

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

KAM

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is KAM. My date of birth is 1932. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Background**

2. I was born in the East End of Glasgow. I grew up there and that was where I did all my schooling. When I left school, I worked in the old Olivetti typewriter factory. Some time after that I went to Rampton Hospital to train as a nurse. I spent about three years training in a secure psychiatric hospital and that was where I met my husband. When we got married, we lived in Cumbernauld. I worked as a receptionist in a medical centre and I was there for a few years. We left Cumbernauld when I had my son at the age of 38. We moved down to Dalry in Ayrshire not long after he was born. I decided that I wanted to bring him up myself and I didn't want him being looked after by strangers. Before working at Kerelaw, I tried to get nursing work in a hospital in Irvine but they wouldn't give me the particular hours that I needed.

### **Kerelaw List D School and Secure Unit, Stevenston**

3. I took up employment at Kerelaw List D School in Stevenston in 1973 or 1974. My designation at that time was a housemother. I studied at Langside College to obtain a Certificate in Social Services, which I finished in 1979. After I completed my training, I became a senior care worker and oversaw the units that I worked in. Towards the end

of my time at Kerelaw, I worked in the secure unit. I think I was there for about two or three years. I left Kerelaw when I officially retired in 1992.

4. Kerelaw took boys between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. Initially, it just took boys when I was there. Then, Strathclyde in their infinite wisdom said that it was not natural for boys to be on their own. They decided to bring girls in. I think that was in the late 1980s. After girls arrived, we not only had boys who were emotionally disturbed but girls as well. Girls are the last people who should be taken into care unless you have to do so. They were at risk for a whole host of reasons. To mix boys and girls together meant that the boys thought they'd won a watch. I didn't work a lot with the girls, but maybe it would have done me some good. Prior to retiring, I was part of a middle management team in the secure unit which took boys and girls.
5. There were four house units at Kerelaw. When the girls arrived, they went into Wilson and Baird units. The boys were in Fleming and Millerston units. I worked in Fleming. The units were all separate, although Fleming and Millerston were linked by a dining room and TV room as were Wilson and Baird. The dormitories were upstairs. When I went to Kerelaw, there were about 30 boys in Fleming. There were between 26 and 30 boys in the course of my time at the unit. The dorms were supposed to take 26 boys, but senior staff would often come down and ask if we could take another one. Social workers would arrive at Kerelaw at 8:00 pm with a boy. I ended up feeling sorry for them because they were left with nowhere to put them.
6. The units were in four separate buildings. They were totally separate from the school classrooms. The secure unit was right up behind the wall. It was a separate building as well. The secure unit wasn't open when I first started at Kerelaw. It didn't open for years, but I can't remember when it did open.

#### *Staffing structure and recruitment*

7. My friend, May McFarlane, was a care worker at Kerelaw. She's now dead. I think she suffered from burn out at Kerelaw. She told me that the headmaster was looking for staff and by that time my son was in nursery. I applied for the job at Kerelaw through



May. She brought me an application form. I was interviewed by the headmaster and someone from Strathclyde Regional Council. I was interviewed in the morning and I thought that I might not hear for weeks. I was barely in the house and the phone went. They offered me the job. Prior to that, my confidence was boosted a wee bit by the man from Strathclyde. He said that my qualifications were different from the other candidates because I was born and bred in the East End of Glasgow. He said that would stand me in good stead, which it did. I came from a big family. My parents' values were so different to what I experienced at Kerelaw, but you always gained something from a job. Kerelaw did obtain references before I started working there. I think one of mine was from a Catholic priest. I think the other reference was from Rampton, where I did my nurse training. They provided character references.

8. Eventually, I was also involved in recruitment at Kerelaw. When people came to be recruited, the men would refer themselves to the male members. I thought that a couple of them seemed uncomfortable with women. When I was involved in interviewing candidates, I hoped that they would stay at Kerelaw long term. The kids needed continuity and to form a respectful relationship with staff. Many workers didn't stay long term because they suffered from burn out or they were promoted and moved on. The kids would then be left without somebody that they had been able to talk to.
9. The headmaster was responsible for the recruitment of staff. Occasionally, someone from Strathclyde Regional Council would also come down to interview candidates but they were very thin on the ground. I can't say that any change was made to recruitment after girls arrived at Kerelaw. I think we just relied upon the original staff. I can remember being part of the team carrying out interviews. Some of the people we were interviewing were women and when they came down to the school, they didn't want the job. It just wasn't what they thought it was going to be. I told them to take their time and go round the school so they got the reality of it.
10. When I went to Kerelaw, [MTT] was [SNR]. He's dead now. They retired him during my time at Kerelaw, but I can't remember exactly when that was. [SNR] [MTT] retired. I think that [SNR] [SNR] somewhere on the east coast, but I'm not sure because

we didn't get to know his background. [REDACTED] MTT was revered by the boys. I think it was because of the macho culture at the time. He was quite a small, slight man but his presence alone was commanding. He was very strict but very fair. The staff enjoyed him as well. I always thought that he gave me a lot of good advice.

11. The headmasters and the deputy heads were in overall charge, but my line manager was the third in charge, Bob Yarr. Murdo McSween was [REDACTED] MTT [REDACTED] SNR and [REDACTED] LEF was [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] LEF came up from a secure unit in Durham when the secure unit opened. He brought other staff with him from Durham.

#### *Staff*

12. There were teaching staff, care staff, night staff, domestic staff, kitchen staff and office staff at Kerelaw. The office staff worked up in the teaching block, which was also where the senior staff had their offices. There were two members of staff to a unit, for 26 to 30 kids. I didn't think about it when I first started working at Kerelaw, but as the years went on I thought that was wrong. There should have been more staff on duty. There were also two members of staff on duty in the secure unit, but there were less young people there. I think there were six or eight children in the secure unit.
13. There was a housemaster and a housemother in each unit. After 5:00 pm, that was supplemented by a teacher. The housemaster had a lot of responsibilities. If he was away to a court or a Children's Panel, the housemother and the teacher would be the only staff in the unit. Over the years, I used to say to teachers not to come down to the unit right away. They were supposed to come after class, but I told them to go into the classroom and have a cup of tea. I thought that made it a better environment. The teachers needed to get away, into the classroom and have a chat. I recognised the importance of that myself. I did an awful lot off my own back and out of instinct. I wanted to create a good atmosphere because we were dealing with kids who were very disturbed.
14. I remember Ronnie Conway. He was a housemaster in Fleming House. He came after Davie Denholm left and went to Ballikinrain. Ronnie Conway was a very good member



of staff. I think he did the Certificate of Social Services (CSS) course. He definitely did some sort of course. He then moved up and on to another establishment. I also recall Bill Nelson, who worked in Wilson unit. He was a great Christian. In his time off, he would stand down at Stevenston Cross and do his preaching. He was very good. The boys would get a laugh because religion was the last thing on their minds.

15. The nightwatchmen was on duty at night time. There was one for each unit and he would be the only member of staff on duty at night. I'm not sure, but I think they brought in one female night staff when girls started at Kerelaw. I think male staff did do nightshifts in the female units.
16. The nightwatchmen came on at 10:00pm. I can remember telling the nightwatchman if a child had been unwell and needed medication or if a child had been playing up. I would write things like that in the unit logbook, but in my experience the nightwatchmen never read the logbook. They had their role, which they thought was sacrosanct. They had no training or experience whatsoever. My memory is that a couple of them were very good. Another couple were not so good in my opinion. I would hear about the nightwatchmen from the kids so I knew who was liked and disliked. One of the nightwatchmen had a wife who was a kitchen lady at Kerelaw. He was very good with the kids, although I think they ran about like scalded cats while he had a sleep. I can remember Bob Forrest asking me to see whether one in particular had had a drink when he came on shift. If I'd got a whiff of that, I would have said something but I asked Bob Forrest how I was supposed to know, unless I had a breathalyser.
17. One of the best nightwatchman was [REDACTED]. His first name was KGN. He worked in my unit, Fleming. I didn't know the dynamics in other units because I didn't work in those. It was like four different houses. KGN was very old fashioned and he had an air about him. He wasn't a man that communicated a lot with the kids. They must have had a respect for him because I think his approach was that he would give them an easy time if they gave him an easy time. I never heard the kids say that he had been rough with them. He would never give them cigarettes. I think he had quite strict Christian views. Some staff did give the boys cigarettes through the night if they wanted the kids to favour them. They would then use the kids to do some of the

management for them and keep order. If kids got up and carried on during the night, they would hope that the older ones would get them to shut their mouths. Giving boys cigarettes was not allowed.

18. I never socialised with staff. I went home after my shift and switched off. We did have a night out occasionally at Christmas or something like that. We did have volunteers at Kerelaw. They seemed to come from Geilsland. They were vetted by the headmaster or senior staff.

