parents. I had Jimmy Boyle's book with me when I went back into reception and the SNR SNR just happened to be walking past. He looked down to see my belongings and saw the book. He picked it up and asked me, "Is that your fucking hero" and the next thing he grabbed me by the throat and started to lift me up on my tiptoes. Again I couldn't breathe and I was beginning to panic when he eventually let me go. He knew what he was doing when he throttled me. I couldn't breathe, but he knew just the point to let go.

150. I suppose, because of all I had experienced, it didn't really bother me at the time and I didn't think much more of it for many years. I was so used to that sort of behaviour from prison officers, but looking back as an adult I wonder how on earth he could have got away with that sort of violence.

151. What happened to has always stuck in my mind though. It was so brutal. This was a grown man, violently punching and kicking a small lad in front of everybody.

152. As far as I know, nobody ever required hospital treatment after being assaulted by a prison officer, but there were still hefty beatings. Lads would often have black eyes and burst noses, although there wouldn't be any broken bones. That is a very measured and controlled level of violence, taking it right to the point where you don't need to stand up and explain it.

Bullying at Castle Huntly

153. There was no solvent or drug abuse at Castle Huntly, but again, it was a violent environment, although perhaps not as much as Polmont. There is a hierarchy in every prison and Castle Huntly was no different. Hierarchies were allowed to flourish. Fights

were commonplace and there always seemed to be something bubbling away. Occasionally there was a right ruckus, but it would only be if there was an all-out battle that the prison officers would go in and stop it.

154. I saw some poor guys who were targeted from start to finish, but I was okay. Even though I was younger than the rest of them, having been through the system I knew the situations to avoid, who to stay away from and how to conduct myself. A lot of the guys who were targeted were first offenders and therefore didn't know the dynamics.

Leaving Castle Huntly

155. I had been sentenced to two years borstal, but the recognised period you would do was ten months. I think I did ten months and three weeks, which was longer than normal.

156. I can't remember exactly what point I was told I was getting out. It might have been when I moved from being a blue shirt to a red shirt. I did have plenty of notice, however I remember being disappointed that I had to do almost eleven months.

157. When I left, I was given a travel warrant and an allowance that would cover two or three days, but that was all I got.

158. I went straight down to Hartlepool to live with my parents, but I had nothing there. After a while one of my pals from Saltcoats came down to see me. I could have hugged him when he got off that train. We were really close and it was great to see him, but the downside was that as soon as we had a drink we were back to our old habits. We had no focus in life, we were unemployed, with no prospects and no money. It was as if we were excluded totally from mainstream society.

159. We got into a bit of bother breaking into houses and I was caught and appeared at juvenile court. In England if you re-offended you were given a 'fresh whack', which meant that if you'd already done borstal you'd either get a full term again, or you'd get

a recall. I got the lighter of the two and was given a borstal recall and I think I had to go back for about four months or so.

160. I was just coming up for my seventeenth birthday and was initially taken to the allocation hall in Strangeways, where I spent about six weeks, before I was transferred to Hatfield.

HMP Strangeways

161. Even though I was in Strangeways, with the reputation it had as one of the hardest prisons in Britain, it was more acceptable than the experiences I'd had in Scotland.

162. I was in my cell for twenty-three hours a day and only allowed out to get my meal. I wasn't allowed on my bed during the day, I had to tip my mattress up against the wall and sit upright on a wooden chair and every now and again they'd come round and check. You were allowed to read, but only if you were sitting upright in that chair. It was only when it came to bedtime that you were allowed to lie down.

163. The food was awful and I developed sores around my mouth, which was obviously to do with stress and being run down, but despite that I suppose Strangeways was partly better because I was on my own and not exposed to the brutality and the hierarchy I had been previously. I didn't need to be on my toes and watching my back as much. It was a punishing and harsh environment, but there was no hassle.

164. Again I would have been subjected to a borstal assessment while I was incarcerated at Strangeways, but I've no idea what that entailed, or how the decision was made to then send me to Hatfield.

HMP Hatfield

165. Hatfield was an open borstal and was a far less brutal, less punitive regime than in Scotland. I think that was possibly to do with the Scottish penal culture, where brutality is embedded, but I don't know why that is.

166. The staff in Scotland were far more violent than in Hatfield, albeit there was still a distance, an 'us and them', between the prisoners and staff at Hatfield. That is not to say the English system was easy, but some of the staff were more approachable.

167. I got picked for the borstal football team, which helped me because one of the top screws actually played for the team as well. As a result my life was made so much easier. I worked in the admissions block, cleaning it alongside a wee Irish guy, where a Scottish prison officer worked and he was a gem of a guy.

168. I didn't get any visits from my mum, but I did get regular letters, right up until I was released. My parents had left Hartlepool by that time and had already returned to Saltcoats.

Life after being in care

169. When I was released I returned to Saltcoats as well. My parents still hadn't got a house by then and stayed with one of my sisters, so I stayed between there and my brother's, but I didn't have a settled address. I was effectively homeless.

170. Around that time I started a relationship with my first wife ████. We'd grown up together and I'd known her for a long time and we had started writing to each other just before I left Hatfield. I think we were married within four months. I was eighteen and ████ sixteen.