### *Training*

19. I didn't get any specific training when I started at Kerelaw. I remember the housemaster in Fleming was Davie Denholm. It was old-fashioned in that he was the man of the house and the woman was the one who did the homely tasks. Davie was very controlling, but that was acceptable if you got the respect. Unless you got the kids' respect, your life would be an utter hell. When I started, Davie Denholm showed me what to do but other than that, kids told you what to do. I always remember going to court. I had been before with Davie Denholm, but it was the first time that I had gone on my own. The boy I was taking taught me court procedure. He told me to call the Sheriff, "My Lord," which I did. That was how I learned the language at court.
20. If I had questions about how things ran, I could ask MTT [REDACTED] but that didn't really come until later on. A couple of days after I started, I remember senior staff coming down to the unit. MTT [REDACTED] always wanted to chat to the kids, even if it was to say that their behaviour had been out of order. He didn't particularly talk to me until he got to know me. I would take things to him if they were things that I couldn't manage or if I thought something would ricochet back on a kid. I would get his advice.
21. In 1976, Kerelaw sent me on the Certificate of Social Services (CSS) course at Langside College. It was a three year part-time course in children and adolescents. I was expected to come back at night to work at Kerelaw. It was a good course. However, the people training us hadn't worked at the coal face. I'm not underestimating them because it was a good training that I got, but I often thought that



they were unaware of the work we did at Kerelaw. In the group that I was in, the other people worked in children's homes. They didn't always have experience of the boys we had at Kerelaw. One of the tutors referred to us as middle class ladies, as if we were just in that profession for something to do. The ladies who ran the course were good though. It was practical and it was where I learned what I would call handling skills. As far as I recall, there was nothing in the course about child abuse or child protection. I was awarded my certificate on 14 September 1979.

22. Not everyone at Kerelaw went through that training. Just before I left, I think Strathclyde began to move the agenda on the CSS and it was given a different name. Years after I finished the course, I can remember that I mentored someone else doing it. I still had the rest of my workload, but when time allowed I did get involved in training other members of staff. In a roundabout sort of way, you'd pass on your skills. I also got papers from the college. I would give them to other care staff if they were interested. The men didn't particularly want to know. I had some clever guys working with me, but they were comfortable with what they had. They also didn't have the confidence to go to college.
23. I was out of the school quite a bit over the years. When I did my college course, I went out on placements. I went to Quarriers in Bridge of Weir. I also went to Geilsland School in Beith. I went there for a couple of day visits for training. They were great. Boys had come through the system there and they were not so much about education. I felt that was worthwhile as I took things away from that. Boys who were unable to sit behind a desk and caused mayhem, not only to staff but to themselves. I think some of the boys showed signs of being autistic. They had been constant truants from a very young age. When they got to teenagers, a self-image was developing. They had a self-image that they had no education and truanting or absconding were the only things that they got attention for. They would be held in esteem for that by an element of their peer group.
24. At Geilsland, I perceived that they gave skills to kids who were resistant to education. Some of these boys had skills that they were unaware of. I'm not sure staff at Kerelaw picked those skills up and I think that should have been looked at more rather than the

curriculum we followed. I would discuss things like that with other staff when I came back to Kerelaw. I might have discussed things like that at staff meetings, but I don't think it resulted in any changes being implemented. I can remember a senior member of staff came from Geilsland to see how we operated at Kerelaw. He wasn't negative or anything. I think that no matter where you go, you take something away from the situation.

25. I can remember that L<sup>EF</sup> [REDACTED] organised for us to go down to look at a secure unit in Durham. He had worked there before he came to Kerelaw. I went with other middle managers. We went to look at their methods. They were more or less dealing with the same type of child as us. I'm not being bias, but I thought that we were better. There was more organisation at Kerelaw. For example, we had the assembly at 5:00pm every night. I just formed an impression that the children in Durham sat about a lot and a lot of time was wasted.
26. Students would come to Kerelaw on placement. I don't know whether Kerelaw had any choice in the students that came. That was the kind of information that wasn't passed on to us. Some of them went through quite a hard time with the boys. They were young and attractive. They would come to me in tears. I had regular meetings with them and the boys. I would also chat to them if they needed it and I had the time or I would go and find them if I'd heard they were having difficulties. I think that Strathclyde Regional Council were responsible for vetting the students. I would liaise with them about the students. I had to ring one tutor and tell them that it was painful for the girl to handle boys.
27. The students shouldn't have had to handle the boys, but sometimes you had to leave the unit or take the boys on an activity at night. Many of the students were very sympathetic to the boys and good with them. Some of them weren't. It was no reflection on them. It just wasn't the placement for them. The staff kept an eye on the students. I used to tell them when a student was coming on the unit and was getting a rough time. I would also say to the boys, "How would you like your sister or your mother to be spoken to like that?" That was the kind of language that the boys understood. I wasn't using psychology with them, but they got a mouthful. The training



I gave the students was really hands on. I used to think of it as they were looking at us as models for how to work. I considered myself to be a model for other staff.

28. When I think of some of the violence that's been reported at Kerelaw, staff just followed on thinking that was the norm. In some respects, those staff might have been doing a great job but when it came to emergencies and flashpoints they did what they had seen others do. Unless they had some time of training and mentoring, they were bringing their own attitudes and values to a situation. Some of the kids would respond to that because it was the norm for them at home.

#### *Policy*

29. When I started at Kerelaw, policies and guidelines weren't written down. Mainly, I learned on the job. There might have been things written down as time went on, but I do not recall it. There was no guidance given to staff on things like restraint. We did have staff meetings, but when I think about it now they came with an agenda. The agenda would have been prepared by the secretary and the headmaster would say what we were going to discuss. I didn't see anything wrong with it at the time. I thought that the teachers always added a contribution to those meetings. I don't remember those meetings at the start of my time at Kerelaw, but latterly they took place about once a month. I think the direction to hold the staff meetings came from Strathclyde.

#### *Supervision/appraisals*

30. I think I did have regular meetings with my line manager to discuss my performance. My line manager was Bob Yarr. He was third in charge and he was there from the beginning. By the time I had qualified, Bob was getting ready to retire. I was on an equal status with him, but I could always ask him things. He was very good with me when I was doing my modules. I didn't get any written appraisals, but he had to give feedback to the college when I was on my course. It was more on a casual basis. I think I learned the folly of that when I got my training. They touched on appraisal on my course, but I didn't have regular appraisals at Kerelaw.

## *Work/roles*

31. Initially, my job description contained three lines. My role was to create a homely atmosphere where boys could relax outwith the classroom setting. I was supposed to encourage them in their personal hygiene and their appearance. I also had to escort them to doctor, dentist and hospital appointments, if required. As time went on, these duties extended to attending Children's Panel and courts where reports were prepared by the housemaster or senior staff. I was also expected to liaise with field social workers and families, as required. On reflection, information was rather thin on the ground. Social workers were seldom seen or available, but no disrespect to social workers. As I saw it, they had such a high caseload.
32. Eventually, I became a senior care worker and I was in charge of the unit. The term social worker was usually used for social workers in the field. Kerelaw senior staff interviewed me and said that they would promote me. Women didn't usually get promoted then, but it was to make life a bit easier for them. Maybe women were starting to be valued a bit more around that time.
33. We did fourteen hour days at Kerelaw, working one day on, one day off. That was because SNR [REDACTED], thought that continuity would be better. I arrived at Kerelaw for 8:00am and was there until after 10:00pm. It was too long. If there was a drama or an upset at night time then you didn't leave the nightshift. It was an unwritten law that you would stay to try and ease the situation. In saying that, I could count on one hand the number of times that happened. If you had the right staff on, they calmed the situation down. In fact, we spent our lives calming the situation. Sometimes, there were flare ups and it was usually when the kids were planning to batter another child. As far as I was concerned, we were there to protect the kids and protect the staff as well. The children weren't ten or eleven years olds. They were big thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen year old boys.
34. The workload of seniors was heavy so they were putting work onto me, but they still weren't sharing salient points that I should have known. I can analyse it now. When they promoted me, other people had come and applied for the promoted post but I got



the job. It took me out of the units, although not purposefully. I gradually got more and more tasks. I didn't think anything of it because I was new to the job and picking bits up.

35. There was an expectation of traditional roles. They wanted women to do the usual female jobs. However the workload got more and more, although I didn't think about it at the time. If you're learning to write court reports and Children's Panel reports, you need to be tuned into everything that's going on. I had a style of writing when it came to preparing court reports. I got to know what the courts were looking for. I didn't get taught that on my social work course. I think they taught us to write reports, but not necessarily court reports.
36. The more experience I got and completing the course made me look at things very analytically. I would look at what lay behind the behaviour. When I became a senior, I was overseeing all the unit and staff as well. Between 5:00 and 10:00pm, part of that duty was to visit other units. By the time I left Kerelaw, I was working in the secure unit. I can't remember how long I was in the secure unit for.
37. My caseload was loaded. I was wearing lots of different hats. I was also mentoring students, one student at a time. I have a letter from a field work teacher at Strathclyde Regional Council dated 10 December 1982. It states: "*Dear KAM I should like to thank you for all your hard work as a link worker in Fiona's placement. I very much valued your positive contribution to her placement and to my own learning. I've enjoyed meeting and working with you and feel that your support and encouragement has really facilitated Fiona's personal and professional growth. I hope that I shall have the opportunity of working with you again. Your particular comments at the final meeting were much appreciated and Alan and I will bear them in mind when negotiating our next Kerelaw experience.*" I was mentoring the field work teacher's student.
38. As the years went on, I was becoming divorced from the care side. More students were coming to Kerelaw. They were going on to do psychology and things like that. I think that all of the students were with us for about three months. I wanted to make

sure that they had a comfortable setting to get the most out of their placement. I had to spend a lot of time with social work students when I think I should have been spending my time with the kids. It was a hands-on training for the students. They would use you as a model for how to work.

39. By the time the girls came in, I was in middle management. I was overseeing four units and writing reports. Without realising it, I'd been withdrawn from the care of side of my work. I was the only woman in middle management. It changed the atmosphere between staff and me. Women seemed to prefer a male member of staff. It was a cultural thing.
40. I think my husband had a good understanding of my work, which meant that I didn't get burnt out. Not many people stayed in jobs at Kerelaw for years and years. They either left because they got burn out or they were promoted and wanted to get on. I worked at Kerelaw for eighteen years.

#### *Children and young people at Kerelaw*

41. The biggest punishment you could give children was taking them away from everything that was familiar to them, although some kids didn't want to take their home leave when they were given it. In spite of many of Kerelaw's residents coming from dysfunctional backgrounds, it was all that they knew and it was security. In their own local environments, people spoke their language and practiced their habits. Some parents didn't want their children at home. They were always on the phone saying that they didn't want them. Other boys didn't want to go home. You could tell by their body language at the weekly meetings when you read out who was going home on leave. They were sometimes frightened to go home to their peer groups. I would discuss these things with social workers, if they visited. Some social workers were excellent, but some were clueless to the kid.
42. Nowadays, we hear about children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and autism. I think that many of the kids at Kerelaw had those conditions. There was a psychologist and a psychiatrist attached to Kerelaw, but they were called



in. It was part of their remit to come and interview the children. They might suggest that we try this or that. Not all children were seen by the psychologist or psychiatrist. I think the headmaster decided which children were seen, but he got information from the care workers.

43. The kids at Kerelaw were in transit for most of their lives, but MTT liked to hang onto a kid if he saw a possibility. I can remember he would take three or four very difficult kids up to his house. I would ask the kids what they would do up there. They told me that they would watch the telly, have a cup of tea, have a game of cards.
44. I can remember MTT mentoring a boy when I went there. He was thirteen, fourteen. He had been at the previous school before Kerelaw opened. I can't remember its name, but it had been in Millerston in Glasgow. The house units at Kerelaw came down from that school. Kerelaw was formed on the basis of the Millerston school. MTT had worked with this boy from the age of nine or ten and he brought him to Kerelaw. By that time he had left his offending behind. His name was , but everyone called him . As the years went on, he stayed in the school. He got a job working for a removal company. He went abroad and everything. He got married and settled down. As far as I know, ended up looking after MTT in his old age. MTT was a very important person in his life. Those are the snippets about Kerelaw that you don't hear.
45. Children in the secure unit had to be sectioned. The decision was taken by Children's Panels. The headmaster might discuss it at Strathclyde level. If staff thought a child no longer needed secure unit, the decision had to come from the Panel. Staff couldn't decide to move children from open to secure. If we thought that a child should be getting home leave, the only way they could get that was in the open unit but that had to come from legislation.

#### *Mornings*

46. When I think of it, I didn't spend so much time with the kids. They got up at 8:00am and went to school at 9:00am. There were a lot of dynamics in that hour as well. I

didn't see them until 10.30, 11:00am when they came back for their cigarette. They came back to the unit at lunchtime and went back to the school for the afternoon. After school, it was activities. I think the scenario was that we kept the kids occupied.

### *Bed wetting*

47. Some boys did wet the bed. The main thing with bed wetting was to keep it private from the other boys because they would use it as an oral weapon. In the morning, I would go up to the boys. There was one who I would now say was autistic. I didn't know that at the time, but I knew there was something. I would ask him quietly if his bed was wet. I would then tell the others boys to get up, get washed and get down the stairs. I would tell the boy to lift his bedding and put it in the bucket and that was it. Kids in other units were told to take wet bedding up to the laundry. They would be late for breakfast because they had been up at the laundry. I tried to be discreet about it but there wasn't a uniform policy.
48. I can't remember raising bed wetting at staff meetings, but I think I might have said to other staff in my unit that they should give the kid his dignity. I don't know how I discussed that with staff, but I know that I did. If kids are getting slagged off, they'll be highly distressed. The particular kid I'm talking about could be on a short fuse. Other boys realised this and sometimes used it to bait him. A lot of your management was done instinctively and according to your own attitudes and values.

### *Mealtimes*

49. The staff ate the same food as the boys. I thought that the food was very good, but it depended who was doing the cooking. They all did their best. If kids didn't want the food, they could just leave it on their plates. The menu was changed when new supervisor came. It was very varied and she was very hands-on. She was a nutritionist more than anything else. Her menus were good. I don't know whether that was a conscious decision when she was appointed. Nobody told me that kind of thing.



### *Chores*

50. The kids didn't do chores at Kerelaw. We had cleaners, who the kids related quite closely to. The cleaners would slip them things, but we didn't make an issue of that. The cleaners always felt that the kids were so innocent. I would tell them not to leave their bags. They would get their bags stolen and the school had to compensate them. Occasionally, kids that I knew would help out in the kitchen. They were worldly wise and always plotting. They would ask to get in to help. If they did the veg and the potatoes, they might get a cigarette from the lady in the kitchen. They also made their own beds and kept their bedrooms tidy. They didn't have any personal things in the dormitories. That was the kids' personal choice because they would thief from one another.
51. The kids also did a bit of sweeping, but you had to be careful that they weren't being scapegoated. One boy loved making the tea for us at night. He would make a load of toast. He was currying favour and said he liked doing it. Part of him did, but the other part was that he was doing somebody else's work. I didn't like that because I wanted a child to make his own way, but I certainly was not going to see him being bullied.

### *Pocket money*

52. The kids got pocket money every week. There was no way it would be stopped unless behaviour was very bad. That decision was taken by the headmaster. I had enough on my plate and I wasn't going to take responsibility for that. I used to give the kids their pocket money. I would get envelopes and a sum of money was already in them for them to take home. I had to be careful because I wasn't with them going out in the minivan. Those who bullied would take the money from other kids, but not on the school premises. They did that either in the minivan or when they had arrived at their destination. It was almost an impossible task. Now and again I would ask the strongest boy to make sure the money didn't get thieved in the minivan. You had to have good handling skills and trust so that boy would do what you had asked for. I couldn't be everywhere at once.

### *Washing and bathing*

53. There were showers downstairs in the units. Normally, about four boys went in at a time. If you sent a whole lot in it was a huge carry on. Showers were sacrosanct in as much as it was male staff who went in. I might have gone in a couple of times if there was a melee in there. On the whole, kids showered every night and there were no incidents. If there was a carry on, a male member of staff usually didn't expect me to go in and I didn't want to go in. If it was something serious, I wouldn't have hesitated to go in. I can count on one hand the number of times that I went in. I worked so little with the girls so I don't know what the arrangements were for their showers.

### *Leisure Time*

54. Senior staff were like snow off a dyke at 4:00 and 5:00pm. Teaching staff came over from the school to do extra activities. <sup>MTT</sup> [REDACTED] was very strict about wanting the kids to come back from school at 4:00pm and getting the classroom out of their system. We had to keep an eye on them because they would be letting off steam, as kids do. At 5:00pm we had an assembly with the children and all the staff who were on duty. I don't remember that assembly being held in the secure unit. There weren't enough children in there for an assembly.
55. The teaching staff who were doing an extra-curricular activity were also at the assembly. There was one teacher on duty in the evening for each house unit, so four teachers. They were expected to come with some kind of activity to offer to the kids. They kids would then decide what they wanted to do. Most of the activities were sport. There was football and <sup>MTT</sup> [REDACTED] took padel tennis. I would take the kids for reading or writing. The activities were often quite manly things, although sometimes I'd take the kids out. I often thought it was the best thing to get them out of the school. We would take them in two small groups to things like ice skating. That was when I really got to know the kids. I picked things up. The kids in the secure unit couldn't be taken outside.