171. We started building a life together, however I had the same pals and was still getting in bother. Thinking back now, I believe that a part of me did want to change, but I couldn't get any work because of my record. I didn't really know how to change and instead I was becoming far more violent and drinking a lot more and it was bedlam.

172. A wee part of me enjoyed the reputation for violence that I had. I bought into it and I got caught up in that mindset for years. I wasn't known for anything else and I wasn't good at anything else.

173. I was arrested several times and would get probation and occasionally I met Margaret Clark, my social worker as a child. There were also lengthy periods of time I would not see her, but every now and again I would nip into her office and have a coffee with her. When I was deep into the throes of criminality I didn't want to see her though, it would have been embarrassing.

174. After a time I got work through [redacted] dad as a steel fixer. It wasn't bad money and it meant I was getting away from Saltcoats, however my friends were a bigger pull. I don't think there would really have been anything that could have taken me away from that lifestyle at that point, I think it was just a path I had to travel.

175. At twenty-one I was convicted of a number of offences including assault to severe injury and permanent disfigurement and I was sentenced to a total of three years imprisonment. I was sent to Barlinnie for about eighteen months and, although I was still young, my pals were all in Barlinnie at the same time, so it wasn't a massive deal being back in there. I knew a lot of guys and I knew the system and I suppose, looking back, I was sinking into that whole culture.

176. I went from Barlinnie to Dungavel and finished my sentence there, where I met an old lifer called Donald Lake. He had been involved in Glasgow gangs and in violent crime and, although he was a lot older than me, I got friendly with him. He represented what I was aspiring to be. He was the quietest man in the jail, but nobody would mess with him, given his experiences.

177. Don talked me through a lot of things and in some ways, I suppose, he educated me. We slept in dormitories and had a shared toilet area and he would spent the whole night painting. We spent a lot of time together and he taught me a lot and he had a big impact on my life. He planted a seed in my process of change and started me on that road.

178. I enrolled in an English class in the prison and had a good teacher and I really enjoyed it. I got a taste for education and I wished I had done more at school. I was starting

to think more about things, although there were also other factors that were persuading me to find a different life, like the birth of my son [redacted] when I was twenty-four.

179. My last sentence was in Barlinnie and was for three months after I'd taken a plea. It had got to the point by then that I knew I had to move from Saltcoats or I was going to the jail for a very long time. Not long before I was released I got caught up in a fight and got my face slashed by a razor blade. I knew it was a bad one as soon as it happened.

180. When I was eventually released there was still a gang feud going on and so [redacted], [redacted] and I went to London to get away from it. It was the time of the construction boom, so there was plenty of work and plenty of money and getting away to London got me away from the mindset of criminality I was in.

181. We stayed in London for a couple of years where our second son [redacted] was born, before we then moved out to Basildon and stayed there for a couple of years. [redacted] mum then died so we moved back to Saltcoats and I caught up with Margaret Clark again. I think I was still on licence when I met her and she asked me to get involved in a programme with lads who were termed 'young offenders'. They were really just weans between thirteen and sixteen who had got themselves into trouble.

182. Margaret wanted me to go along and speak to them, although I was reluctant to at first. I didn't think there was anything I could say to them, but because it was Margaret I thought I'd go along and do it.

Volunteering opportunities

183. At that time, it wasn't the case that you had to be risk assessed before you could volunteer to work with youngsters, however Margaret did get some grief when she put me forward. I was out on parole for serious assault at that time and still very much steeped in that whole culture. Margaret did tell me that she had been pulled to the side and asked whether she wanted to rethink, but she stuck by her decision.

184. I ended up befriending a couple of the lads and I look back now and think that would be questioned nowadays. Sometimes one of those lads would come to my house, so that I could make sure he got a dinner. I understand safeguards and risk assessments, but there was a lot to be said for the extra time I spent with him. I got a lot out of it and so did he.

185. I know that none of my pals would have been up for that kind of thing. It wasn't their interest and they would have probably run a mile if they had been asked.

186. Despite the challenges and despite how difficult it was, I loved it. I'd never done anything like that before. It wasn't the case that I would sit down and talk to the youngsters and tease out their offending behaviour, I tried to be natural and normal with them.

187. I started to think that I could take to social work. I was working at that time and earning good money as a steel fixer and I knew that if I went back to school or college there would be a big financial hit. I talked to my wife [redacted] about it and fortunately we were both of the same mind and agreed that we would pay the price.

Further education and becoming a social worker

188. I went to a secondary school in the next town, Ardrossan Academy, and had to sit in class with a bunch of fifth year pupils. I probably didn't look the most welcoming guy, because my scar on my face was still fresh and I had a crew cut and I remember thinking that I couldn't do it.

189. I would see my pals in the pub at the weekend and they would give me pelters, asking me what my packed lunch had been that week and that sort of thing. They weren't doing it in a bad way, I could see the funny side, but it was unusual.

190. I was still doing the volunteering with Margaret at that time and I went from that to supporting a group with mental health difficulties. I had no prior experience, but again

I really enjoyed it. I also formed a football team, which ended up going on for about twelve years.