56. If staff wanted to take the kids out, they would ask if they could have the money and the minibus that night. When they took the kids out to ice skating, they would fight with the locals. It was not straightforward but you got used to it and you managed it. I would tell the kids that if there was any nonsense, the whole group would have to go back. I used group dynamics. If the fight was deliberate on the part of a Kerelaw pupil, there would be repercussions for him. However, the local boys did not want them there. They were on their territory and they would start fights. I never knew how territorial boys could be until I went to Kerelaw. Some boys would use trips out to run away. We had to stop taking them to Largs because some of the boys would go shoplifting.
57. Some staff took children to their homes outside Kerelaw. I think that Strathclyde knew about this practice. It was an unwritten law. I never took children home. May McFarlane used to take children to her home and they loved it. I would not take children home. I would say to people that if I were them, I would not take children home. Apart from anything else, kids would see things and lift them. That was natural for them.

#### *Trips and Holidays*

58. There were no holidays when I first went to Kerelaw. It just developed. I think I picked up these bits of development at my course. Along with May McFarlane and Ernie Nash, a PE teacher, I took some children to Lendalfoot for a week. They were amazed. Ernie Nash had played football for St. Mirren or someone like that. The kids liked him. There was a kindness that he radiated, but he was more than able for the kids. Ernie and I decided to take the kids away, but we did a timetable for them. That kind of child cannot be left to their own devices. They've got to be occupied. I'm not saying they can't have their own time and privacy in the unit, but it had to be controlled.
59. Lendalfoot was six miles outside of Girvan, on the water. We took ten or twelve boys in the minivan. We stayed in a purpose-built community centre. We had a tight rein on them. The only incident we had was shoplifting in Girvan. Girvan police arrested two kids and a member of staff took them back to Kerelaw. Other than that, it was lovely. We picked kids that we didn't think would be any bother. Sometimes, we looked at

kids and saw that they needed a break from their families. Some of the kids had never seen the sea.

60. I also went to Islay with a teacher called John. He was a lovely lad, but he wasn't at Kerelaw for very long. He was an excellent teacher and I thought that he was quite a loss when he left. He went to work in the Borders. It was just the two of us in Islay and he brought his big dog. The kids just loved it. Because it was an island, everybody knew everything that was going on. We could let the kids take the dog for a walk and take it down to the water. It was a very good trip.
61. Matt George took the kids on a trip to France, but I wasn't involved in that. I did help them to prepare for it. I don't think Matt was without his problems, but he managed it. There would have been other staff with him. He wanted to take the kids round the museums, but the kids were not for that. The kids did learn a lot from him. He was a very good art teacher.

#### *Education*

62. Regardless of people's judgement now, there was a structure to Kerelaw. I think that was a good thing in as much as classrooms were separate. It wasn't all under the one building, which I think is claustrophobic. I think that children need to be in smaller units. I also thought it was better because the kids could go up to school at 9:00am, come back to the unit about 10:30 and get a break, give the teachers a break, go back to school for about 11:00am, then they were out again at 12.30pm, which gave them a break from the classroom setting again. These kids needed the frequent breaks. They'd never sat in a school for any length of time. They were constant truants.
63. All the children had to go to school. It was a very strict curriculum that they were offered, but some of the kids couldn't read or write. I used to take the kids for an activity and they felt a terrible shame when they couldn't read or write. I would say to them what else did they expect because they had been dodging school. They would say that I was right.



64. LYW taught maths. KBK taught English. GOM taught woodwork or metalwork. There were also members of staff who came in and were very good. They taught the boys canoe and boat building. It wasn't all doom and gloom. There were some boys who really did quite well at Kerelaw. I had one or two boys who did O'levels. They didn't do them at Kerelaw. They sat them at Auchenharvie Academy. That decision was made by teaching staff. I can remember one boy who went into the army. Another lad still works for a furniture removal company in Saltcoats.

#### *Healthcare*

65. If a child had to be taken to hospital, there was a protocol that had to be followed. I can remember taking a boy to Crosshouse Hospital. The boys had been down at the burn that ran through the school. I think there was some bullying. The boy might have had a sprain, but I'm not sure. When I came back from the hospital, I had to write that up. If I can remember rightly, I got back from the hospital before I came off duty around 10:00pm. I don't think it was a serious injury, but I would write that up in the shift diary. I think I would also have informed the child's field social worker. If I was going off duty that night, I might have left a note for the next person on duty, asking them to inform the social worker of the incident.

#### *Religious instruction*

66. It was common for parents to ask whether Kerelaw was a Catholic place or a Protestant place. Some would say that they didn't want their son going to a Protestant place. Some of them were the worst parents and I would have liked to say to them, "Pity you don't practice what you preach." Kerelaw wasn't Catholic or Protestant.
67. When I first started at Kerelaw, the boys were sent to church on a Sunday. It was the Protestant church, but Catholic boys were allowed to go to a Catholic church. You had to get their clothes out. They would wear suits. In the end, the church wasn't having them. One boy was helping himself when the collection plate came round. He knew what he was doing. Everybody called that boy [REDACTED]. He was a likeable kid. You wanted to mother him but he was the biggest thief walking.

### *Family contact/home visits*

68. I did home visits with kids as well. I thought that would be worthwhile. Some of them would say that they didn't want to go home. They were sent out shoplifting or it was better if they were small and thin for housebreaking. It was an education for me. I used to value when I occasionally went home with a kid. It helped me to see what was happening for the child. If I saw that there were problems at home, I would raise it with the field social worker. The response depended on who the social worker was and their caseload. Some of them would listen to me. Some would say that they would have to hand it on because they were moving on to different things. Others would say, "Oh yes, we know that. That's why they're here." I don't think they took my role seriously unless they were using us as a dumping ground for these poor kids. To be fair to the social workers, they had nowhere else to put them. I just didn't think it was fair to the child or their family when social workers were moving on and not giving them the service that they should have.

### *Inspections*

69. I can't remember any inspections taking place at Kerelaw, but I may have been off duty when they occurred. They may have happened at the school, but I wouldn't have been aware of that. It was a purpose built establishment so there must have been situations when people would come to inspect it. If there were inspections then they were never conveyed to me.
70. We did get people visiting occasionally from Ayr or Strathclyde Regional Council. We were financed by education then social work, which meant that we dealt with Ayr and Glasgow. The people from the councils would walk around. Their visits were no more than a brief inspection. We more or less got prior notice if visitors from the council were being brought to the unit. I didn't bother because I thought that it was quite good for the kids. There were always two or three kids who took a pride in the unit and tidied up the pool room and things. Sometimes tidying up came naturally to them.



71. The visitors usually came down to the unit when the kids weren't there. They might have looked at kids in the classroom, but I wasn't a part of the education so I don't know whether they spoke to kids there. I don't remember them speaking to kids in the unit. Kids would see them as nothing to do with them. The very fact that MTT would be with the visitors from the council meant that the kids would be on their best behaviour.

*Review of placement/discharge from Kerelaw*

72. Most kids were working towards going home, but they were going home to the same situations. I would mouth off about that at staff meetings. I wasn't involved in any children meeting potential foster parents and I have no knowledge of that happening. Sadly, nobody wanted the children at Kerelaw. My recollection is that Children's Panels would not release a child from Kerelaw without a plan. They wanted to know what the future was for them. It was against the law for Kerelaw to just release a child. They had to be released by the courts.
73. I took children to the Panel when they were dismissed from care. I can remember one boy from Ayr, who wasn't the brightest child. When he was sixteen, he got a job down in Stevenston. His family didn't want him back because he wasn't streetwise. He loved the job, but I can't remember what it was. I made him save part of his wages. I didn't handle the money. I sent it up to the office and he had a lovely bank book. Nobody had wanted that kid, but because he was working his mum came to a Panel, took over and said that she would give him a home. The Panel was quite happy with that and released him. I tried to encourage him to keep banking. I can remember him coming back to Kerelaw, asking if he could get in again. According to him, he had spent every penny. I contacted his social worker, who went to the home again. The last I heard he was back at home and he still had his job.
74. We used to help kids find jobs. I can't remember whether it was me or another member of staff who found the job in Stevenston for that boy. That didn't happen for every boy. There were so many boys who didn't reach that great goal. They had to be getting released to a home and they had to have some kind of work or promise. We knew it

was often lip service because some kids couldn't handle school. They couldn't handle orders which meant they couldn't handle a job.

### *Running away*

75. Some kids would use trips out to run away. We had a secure unit and the attitude of the police was that all of Kerelaw should be secure and kids shouldn't be able to run away. Our local police station was Stevenston. The police would bring boys who ran away back to Kerelaw. Privileges like cigarettes were stopped as a punishment.

### *Discipline and punishment*

76. I wasn't given any overview of discipline when I first started at Kerelaw. I think it was explained to me that privileges were taken away as a punishment. The privileges were cigarettes and home leave. Home leave was sacrosanct, but so were cigarettes. Many kids depended on them. We didn't have problems with serious drugs back then, but we did have a form of that. Children would bring glue-sniffing and prescription drugs with them. I soon learned that boys weren't bringing bottles of water back to the unit but bottles of vodka. I didn't know about that when I first started. One of the kids would grass on other kids for having vodka because I had protected him from the bullies. I couldn't say that he had told me, but I would go in a roundabout sort of way to find the vodka.
77. Initially, the punishments were decided by Davie Denholm or MTT. I started to take things from how they dealt with discipline. For example, the biggest punishment was to take the drink off the kid if they came back with it. When I went to Kerelaw, the belt was used for discipline. These children were thirteen, fourteen by this time. They had come up through the ranks, so to speak. They had been belted at school and belted at home. There was no way that a member of staff could use the belt. Only the headmaster used the belt, but I never saw that happen. That wasn't spelled out as a policy, but that was the way that I understood it. There were no clear directions or policies for anything like that. I think we would have been the better for it if there had been.



78. MTT would make a judgement on whether a boy was given the belt. brought a different scenario. I think he may have wrongly taken a lot of the security from the kids. The kids had been so used to the control there. They weren't used to another method. maybe just said that leave was getting stopped and that was it. He didn't take the easy way out. He took the road that he thought was best for the boys. I'm not putting it all on MTT and 's shoulders. The whole system was subtly changing while I was at Kerelaw. I can remember the day that the belt was to be taken away from all schools, including List D schools. It was a complete change. I had got the belt at school. Everybody got the belt at school. Sometimes, the whole unit got the belt.
79. When it came to discipline, I made the judgement on it. I used to tell kids to stop carrying on or there would be no privileges for them. With bullying, I think my age saved me. I got away with talking a certain way because I wasn't a young girl. I was using language that their parents would have used with them. I would say things like, "You're going to go somewhere where you are going to be bullied and you will not like it."
80. We also had the time of the cell at Kerelaw. I can't remember the kids being removed from the house unit to the cell. They were in a different setting and more likely to battle it out with one another. I think they may have been removed from the school more often. Kids would come back to the unit from school. I would ask where someone was and they would tell me that he was in the cell. It might have happened if there was some kind of flashpoint, such as a one boy attacking another boy or trying to run out of the class.
81. As far as I knew, children were not kept in the cell for a long time. I knew that it was a bare room about two or three doors down from the headmaster's office. I think it had a concrete bed in it. I can't remember if there were toilet facilities in it, like a cell would have in a prison. What I can say is that as far as I know, children were not in there for a long time. I had nothing to do with the decision to put a child in the cell. The responsibility for sending a child to the cell was SNR . MTT wasn't a big tall man so he would have needed help when he placed a boy in the cell.

I don't remember seeing children being placed in the cell, but I was aware of it happening. They had to be man-handled in. If I was in the corridor, the last thing staff would want was people standing there looking at them. The corridor was small and MTT wouldn't have appreciated that. He might ask ladies to leave because there were very few women there at that time.

82. I never asked for a child to be placed in the cell. If I had a rapport with a kid and he came back from the classroom and something set him off, it didn't help to have him removed to the cell. It didn't help to meet violence or a situation like that. Boys were placed in the cell rarely. I'm not sure how long boys were in the cell for on average, but it might have been about twelve hours. Because I wasn't usually in that building, I couldn't accurately say whether they were given meals in the cell. I used to hear teachers complaining that when boys went to the cell, MTT would be giving them cigarettes. Sometimes, I would be asked to bring clean clothes and underwear to a child in the cell. They might have urinated either out of nerves or deliberately. Girls were never placed in the cell because it was gone by the time they arrived at Kerelaw.
83. MTT used to say that the word discipline comes from the word 'disciple', which means to teach. He felt that discipline should not be viewed as a negative or a positive thing. I can also remember him telling me that anger is an acid which does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to the vessel onto which it is poured. I would like to say that without him realising it, MTT added considerably to my learning.

#### *Restraint*

84. I was never given any training on restraining children. Nobody was the whole duration of my time at Kerelaw. If it happened at all, I wasn't there. We were all expected to be at staff training. I would have gone in for that if it had been on my day off. I witnessed restraints being carried out by other members of staff. My job, without thinking, was to calm things down. I would tell kids that their behaviour wasn't helping and try and calm them down. I did have to take part in restraints, but they tended to be done by the men at Kerelaw. I can only remember seeing about two or three restraints when I was there



because these serious situations were, in my memory, few and far between. They may also have happened when I wasn't on duty.

### *Records*

85. I used to write in a logbook. It was a shift diary and every unit had one. It would have the appointments for the day, such as kids going to an appointment with the doctor or a Children's Panel. I would also note if a teacher had complained about behaviour, without writing screeds but enough to give an accurate picture. I would write it down if I thought there was bullying in the unit. There weren't misdemeanours on every shift. I would write things like, "Boys in bed. Quiet and settled." I felt that I had a moral duty to hand over a quiet and settled unit to the nightwatchman.
86. I think it was expected that all staff were supposed to write up what had happened on their shift. Other staff would complain about writing things up. I used to say to them that if they had any common sense, they would cover themselves and if they wrote things up, people would read it. It was for anybody who came on duty and followed up from me. When I was assaulted by a girl at Kerelaw, if the person who had been on duty before me had written up what had happened I would probably have taken a different tack. I wouldn't like to do anybody an injustice because I've been retired for 32 years, but I don't remember many other members of staff writing in the logbook. Nobody was insisting on it to my knowledge. Some of the male staff wrote nothing up. Then again, they weren't given the advantage of formal learning. I think they could have benefitted from that but they didn't want it.
87. The unit diary was an overall view, but the boys also had their own social work records. I kept them in a filing cabinet in the unit office. When I first came to Kerelaw, whoever was in charge had locked the filing cabinet. Because I was new to Kerelaw, I just took it to be part of it. As time went on I thought that the files were there for staff to look at and read. I would update those files as well as the unit diary. I would enter things like boys having hospital or doctor appointments. When we worked one day on, one day off I thought that it was especially important for staff coming on duty the day after me. I learned that on my CSS course. One of the tutors told us to record incidents. As far

as I can remember, I definitely wasn't given any guidance from senior staff at Kerelaw about keeping notes and records.

88. I can recall taking kids from other children's homes or List D schools. They came to Kerelaw with practically no information. I remember asking one social worker where the background information was about a child. She took it as an affront. Sometimes it was teaching staff that brought children to Kerelaw. Teaching staff could be elitist. It didn't bother me because I felt that people earned their place, but teaching staff weren't always used to care staff.

### **Leaving Kerelaw**

89. I left Kerelaw in 1992. One evening, I came back to the secure unit after being at the court or a Panel. I can't remember the girl's name but I can remember her face. When I got back to the unit, I was told that the girl had been visited by a family social worker and that she had played up or had a meltdown after the social worker left. She wasn't going to be allowed leave or cigarettes. That decision had been made by somebody else. She had a high dependency on cigarettes. When I came on duty, nothing was written down about it. The girl was making a fuss and playing up. I was asked to intervene in some sort of fracas. I was so used to going into a situation like that with the boys. My usual method was to remove the child from the heart of the situation. I would take them away so they didn't have an audience, which exacerbated it.
90. Boys don't feel the threat of a woman in the same way as girls. I'd also built up a lot of respect from the boys. It was a big mistake to take the girl away on her own. I think I took the girl away for her shower. I was so used to doing that with the boys and I didn't read the signals that she was giving out when she demanded a cigarette. I refused and told her that, according to staff, her behaviour didn't merit it. If I'd have been informed of that background I might have taken a different tack. The next thing I knew, I was on the floor and there was a torrent of blows. By this time, I was in my sixties. I was unable to defend myself. There was an emergency button and I managed to summon help. One of the other members of staff came and took the girl away.