191. I sat my Highers in 1992 and in 1993 I applied for a social work course at Strathclyde. I had to attend an interview for the course and a lot of the questions focussed on my past. Some of the questions were ridiculous and I was really disheartened when I left.

192. I didn't get on the social work course at that point and ended up on a social care course at Greenock College instead. As part of that course I got a placement in a locked geriatric facility, where there were a lot of people with dementia. I had never experienced anything like it before, although in some ways it reminded me of Longriggend with people screaming all the time.

193. I also got the knockback for a course at Jordanhill, however within twenty-four hours I got a phone call to say that someone had dropped out. I accepted it and the fact that I didn't have to go back to that geriatric facility made me almost cry with happiness.

194. Jordanhill wasn't easy. I often used to wonder when I would get found out. I think I probably felt that way because of my own inferiority complex due to my background and my imprisonment. I used to travel up with a woman from West Kilbride, who was really middleclass. She was great and we kept in touch for a lot of years, but she used to get a hard time because of her accent and I realised that, for totally different reasons, she wasn't unlike me. I think we both felt like we were treated as outsiders, as indeed we were.

195. You could specialise in childcare, community service, or criminal justice, albeit it was called offender services at that time. I opted for criminal justice, however I never took to one lecturer in particular and he never took to me. I got his back up and he used to make bizarre comments, which fed into my belief that I shouldn't have been there. I carried that feeling with me for years.

196. I got my diploma in social work in 1995 and in 1996 I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and gained employment as a criminal justice social worker in Irvine. In that role I was supervising people on parole and probation and visiting prisons for the parole board.

197. In 1998 I graduated with a Masters in advanced social work studies and in 1999 I passed the social work teachers course and began supervising and teaching students. In 2002 I was promoted to the post of senior social worker in Irvine.

198. Although I was working for the wider organisation, supervising social work students was very much on an individual basis. I was always of the view that competence and ability can be improved upon, but they must have the heart for the job in the first place. Someone shouldn't want to become a social worker because it is a steady career, they need to want to make a difference and help people.

199. [redacted] and I ultimately divorced, although we kept in touch and I continued to involve myself with my sons as they grew up. In due course I met and married my wife [redacted] and we have now been together for some years. She has been very loving and very supportive. I retired during lockdown as it was deemed I was medically unfit for work after I had three heart attacks.

200. I know that I'm incredibly fortunate to be in the position I am. I have succeeded in making a life for myself. I have a loving family and a good life. I'm enjoying my retirement and keep myself occupied helping out with my grandchildren.

Social work placement at Kerelaw Residential School

201. My first social work placement was between 1994 and 1995 as part of my studies and was at Kerelaw. A lot of people had gone to field offices, but I went to Kerelaw and it was quite a daunting and difficult experience for me. In the back of my mind, obviously, were my experiences, in particular those from St Andrew's. I didn't quite know what I was getting into.

202. In addition to my placement, I worked 'sessional' at Kerelaw, which topped up my student grant. Working sessional meant being employed there part-time as a residential shift worker, mainly at the weekend, although I would do the odd evening as well when I wasn't studying. I probably worked at Kerelaw for about a year in total, both as part of my placement and with the additional work.

203. If I remember correctly, Kerelaw was the biggest residential school in Europe at the time. It was a massive, factory-like place where disturbed children could be sent and housed in one environment. I would describe it as a last resort for children, because there was nowhere else for them to go after Kerelaw other than prison.

204. I don't want to be too negative about it, but I wonder who cared whether Kerelaw worked or not. Going back to the time of the creation of places such as Kerelaw, I think the idea was to get those disturbed children off the streets and put them somewhere where it didn't matter what mayhem they caused. If they were off the streets, the idea was working.

Staff at Kerelaw

205. Bob Forrest was the headmaster of Kerelaw and was in overall charge of both the secure unit and the open unit. LEF SNR the secure unit and KAB KAB was SNR in the open unit. I was never in the secure unit, I spent my time in the girls' open unit, which was called Wilson, I'm sure. KAB was SNR social work in the open unit and was my practice teacher and I had a lot of respect for her.

206. Residential work is very difficult because you are working with the most damaged and troubled youngsters in the country. However, as hard as it was, I enjoyed the experience of working at Kerelaw. I loved working with the children, although the staff were a bit hit-or-a-miss. There was a macho, tough-guy culture amongst them, some of whom could be heavy-handed, however KAB worked hard to change that culture.

207. KAB wasn't long there when I arrived and I knew she was working hard to make an impact. I also knew through exchanges with other staff that a lot of them really resented her and ridiculed her because of her child-centred approach and her demand that they try to adopt that practice.

208. I never got any grief working at Kerelaw, but KAB was a demanding individual, including of me as a social work student. She would often question why I might be doing something and why I might not be doing something else and I learned a lot from her. She remained at Kerelaw for the entire time I was there and she brought in a lot of new initiatives. Those initiatives didn't sit well with the staff group, but she pushed on and such was her role and influence that changes were happening and increasingly she was starting to take more staff along with her in that process.