91. I didn't blame the girl. I should have known that girls react differently from boys. If I'd known the background and had been given the news about what she was suffering, I might have dealt with things differently. I remember meeting the girl at Kilwinning train station with a member of staff about a year later. We bumped into each other by chance. She dropped her head. I spoke to her as if nothing had happened so that she knew it was over and done with. I had put it behind me. That girl suffered. If I'd had daughters, I think I'd have been more aware of how to deal with the girl. Another member of staff told me that she was sent to Cornton Vale because of that incident. She wasn't there for long before being sent back to Kerelaw. I think it was for a matter of days. Prison was the last place that she should have been sent. Women do not respond well to being in prison. They deteriorate. In my opinion, women have to form a relationship with someone that they respect. It's all got to be based on respect. Women find that hard.
92. It was the first time in eighteen years that I had been assaulted. I was utterly shocked. I vaguely knew the girl and I would not have anticipated any violence from her. I didn't go to hospital. A colleague took me home. When I got home, I had black eyes. My husband felt that was enough and wanted me to get out of Kerelaw. I had thought about leaving before I was assaulted and discussed it with my husband. I went to my GP the next morning. I think he said words to the effect, "What the hell are you doing in a place like that at your age?" I took the advice of my GP and my husband and I tendered my resignation the next morning. I was 62.
93. After I was assaulted, Strathclyde did send me to a doctor in Irvine. It was a GP. I remember thinking afterwards that it was more for their benefit than mine. It felt like a bit of a box-ticking exercise as I got nothing from it. I'm not aware of Kerelaw taking any other measures after I was assaulted. I wasn't asked to write a report about what happened. I don't know of any investigation that was carried out. I don't think that was the done thing at the time. I would not like to do Kerelaw an injustice because I was so shocked that I blotted a lot of it out. I was definitely in shock because nothing like that had ever happened to me before.

94. It was coming towards the summer holidays when I was assaulted. I bottled it all up within myself. I think it would have been worse for somebody who came from a sheltered background. I think it was maybe a teacher called GOM who came out to see me. He agreed with me that it might be time for me to retire. I think they might have been covering their tracks, but they said they wanted to give me a leaving do. I told them that I wasn't going.
95. I did go back to Kerelaw about six months later and they gave me a send-off. After I left the job, I heard information about the girl that explained why her behaviour had deteriorated. Needless to say, that information was not conveyed to me nor was it recorded as far as I'm aware. That was information that should have been written up by the member of staff who had received the social worker. It should have been recorded about the girl. The next member of staff could then have come on duty and realised that she would have been upset. I might then have dealt with things differently.
96. The sad thing about it was that I missed the kids. Because I missed the kids and I was such a fidget, I wanted to keep busy. A friend of mine owned a dress shop in Largs so I worked there for a while. I also went on to study at Strathclyde University. I started off studying creative writing but moved to theatre studies. I did get a reference from Bob Forrest.

### **Concerns about Kerelaw**

97. When I was at Kerelaw, I didn't have any concerns about the way it was being run. I think there was a macho attitude at Kerelaw. I've thought about it long and hard. There were many kids who were unhappy in class. They would come back to the unit and tell me that a teacher had just "cuffed" them. Right away, I would try and help the child to settle down. I was well known for going up to the classroom with them. Often, the child would then say that they were fine and didn't want to go up to the classroom. No wonder boys are known in court as unreliable witnesses. They described everything in violent terms. One boy would turn around and say to another that he would kick his head in if he did something again. That was their social communication.



98. There were occasions when staff were disciplined, but it was done behind closed doors. I did hear about it through the grapevine, but there was nothing that I saw for myself. During the day, everything was going on in the classroom and I was down in the unit getting on with the jobs that I did when the kids weren't there. I wouldn't have seen things that happened in the classroom, but I would never have thought that a teacher had hit a child. It exacerbated the whole system. You shouldn't take the dignity away from a fourteen, fifteen year old. I didn't need to, although I was mouthy with the kids. Without analysing it, I always thought my job was to control the group. I was quite good with group dynamics. I was told that was one of my strengths.

### **Reporting of concerns**

99. If I did have serious concerns about a member of staff's behaviour, there was no clear pathway for reporting those concerns. I would think about the aftermath. When I did tell a boy that I was going to report an incident to <sup>MTT</sup> or , he would usually tell me not to and that he was fine and that he had been carrying on. The boy might say that if I told, he wouldn't go to school the next day. That didn't always happen and sometimes the boy did want me to take it further. Even if a boy withdrew his complaint, I would often take it up to <sup>SNR</sup> but it depended on the severity of what had been said. I would go up to <sup>MTT</sup> and his response was, "Okay, <sup>KAM</sup>. Leave it with me." I agreed and I left it with him. <sup>MTT</sup> may have taken the heat out of the situation because of the power that he had.
100. The kids didn't have a key worker or someone specific they could report concerns to. There just were not enough staff there. If a child was being bullied or having problems with a member of staff, I think it just depended who was on duty whether they spoke to someone. If staff didn't believe in writing things down in a log then complaints could get lost in the system. I think that Kerelaw would have benefitted more if it had given staff a simple training on recording.
101. There was a culture that kids did not want to be known as a grass. If you look at the dynamics of that, it meant that if a member of staff was a bully then they could play

the group dynamics on the kids. You were left with things that kids would not report, but there were limits. When I did report things to the headmaster, I was told to leave it with him. Now when I think about it in my old age, I don't think that the headmasters were clued up to handle it.

### **Investigations into abuse at Kerelaw**

102. Kids didn't like to report concerns. They wouldn't report the nightwatchmen. One boy did make a complaint about a nightwatchman. I think I had come on duty and the nightwatchman said to me that he'd had a carry on with the boy. He said the boy had been fighting with someone and he had stopped him. He was going off duty. I can't remember the nightwatchman's name.
103. I think this happened when I worked in the secure unit because I can remember going into a single room and talking to the lad. I can't remember his name. I asked the boy what had happened the night before. He said that nothing had happened. The boy himself didn't trust adults. He wouldn't even have trusted me. I told him that the nightwatchman had said that he was playing up. I can't remember exactly what was said, but I think the boy said that the nightwatchman had hit him. I don't want to use the word smack, because I don't know what happened and I don't want to put my own impression on it. He said he didn't have any marks on him. That was the first thing I checked because I was supposed to record that. More than likely, I would have asked a male member of staff to have a look at the boy. He objected to that because he didn't want to be taken out of his bed and looked at. I told him that I'd have to take it to the headmaster. He was extremely agitated and he didn't want me to do that.
104. I took what I knew to a senior and was given the usual mantra of, "Leave it with me." I think the senior might have been SNR [REDACTED], LEF [REDACTED]. Days later, I think the boy went home. There was no mark on him but he must have said something to his family about what had happened. The family reported it. The senior staff brought somebody down from Strathclyde and I was interviewed about what the boy had said. I gave a statement, but I don't know whether there was any follow up. There was so



much going on and I had a very heavy workload. I just took it for granted that the situation was managed.

105. My gut reaction is that the boy might not have been at Kerelaw much longer. The nightwatchman still worked at Kerelaw by the time I left. That was the only investigation into abuse that I was involved in when I worked at Kerelaw. I think I would remember if I had been involved in any other investigations.

### **Abuse at Kerelaw**

106. When I started at Kerelaw and even as the years went on, nobody spoke about child abuse. I know about it now. To me, it's a silent killer. I wasn't there all the time so things may have happened that I wasn't aware of. I worked one day on, one day off. I was sometimes away to the doctor or a hearing with a child, that could take all day.
107. I think it was awful that only one nightwatchman was on duty in each unit, not only for the boys' safety but now that we've brought child abuse into the open. Nobody spoke about child abuse when I was at Kerelaw. There was no discussion about child protection or child abuse amongst the staff. I don't remember sexual abuse ever being mentioned. The possibility wasn't even discussed. I can remember boys saying things like, "Ah ha, he's queer," or something like that but that was it.
108. I told staff to take someone else with them if they were going upstairs with a girl. I knew what girls were like in contrast to the boys. Without analysing it at the time, I thought that they were leaving themselves open to any kind of abuse. It must have been in my mind that a girl might accuse them of abuse. I don't know why my concern was more about the staff than the child. I knew the members of staff and I never thought they would be abusing the girls. Now I think that I was naïve because it was something that it was not acceptable to discuss. My age group didn't have the means of communication to discuss things like sexual abuse. To be honest, I do think there was a culture of worrying that a girl might accuse a member of staff rather than a concern that a girl might be at risk. Maybe naively, I trusted other members of staff.

109. I would have protected a girl if I suspected she was being abused because it was not only my job, but I was a female myself. It came without thinking. I am now aware that Matt George and John Muldoon have been convicted of the abuse of multiple children. I think that abuse took place and went undetected at the time because abuse can be physical or sexual. The perpetrators will make sure that they do not have an audience. That's my take on it. Another thing I've often asked myself is why I missed it? Kids would come and tell me things. You always had kids who were known as informers in your group. They were usually a bit younger. They would share their anxieties and things. I had my ear to the ground. I never heard about any abuse, but then again I was mainly with the boys. As far as I'm aware, it was mainly girls who complained about Matt George. I wasn't aware of any abuse and I never heard about any abuse. I had left Kerelaw by the time accusations were made against Matt George.

### **Convicted abusers**

#### *Matt George*

110. Matt George was an art teacher. He was very controlling, but I have got to say that he kept a very good class. I never saw Matt George behave in a way that I thought was inappropriate. I think that a lot of it was because he was in the classroom. Unless he was doing extra-curricular activities after 5:00pm, I wouldn't see him. I think he only did that once a week. I wouldn't see him in the course of the day. I have read some statements that were provided by applicants to the Inquiry and they looked upon Matt George in a different way. I thought that he was a wonderful art teacher who took no nonsense. Another teacher might have looked behind things and thought that there was trouble at home or the child was getting bullied. Bullying was a terrible thing. I would try to protect the kids from bullies in the group.

111. Sometimes, boys would come back to the unit and say that they'd been "cuffed" by a teacher. I would try and help the child to settle down. I would then go up to the classroom with them. They would tell me that after they'd been in Matt George's class. When I went up to Matt George's classroom after a boy had come flying down to the



unit, I would ask him what had happened. Matt would give me his version of it. I would make a judgement there. If I wasn't happy, I told the boy that I was going to discuss it with the headmaster. The boy would usually say, "No, no, don't." When I look back on it, I wasn't exactly ignorant but I had to temper it with the staff member taking it out on the kid when I wasn't there. I never heard Matt George speaking to a child in an inappropriate manner.

112. No way am I defending Matt George, but he always organised a great pantomime. He used it to teach the kids. For months before it, they would do all the scenery. I thought that he used music and drama to bring the best out of the kids. When Matt George was convicted of abuse at Kerelaw, I saw it on the news. I couldn't believe it. I thought that I would have heard the boys talking about Matt George. There would have been gossip that he was this or that. I never once heard that kind of gossip. That being said, I was at Kerelaw for eighteen years and I never once brought a child home with me and I know that Matt George did that. I was aware that it was common practice for members of staff to take children to their homes. As far as I was concerned, Strathclyde knew about that as well. There was an unwritten law about staff taking children home.
113. I have been provided with the statement Frank McCourt gave to the Inquiry. At paragraph 142, he stated that Matt George would take children to his house, where they would watch TV. He stated that Matt George would disappear with other children while he was in the living room. I don't dispute what has been said about this by Frank McCourt. Years before that, I think I possibly said to Matt George that he should not be taking the kids home with him. The fact he faced allegations of abuse is exactly what I meant when I said that.

*John Muldoon*

114. I also remember John Muldoon. His designation was housemaster, but he wasn't a senior housemaster. He worked in Wilson and Fleming units. He was a controller, like Matt George. The kids accepted him. Some workers spoke the boys' language. They

understood where the boys were coming from. I would not have tolerated any violence from John Muldoon because it would have upset the whole scenario.

115. John Muldoon and Matt George came into the school non-verbal. Some people come in and they've got quite a commanding presence. This was a bit more than that and I was aware of it. That was why I used to tell Matt to go and have a cup of tea. **KBK** **KBK** and **LYW** were also teachers who were a different type of person altogether, but I wasn't going about analysing it. I was too busy doing other things. Matt George and other teachers took the boys over to the gym a lot after school. I never really did that, unless I was asked to take a boy back to the unit because he was playing up.
116. When  was **SNR** , I became aware of an incident involving John Muldoon. I don't know whether I was off or away at the college but I wasn't at Kerelaw at the time. I think John Muldoon had dragged a boy out and ripped a piece of his clothing. The boy ran away. John Muldoon was summoned to see . That was a bit of gossip and hearsay. It could have been that another teacher told me that he got a warning.
117. In the units, I used to tell male staff not to take girls upstairs on their own. John Muldoon would say that he had two lassies of his own and that there was nothing wrong with it. Obviously, when I was on duty he wouldn't take girls upstairs but I don't know what he did when I wasn't there.

### **Reporting to police/criminal proceedings**

118. The police came to speak to me when they were investigating Matt George. I think it was a long time ago, maybe between fifteen and twenty years ago. The police put a note through my door and I wondered what it was all about. When they came to see me, they told me the nature of their investigation and that it was about Matt George. I don't think they asked me about John Muldoon at that time. The police told me that



boys had moved to England and that they were interviewing them there. They didn't name the boys involved. They wanted to know what I thought of Matt George.

119. At that time, I wasn't aware of the allegations that had been made against Matt George. The police might have told me, but I don't remember it. I told them the exact same thing that I have told the Inquiry. Matt George was a controller. When a boy came down after a drama, I thought the best method to deal with it was to speak to the boy, speak to the teacher and find out what had happened. I gave quite a detailed statement and they asked me to sign it.
120. The police came back to speak to me about five years ago. I think they were building a case up against Matt George again. A female police officer came out to see me and I gave the same statement again. She said that it was voluntary. I think she mentioned John Muldoon as well. By that time, my memory was beginning to go but it was better than it is now. She assured me that would be the end of it and thanked me. She asked if I would mind if they needed me at a trial and I said I wouldn't mind at all. I didn't hear anything further from the police.
121. I found out about Matt George and John Muldoon's recent convictions in the local newspaper. It was in the *Sunday Post* recently. That was the first I knew about it because I don't socialise with any ex-staff from Kerelaw. I knew that Matt George had already been given ten years imprisonment. I think I found that out from my hairdresser because she had gone to school with Matt George. When I heard that, I thought about Matt George being a controller. I also thought about girls who sometimes made statements and when they were broken down, they withdrew them. They would say things like, "Nah, I didn't mean that. That wasnae what I said." When Matt George was sentenced, it just did not seem right. I think I felt that way because I knew his wife and daughters.

## Prior statements

122. Other than the statements I gave to the police about Matt George and John Muldoon, I've never given any other statements for any criminal or civil cases involving Kerelaw.

## Specific allegations against me that have been made to the Inquiry

IAH

123. I have been provided with a copy of the statement provided to the Inquiry by IAH IAH. I understand that he was at Kerelaw from around 1981 until 1983. The name means something to me but I just can't put a face to it.
124. At paragraph 78, he stated: *"There was a couple of other staff who would batter me but I can't remember them all. They didn't do it constantly and it would be if you were out of line a wee bit. I don't think there was anything wrong with a wee clip over the ear if you go over the score but I don't think I ever went over the score. I remember wee Mrs KAM was one of them that hit me. She was a senior member of staff. Matt George, Mrs KAM and other staff would hit me in front of other staff and only once did Matt George give me a doing in front of another member of staff although I don't remember who that was. They would slap me in front of the other boys but I would never get a doing in front of them."* There is no way that I did that. I definitely deny that I ever hit a child.
125. IAH alleges that staff members hit children in front of other members of staff. I never saw a member of staff hitting a child. I would have told them that was setting a tinderbox off. You'd have to be a brave person to hit a child. I know that it's wrong to tackle bad behaviour with violence. I tried to think about things when I read the statement. I wondered whether something had happened when IAH was being restrained, but I was very rarely there when children were being restrained.



126. I accept that the passage of time could have altered my memory of events. At my age, things are not as accurate. I sometimes say things and my husband will correct me. However, I know that I would never have hit a boy. A female member of staff would never have taken on a fourteen, fifteen year old boy. You would be taking their dignity away. It would have resulted in a response because they were in a very heated situation. It would have exacerbated things. I was a great remover. I was lucky that I could do that. Some staff maybe had better handling skills than me, but I could always go and take boys out. If I didn't, it would upset the group.
127. At paragraph 80, <sup>IAH</sup> stated: *"If you had a falling out with another boy they would make a boxing match out of it but it wouldn't be organised for another week or two weeks so you had that wait and build up to deal with. They organised for you and the boy to box in the boxing ring whether you wanted to or not. The full school including the staff would be there to watch. They would make a wee showpiece out of it, so there would be posters made advertising that one boy was fighting another in the ring. I had to do it twice and I had the fear in me. I knew I would have to go in and try and knock hell out of this boy because if you got beat you would be degraded by staff and pupils. Everyone would be screaming and bawling as they were watching. Sometimes they would bring people from boxing clubs in to fight with us, like a tournament. I don't really know if you had a choice or not because staff would say you were fighting whoever and you just did it. If you didn't you were made to look and feel like a coward."* Initially, what I remember is that if boys were bullied in Kerelaw, <sup>MTT</sup> would take them over to the gym. He would tell the boy to put a pair of boxing gloves on and see how smart they were then. He organised boxing matches because that was the macho thing for staff and the boys.
128. I never liked boxing. The ladies didn't have to go to the boxing matches. I remember one when a Scottish boxing professional called Dick McTaggart came to the school. There was a buffet for the visitors. Another professional boxer came with their entourage and it was a highlight in the boys' lives. That's one boxing match that I can remember quite clearly. I can only remember a couple of boxing matches in the gym. I think that <sup>MTT</sup> organised a boxing club. I might be wrong, but I think they went down to Stevenston to box. They were boys who had chosen to box.