209. Across the board in all the institutions and even at a place the size of Kerelaw, there were very few qualified social workers amongst the care staff groups. They should have had the best, most up-to-date qualifications, but they did not. They were all residential workers, who were viewed as the poor relatives of social workers and I think that is telling in itself.

Knowledge of staff recruitment

210. In fairness to the staff, it seemed like the school did their recruiting in the local pub, which invited a lot of problems. Those people ended up with quite a good job and quite a good salary, however their area of interest certainly wasn't in the wellbeing of the weans.

Staff relationships with children at Kerelaw

211. There were staff who were really child-centred and you could tell right away they cared about the children and the situation they were in. They had good hearts and they tried hard, but it's an exhausting job and they just didn't have the training or the support. I felt for them.

212. There were also some staff that strongly resisted KAB changes. One was John Muldoon, who was the guy in charge of Wilson unit and another was Matt George, who was a teacher there. Both had been at Kerelaw for decades and were old school. They used to question KAB changes and say that the weans needed discipline instead.

213. John Muldoon had two or three favourites amongst the girls in Wilson unit and that created a hierarchy amongst them. He very much encouraged that hierarchy and played into it. He used to do such things as tell his favourites to come into the office and have a cigarette with him.

214. There were some very disturbed youngsters there, which was terrible to see, and things would inevitably kick off from time to time. John Muldoon would use the relationships he had with those few girls to try and control that, instead of showing any empathy or utilising any therapeutic interventions. John Muldoon was all about containment and control.

215. I was aware of the hierarchies that existed and the rest of the staff would have been too, but there were no conscious efforts made to promote them and use them to the staffs' advantage. The staff struggled, but they tried to handle them as best as they could.

216. Some of the weans had spent their lives surviving on their wits and they could easily sniff out a new worker, or a worker who was struggling and unsure. They could tell who wasn't really cut out for that type of work and they used that to their advantage. Those members of staff weren't getting the support they needed to turn them into effective residential workers, good line management just wasn't there.

217. Glasgow Council had a massive responsibility for the effective running of Kerelaw and they failed. There was limited or no opportunities for staff to pursue appropriate qualifications. Likewise, there was little or no opportunity for staff to feel they could highlight or confront bad practice within the school.

Roles at Kerelaw

218. In addition to my responsibilities as a social worker on placement, as a sessional worker I worked within the unit making sure the girls were okay and making sure the unit was running as smoothly as possible. Along with other staff, I took the girls on various outings, which we tried to encourage as much as we could. We would take them to the amusements and to different parks and that type of thing.

219. I was the key worker for two or three children and tried to have a more in-depth involvement with them. Part of that was getting to know them better and getting to know their home environment. I would also talk to their social workers, just to see what was going on in the girls' lives.

220. Working at Kerelaw was the most difficult job I have done. It took a lot out of me, trying to understand child psychology, why the children were there, their family circumstances and everything else.

221. In my later life as a social worker, if I was ever involved in a stressful situation, I could go for a walk round the block. I could remove myself from the situation, but you can't do that in residential care. You are there on shift, you can't leave and it can be really demanding. Again, there was little or no acknowledgement of this and many Kerelaw staff felt ignored, dismissed or uncared for at times.

Daily routine

222. The children would get up for breakfast in the morning and then wait in the unit before going to school, which was within the boys' unit. Some of the slightly older ones had wee jobs to go to, but the daily routine was mainly based around the school day mid-week.

223. At the weekend we tried to create more activity-based programmes, getting the youngsters out and about and filling in their days. Just the same as you would do with your own children, trying to keep them busy, interested and happy.

Training

224. The residential staff did go for periodic training, but I don't know what it was like. I don't think I did any training, but that was probably because I was also there as a social work student.

Punishments

225. I remember children not getting cigarettes and certain activities, such as TV or swimming and that sort of thing as punishment. There was certainly no physical chastisement that I saw.

Restraint techniques

226. In all my experiences at the various institutions, the only time I saw restraint techniques being used was when I did my social work placement in Kerelaw, albeit they probably weren't delivered in the most appropriate way. I witnessed weans being restrained by staff in a way that I did think was a bit more heavy handed than it could have been.

227. It would depend which member of staff was involved whether any attempts were made at de-escalation. Some staff did restrain the youngsters after working hard to de-escalate, however others would restrain without that talk down. Those were the ones who, in my opinion, seemed like they had been recruited in the local pub. I don't know if it was the case that those staff members didn't want to try and talk the youngster down, or if they didn't know how to do it, or a combination of both.

228. Some situations required immediate physical intervention, for example if one lassie was attacking another. You can't really try to talk anybody down in that situation, for the safety of the other child. There were plenty of other situations though when a girl was kicking off and was taken to their room. Occasionally I went with a staff member and the girl and they would be sitting with the girl, trying to reason with her.

229. I was never trained in restraint techniques because that wasn't my role there, however I would never have restrained a child anyway.

Awareness of abuse at Kerelaw

230. I never witnessed any crimes during my time at Kerelaw and I never saw any child being brutalised or assaulted. I was never aware of anything overly untoward, however people were always going to be wary around me because I was there as a social work student.

231. I am aware that John Muldoon, the guy in charge of Wilson unit, went on to serve sentences for offences he was convicted of. Matt George also received heavy duty sentences for offences he committed. I did not witness either of them commit any offences.

Leaving Kerelaw

232. I left Kerelaw in 1995 after the placement ended and my university workload increased, so I was no longer able to do the sessional work.

Offender Services in North Ayrshire

233. My second placement as a student was with Offender Services in North Ayrshire, based in Irvine and with a sub-office in Stevenston. The name has now changed to Justice Services. I was lucky that, just as I was finishing my placement, a vacancy became available so I applied for a job and got it and that was where I spent my full career.

234. I supervised people on probation orders and people on parole and I wrote court reports and parole reports. There were other duties as well, but that was the thrust of what I was doing. I didn't work with children, but I did work with a lot of young people because as soon as they were sixteen they were in the adult system, which was how it had

been with me. I had gone to bed one night at fifteen years old and the next day I'd woken up as an adult as far as the criminal justice system was concerned.

235. It wasn't uncommon for the people I dealt with as adults to have been through the care system as children. I suppose, proportionately, it was fairly high. Once a young person became sixteen there was no panel, they would go to court and then they would be in our system. We did various things over the years to try and work with them. Some of what we did wasn't bad, but some didn't work at all.

236. You knew with certain youngsters when you had made a connection and had a good relationship with them and it worked in some respects, but they had nothing else in their lives. It was hard to keep track as they got older and it would be difficult to gauge accurately.

237. I am aware that a lot of councils now have youth offending teams who pick up a lot of people who had formerly been in care and that has been a long time coming. I think that there is a recognition of how difficult it is for a young person to come into the adult system.

238. As an example, a young person who had been in care might not come to their probation appointments and that might be because their relationship with their social worker had been chaotic, not through any malice, just because of their behaviour and their mindset. When they were under sixteen they had an element of choice to an extent with their social worker, but all of a sudden they have this statutory involvement. Within a very short period of time they would breach their probation and that was always a backdoor into prison, even if their original offence hadn't been imprisonable.

239. The issue of non-compliance was massive and a lot of young people were going to prison because social work couldn't engage with them. It was a particular problem with young people who had been through the care system, although also because they were so troubled. They were all over the place in terms of housing and that kind of thing. I understand fully how difficult it must have been for them to attend structured appointments.

240. I suppose the youth offending teams were, to some extent, set up in recognition of these young people's ages, their immaturity and their lifestyles. You could use an element of discretion with them, certainly more than in the adult system and so there were efforts made to be aware of the problems and to address them. All the issues are still there, but that was a move towards acknowledgement and tailoring the programmes.

241. It used to be that it would be an automatic breach of a probation order if you committed a further offence. I remember breaching a woman because she never got a TV licence. Some years ago that was changed so that further offending wasn't an automatic breach and that was particularly beneficial for young people.

242. The changing nature of social work with the emphasis being on robust risk assessments and cognitive behavioural assessments can prevent the build-up of relationships. I had to watch what I was saying because I was the team manager, but I used to despair doing parole reports and assessing whether some guy, in terms of risk, was safe to be released.

243. More times than not it was a long term sentence and we would talk about putting the guy through an offender group working programme. I didn't think doing so was appropriate, proportionate, or relevant. The guy had served a long sentence and was just getting out and we were trying to tease out issues surrounding his offending behaviour.

244. We should have been concentrating on making sure he had a house, that he was registered with a GP and that sort of thing. All the other stuff should have been looked at while he was still in the jail. That is not a criticism of my colleagues, that was the road we were pushed down.

Autobiography 'So you think you know me'

245. In 2007 I published a book about my life, which I called 'So you think you know me'.

246. I mention the credibility that Donald Lake, the lifer I met in Dungavel, had for me in the book. I also mention my initial reluctance to bring my own experiences into my social work practice and it was only following the book's publication that I felt able to do so. It was also only then that I stopped carrying with me the feeling that I shouldn't be where I was. My past was out there and I could relax about it after all that time.

247. I felt I then had the licence to talk of my experiences, however one of the few regrets I have from my social work career is that early uncertainty. I wish I had been in a position to do so earlier on, but I suppose I didn't know how to do it. I would like to think I had credibility anyway, however bringing my own experiences in did solidify it.

248. There is something to be said about the social work organisation that I felt that way for so long. Comments were often made that people can't change and that a leopard will never change its spots. As much as I loved my profession and felt pride in being a social worker, there is a part of me that thinks we were not as good as we thought we were. We had to have the capacity and the willingness to learn and to accept that people can change.

249. I don't have any particular clear reason why I decided to write my book, it was a combination of factors. As well as thinking it might help me deal with my past, I suppose I felt I had something to give to the debate. I had become more confident as an individual and more critical of the system, including of myself. I knew the system wasn't working.

250. I wanted people to know that, no matter what you might have been involved in, everybody has the capacity to change. A part of me wanted to get that out there and I wanted to show that people can do so in the right circumstances and without having to do fifteen prison sentences.