129. IAH [REDACTED] is speaking about boys being forced to box. I am aware of that happening on one occasion. I think I asked the housemaster I was working with what it was all about. I can't remember which housemaster it was. He said that it was all over and done with. Boys had been given boxing gloves and told to go and box at lunchtime. It was an accepted thing that they were then equal. One wasn't bullying the other as far as I know. I don't know who arranged it. Those were things that were not made known to me. Those boxing matches weren't a common thing, as far as I was aware. They could have happened on my day off, but they couldn't have happened very often because I was aware of these things. Kids talked to me so I think I would have known.

130. At paragraph 81, he stated: *"There was a cell next to the headmaster's office and that is where I'd be put every time I returned after running away. It was just a bare cell which didn't even have a bed, it had a cement block instead. It was the exact same as a police station cell and it was freezing. If SNR [REDACTED] was there he would put me in the cell and slap me about or give me the belt for running away. The belt was the same one they used at school. Normally, he would belt me across the hands but sometimes he would belt me all over the body depending how angry he was. Then he would take my clothes so I was completely naked, strip search me before leaving me with an itchy blanket. The blanket wasn't even like a blanket it was like hard cardboard stuff. That would be me until morning and I would be freezing."* I knew that there was a cell, but I was definitely not aware of children being kept there overnight and naked. As far as I knew, children were not kept in there for a long time. I knew that it was a bare room about two or three doors down from the headmaster's office. I think it had a concrete bed in it. I wasn't aware of children being kept there for long periods of time.

*Francis McCourt*

131. I have been provided with a copy of a statement provided to the Inquiry by Francis McCourt. I understand that he was at Kerelaw from about 1989 until 1991. I cannot put a face to him. He stated at paragraph 126: *"When I returned from the hospital Mrs KAM [REDACTED] who was a senior care worker, asked me what had been going on. I told her that FSR [REDACTED] had punched me a couple of times and I had been trying to get away.*



Mrs <sup>KAM</sup> said something like "Just forget about it, it's all alright." I didn't report it after that, and nothing further was done." I honestly cannot remember that. I do remember <sup>FSR</sup>, but I didn't witness him chasing or assaulting any children. I must have been off duty when Frank McCourt was injured. I must have had a good rapport with him for him to have told me what had happened. I see from his statement that he was a serial absconder and offender, but I can't remember him.

132. I can't remember this incident happening, but I have tried to think about the way I handled things. I dispute that I would have handled the situation in that way. When children told me things, I had to think about the teacher or member of staff as well. I would ask the child if he was making a complaint. If he said that he was, I asked what had happened in his own words. I can't say for definite what happened with Frank McCourt because I can't remember the incident, but often boys would say, "I'm not a grass." They would then withdraw their statement. Regardless of that, I would have reported the incident to a senior and recorded it.
133. Francis has spoken about members of staff kneeling on boys' bodies. At paragraph 118, he stated: *"I remember seeing other residents being assaulted and restrained on multiple occasions by staff members. It was always full grown adults restraining people and kneeling on their chests. They used to steam right in heavy handed. They used to just swing people about. It was full on to see. You could tell that there wasn't any procedure or training behind the way in which staff would tackle the residents. It was as if they were fighting and 'anything went' if the staff member got the upper hand."* I never saw that happening. If staff had gone in like that there would have been nothing left of the boy. You wouldn't have let an adult lean on a boy's frame. There were big lads, but it would have cracked the child's ribs. It wasn't one to one, there were two or three staff members involved when a boy was being restrained. To be fair to Frank McCourt, that's how he reads it but I think anybody with any medical knowledge would know that two or three men leaning on a teenager would cause injury.
134. If this was happening in the main school, I don't remember restraints being done so much there. I don't want to give a false impression, but my memory is more that restraints were used in the secure unit. I don't remember restraints being carried out

in my earlier years at Kerelaw. There was a more cohesive system of discipline in the house units and restraints didn't happen very much. My system was to try and calm kids down. If they weren't listening, I would take a back seat. I saw boys being restrained, but I never saw any staff kneeling on a boy's chest. I would have told them to get off. I wasn't nervous about going in and obviously I thought that the restraints I saw were justified. If I didn't, I would have complained to a senior about it. [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] by that time.

135. I can't remember Francis McCourt, but reading his statement made me think that it was a very sad case of a boy. The Jesuits would say, "Give me a child of seven and I will give you the man." I never thought about that saying until I read Francis McCourt's statement. Children are taken into care because of parents, domestic abuse, drink, mothers heavily reliant on medication. The kids would pinch the medication from them. Their mothers didn't want them and that was another form of rejection, but I wasn't analysing all of that at the time.
136. At paragraphs 148 and 149, Frank McCourt stated that he shaved his head on one side and was then injured by a member of staff using an implement, resulting in a bump to his head. When I read that, I was amazed. If a child had a lump on the head, other staff would have seen that. There would have been repercussions. Families would have been brought in. Some would have made political capital out of it, and rightly so. From what I've read, he was more than adept at running away. He had a history of it and he was skilled at it. You wouldn't have kept the Frank McCourts of this world in. His pattern of behaviour is familiar, but I'm only sorry I can't remember the boy. It seems like he had a lot of good attributes.
137. I neither remember a boy with shaved hair or a bump on the head. If I had seen a boy with an injury like that, I would have made sure he got medical attention. A lump on the head is a traumatic thing. I think from what he's said that Frank McCourt was in my unit. I would have gone straight up to my line manager and asked how it had happened. I would have said that he needed medical advice. I would have made sure it was recorded. Common sense would tell you that there would be an aftermath to



that. It was not my job to investigate what happened if there was an incident like that. It would have been the job of a senior.

138. At paragraph 158, he stated that he heard of another child having his wrist broken during a restraint by a member of staff. I don't remember any child having a wrist broken during a restraint. I think I would have heard about it if a child had broken his wrist, but I don't recall any such incident. I always had my ear to the ground. There were always children in the group who I could get information from. I was getting them their tea and making it a homely situation. Sometimes, I would sit down with a boy and have a cup of tea.

### **Helping the Inquiry**

139. I think Kerelaw has been portrayed as absolute doom and gloom but a lot of good work was done there as well. I don't want to talk about it with rose-tinted spectacles. We are always going to have problem children. We have problem families. As far as I'm concerned, we are badly in need. We still have children who are running about the streets and we have nowhere to put them. We've got to learn from that. Things will never be perfect and there will never be a cure. We're always going to have dysfunctional families who operate on a different lifestyle. There has to be much more field work done with the family.
140. Good communication between all agencies is very important. Any information concerning children's welfare should be shared within reason. Agencies should be less territorial in their approach.
141. I think it's extremely important that we get a drop-in place and local mother and baby units. The function of them would be to discuss their anxieties outside the home setting. They wouldn't just be talking shops, but also provide practical skills. They could get ongoing advice. The goal would be to give them a sense of achievement and confidence, which would then be reflected in their children's development.

142. I think we will always need secure units. They should be small. I don't have a lot of criticism about Kerelaw because it was small, which I thought was advantageous. I think that the best thing of all is to try and get kids into foster care. In saying that, foster parents are not always equipped for behaviours and understanding of behaviours. If we have to take kids into care, it has to be in small numbers. Children need to be given a voice. They should be in comfortable settings in small groups. It take the fear away and teaches them to articulate. Negatives and positive should be for discussion.
143. Most of all, wherever possible, give staff training. Staff don't always want training. Staff aren't always the best for training. There are people who are natural carers, but trying to find that in the community is difficult. Training is sacrosanct to protect children. I am quite sure that without training, big mistakes are made. Good reporting skills and a daily log is of immense value to both clients and carers. It cuts out time and expense.
144. I also think that staff need to have someone they can consciously relate to. They need someone to give them an ear and have a chat, maybe someone outside the unit who can give them guidance. That requires time to be given to that person. I want to emphasise that the caring profession is not a nine to five job. People need help after 5 o'clock. Burnout of staff was a major problem at Kerelaw. Thank goodness we've moved on from the days when people resisted women telling them what to do. Whether we like it or not, we are going to have problem families. It starts and ends in the home. That's my mantra. You've got to try and have the right people in children's homes, not just people who are in there for a wage or a job.
145. 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.

KAM

Signed.....

Dated..... 11/03/2024 .....