251. Following the publication of the book I was criticised by some people in my own team, who questioned how I could have been so violent. That did make me wonder what

chance other people might have if that was the views of the people who were trying to introduce a change to their lives.

252. Those people were, however, very much in the minority, there were far more who were positive about the book. The social work department were also very positive and very encouraging too and I was often asked to do talks, albeit that really wasn't my thing.

253. I was contacted by [redacted], one of my childhood pals that [redacted] after it had been published. He had been given a ten year sentence and got out early, but he didn't comply with the conditions of his early release so he was back the jail at the time the book came out. I went up to see him and he was a poor soul.

254. [redacted] told me that he wasn't sure what he was going to do because he wasn't on supervision, as he was ending his sentence through recall. My wife [redacted] and I started to go and see him before he was released. He had no family, so we'd get him odds and ends like trainers and that sort of thing.

255. In advance of him getting released he told me he didn't know what to do because he had no social worker to help him get a house and start a life. I phoned around the housing department for him and eventually I managed to find him a place to stay.

256. [redacted] and I picked him up and took him to his house and to register with a GP, which wasn't easy. After that we took him to a supermarket and as we were putting the stuff through the till, we realised we hadn't got butter, so I asked [redacted] to go and get it. He was away for ages so I went to get him and he was standing in front of all the varieties of butter in total confusion. He couldn't cope with all the choices and he was panicking, but that is the reality for some people when they are released.

257. We left him at his flat and I gave him a mobile and told him to phone me if he needed anything. He used to phone me in the middle of the night, paranoid and worried that he could hear something outside, even though he was in a flat. Eventually he gave the flat up and became homeless and used to sleep in a graveyard. He died not long after that after getting back on heroin. He was alone and penniless.

258. ▇ was completely disempowered after years locked up. Of course he should be punished for his crimes, but he was so excluded and removed from society. He needed heavy-duty help and he got nothing. That is the reality that some people don't see and that some people don't want to know. Very few people cried the night ▇ died.

259. In some ways ▇ probably found it easier being in prison. He had the structure, the routine, all his meals and, to a certain extent, he would have felt safer, but it was all that which assisted in his confusion on his release. Scotland at one time had the highest rate of imprisonment in Europe. Prison was always the first option and prison is not the option.

Documentary 'The Road from Crime'

260. In 2012, as part of a project to share knowledge and improve understanding about why people desist from offending, I narrated a documentary entitled 'The Road from Crime'. I spoke to a number of people in an effort to establish what motivated them to change. I also spoke to my pal ▇, ▇ ▇.

261. To try and answer the question of why a proportion of offenders don't offend again goes back to how the whole system is designed. I understand the argument that establishing who, or why someone, might not offend is not in the remit of Justice Services and there are major resource issues there as well, but nevertheless that exposes the glaring failure in the system.

262. Legal practitioners, academics and policy makers also need to be asking why some people stop offending. What was it that worked? Those are still questions that are not routinely or widely asked. Instead, all the studies and all the research are about why people commit offences. I highlight a lot of that in my book as well and I also write about what helped me on my path.

263. What works for each person should be tailored to individual need, but there are key themes. Personal and professional relationships need to be there. In my case, a steady influence was my mother and I dread to think what my life would have been like had she not been there. You need a professional relationship as well, someone to believe in you and to see something in you that sometimes you might not see yourself. I couldn't see my potential, but Margaret Clark my social worker did.

264. You need hope. I remember going through the journey through the institutions and everything was bleak. I had a profound sense of hopelessness until I was given those opportunities by Margaret and I realised that I could do things differently and I could think differently.

265. You also need realistic opportunities. Opportunities that can be achieved and that can kindle that hope.

Treatment/support

266. I managed to escape the life, but there are many that do not. There are still times I think about my experiences in those institutions and I suppose it will never be far from my mind, however I have never had any treatment or support. In fact it was probably the opposite growing up. I was stigmatised because of my lifestyle, which reinforced the mentality that I was outwith mainstream society. No adult in any institution ever asked how I was, or offered me any support whatsoever.

Records

267. I got my social work file when I was working and there were a couple of reports in it, but there was nothing substantial. One was my borstal report, which made me sad when I read it. I wondered what chance I ever had. There wasn't much there, certainly not what there should have been and I was never given any support when I got that file.

Lessons to be learned

268. These places to which I was sent were god awful. I was lucky that I was never exposed to a sexual predator because I know boys who were sent to other schools were abused. I was not aware of there being any sexual predators at any of the places I was sent to, but that was only luck because that is what these places were like.

269. The question needs to be asked, why were institutions such as borstals allowed to evolve and almost flourish? It's a question that I believe has been overlooked. Especially given that these places existed for so many years and were places where there was almost state-sanctioned brutality.

270. I think I was maybe already lost by the time I was a young man. I'd done quite a lot of time for such a young guy. Perhaps if somebody had intervened with my mum and dad when I was younger and possibly given my mother some protection, things might have been different. Perhaps if someone had given her the life she deserved and she was not exposed to the level of violence she was getting from my dad. Perhaps that might have made a difference.

271. I'm not sure if my education at St Andrew's Academy might also have played a part. Perhaps if more of my teachers had been like my English teacher Mrs Hainey, who I liked, things might have been different, I don't know. Perhaps if more teachers and more adults had been more caring, more compassionate and more forgiving to the child I was, or to the children like me. Perhaps.

272. So many children have been severely traumatised over the many years. We have known that institutions such as those I was put in and such as Kerelaw don't work and yet nothing has been done. I think the situation has changed in the respect that Kerelaw and St Andrew's don't exist anymore, but we do need to ask what we are going to do with troublesome, disturbed children and I'm not sure if I have the answer.

273. I'm not sure what might have replaced institutions such as Kerelaw and St Andrew's, however over my years working as a criminal justice social worker, there was an

increase in the number of people who had been in care as children coming into the adult system. I often return to where I grew up in Saltcoats and I wonder what has changed. There are still the same levels of deprivation and inequality and that concerns and upsets me.

274. There are many young families in the position of being subjected to those levels of poverty and deprivation. It is a conveyer belt and none of that has gone away. There needs to be early intervention. I am aware that there is a recognition of that in social work, but I don't know just how well it is done.

275. While I was working as a social worker there seemed to be almost a collective policy of blaming the individual for offending behaviour. There was also a thinking that a cognitive behavioural programme needed to be devised to teach these people how to think. That was not the issue, but that was the thinking and that drove policy decisions.

276. I take issue with the belief that responsibility for engaging in offending behaviour lies squarely with the individual. I think we have to give people hope, we have to make sure they have good relationships with their social workers and we have to give them opportunities. I had opportunities when Margaret Clark got me the voluntary work, I had a good relationship with her and that gave me hope. That's what you have to have if you're going to make a difference and promote change in someone's life, but we lack that.

277. You need insight to identify the changes needed and the support required by each individual child. Margaret had the courage to put me forward and take the risk, however I have noticed in social work that there is an increased emphasis on risk assessments and so people are even less inclined to take risks. I don't necessarily criticise the individual workers for that because that is the culture that has been created.

278. I used to tell my students that they were never going to effect any change in a person unless they made a connection with them. They have to know who their social worker is, they have to believe in them and they have to trust them. Without that they don't

even have a right to ask them to change and it seems that rather than trying to make that connection, social workers follow a prescriptive programme and follow the pages of said programme. That frustrates me, because I dread to think how my life might have turned out if Margaret Clark had followed the letter of some prescriptive programme.

279. I would ask my students what right we had to ask anybody to change and what did we want people to change into. I remember one time when I was the team manager chairing a review for a prolific offender and asking his two social workers when he had last been charged. The social workers were fair proud telling me that he hadn't been charged for three years.

280. Some months passed and I happened to bump into the guy at the shops. I asked him how he was and he told me he was still in the same bedsit and still receiving prescription drugs, although he did admit he had the odd relapse. He was in a poor state and I remember thinking about us slapping ourselves on the back because he hadn't committed any offences. Yet he was staying in the same squalor, he had no pals and no family support and he was off-and-on heroin.

281. That guy could have been held up as an example of how social work's policies to address offending behaviour were working. He had been in and out of the jail and all of a sudden he wasn't committing offences, however the reality was that his life was probably worse. That is not a success story, that is a failure.

282. There needs to be a wider systemic approach, for which the government have a responsibility as well. It must be policy driven and it is not. We need to change the quality of people's lives.

283. People come out of jail with a week's money and homeless and they don't get any more money for six weeks. There are wider policy decisions to be made with regards to that, to benefits, to employment, to housing and to access to healthcare. Social work are operating in a vacuum because they don't have access to that and instead are left to work in isolation.

284. My offending behaviour was certainly not a conscious, rational choice, it was a series of circumstances. Unless the levels of poverty, disadvantage, exclusion and deprivation are addressed in a meaningful way, we are always going to have the same client going through the doors as children and as adults. Unfortunately there is still no sign of that being addressed.

285. Children and everyone should have a right to safety and a right to good, supportive relationships. They should have opportunities to move on and they should be treated with humanity. We need to be more equal in society and we need to meaningfully address the levels of poverty and disadvantage and how that can impact on lives, and particularly young lives.

286. There needs to be therapeutic communities where care is tailored for each individual child. Staff need to be trained and experienced practitioners, given the troubled natures of the children in their care. Institutions such as those I was put in are crime factories and the only way to stop that is to not put children in them. If a group of disturbed children are put in the one place where there is no therapeutic community it is not going to work and despite places like Kerelaw and St Andrew's no longer existing, the conveyer belt continues.

287. I know that efforts have been made to promote and encourage children to be able to speak about their concerns or worries, but I don't know how successful that has been. I wouldn't have spoken up when I was a child in those institutions and nor would my pals, because that was the culture then. Speaking up would have really bucked that culture and even if I had felt sufficiently able to trust an adult, I don't know if I would have done so. I suppose it might have depended where I was emotionally at a particular point. That would still have been very difficult because it just wasn't something that was done at that time. At that time society actively discouraged the sound of that voice. Nobody wanted to know.

288. That said, however, a point I would like to tentatively make, or a question I would ask is, when the attempts have been made to address past failures, has this at times

fostered and/or encouraged and promoted a sense of 'victimhood'? Does the truth lie somewhere in between? I think that balance has still to be reached.

289. I am all for the latest Scottish Government policy decision that there should be no under-eighteens in prison, although I try not to be too cynical about it. We have spoken about such policy changes for years and it seems that very little has in fact changed.

290. There needs to be a shift in thinking. They are always promoting the use of community-based disposal, which need to be more meaningful than they are. There needs to be a more holistic approach to the young person. Youth offending teams need to be better and need to improve how they work with the person. Prison is not the answer.

291. You could probably empty most of Scottish prisons and it wouldn't make any difference in terms of people marauding the streets and assaulting people. I accept that high risk violent offenders need to be contained, but there is not a large number of them. The amount of times prison is still used for young people is shameful for Scotland.

292. It needs to be recognised that social work needs to have the time and the resources to do work with the young people. Not only does each social worker need to have the desire to make a difference and do the right thing, they must be given the time to do so. There are resource implications and the pressure that social work are under at the moment is phenomenal. My two sons are criminal justice social workers and I can see the pressure they are under and sometimes I worry for them.

293. While I was still working there were various initiatives in adult service and some worked really well, others less so. Those that worked often did because of the individual social worker going that extra mile and doing more than was asked. It shouldn't be left to the individual goodness of the workers, it should be built into the system.

294. The culture of an organisation comes down to the leadership of that organisation. In social work the leaders were increasingly coming from a health background and had

no knowledge of social work. I used to wonder how they could then think about things that would work, they had no awareness and so how could they inspire people.

295. There needs to be leaders who do have experience, knowledge and awareness and who are able to question what does work and what doesn't. That is where a positive culture originates. Potentially the same applies for a care home where people would then be more comfortable and more able to express themselves. More able to have a voice.

296. Children have a right to safety, to stability and to growth, but I don't know what the best way of protecting a child in a care home or a secure unit from harm by an adult or by another child is. It comes down to the individual needs of the child, the circumstances and the context. If there are a number of children in care together, to a certain extent there are still going to be hierarchies. I would question whether we need to put children together in any unit who are unknown to each other.

297. One child could be put in a unit with another who happens to be so damaged and troubled that it cannot be a good relationship for either of them. Additionally, there are adults on the staff who are strangers, working shifts and having little regular contact with the children and so it cannot possibly work

298. Family support is required as well. There is an historical problem with children going on home leave and returning to where a lot of their problems lie. I don't remember any intervention with families while I was at Kerelaw. There was one girl in particular who I was the key worker for and who I took home a few times, essentially to make sure the girl never did a runner. They lived in squalor and I could see that the mother was trying her best, but she just wasn't coping with her own life, let alone her children. There was no help or support for that girl's mother and so neither the girl's life nor the mother's life were ever going to change. I often think of that girl and I dread to think what happened to her.

299. If a child is to go back into a family environment, it must be ensured that the family is adequately supported. The child's life is never going to change otherwise.

300. I don't know much about the models of imprisonment of children in Finland and Denmark, but I do know something of the adult system. I know that imprisonment is used far more sparingly and it's almost as if they are using imprisonment as an opportunity to create a more therapeutic community. They are recognising that the structured, punitive approach which we still have doesn't work and it wouldn't surprise me if that is their approach within a childcare setting as well.

301. Our prisons don't work. They are crime factories. There should be more decent, effective, community-based programmes. I don't know how anybody can think that a person just released from prison, where they've spent their sentence in a state of loneliness, anxiety and heightened alert, is suddenly going to be a decent, law-abiding citizen on their release.

302. There must be an emphasis on a therapeutic component to custodial experiences for both children and adults that genuinely and realistically prepares them for getting back out. There must be an emphasis on how we can help someone have a law-abiding, productive and inclusive life.

303. There is nothing positive that can be said about any of the institutions I was in because they were children's prisons without bars. They did nothing but traumatise people. People knew that's what they were then and people know now. I was a troublesome wean, I was unruly both officially and unofficially and society couldn't cope with me so they put me away. They didn't care where I was going or what was happening to me, they just wanted me off the streets, but I wasn't just troublesome, I was also troubled.

304. I can say plenty of positive things about the system outwith those establishments and I would hold Margaret Clark up as an example of that. Probably the key theme that underpinned my process of change was the relationship we had. Such a relationship takes a lot of hard work and a lot of perseverance, but that is what has to be done.

Hopes for the Inquiry

305. I would like to see an improvement across the board in the systems of how we tackle dealing with the most troubled and damaged children. We must be better and help and acknowledge those youngsters and their traumas.

306. People living on the margins of society has gone on long enough.

Other information

307. Margaret Clark, my social worker maintained contact with me right through from being a boy and into my adulthood and I spoke at her funeral. I read the eulogy. In my social work career, I tried to do what Margaret had done and I always treated people with kindness and humanity whenever I could. No matter who they are, everybody has a context and everybody has a backstory.

308. 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..

Dated.......21/12/22...