

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GJZ

Support person present: No

1. My full name is GJZ. This has been my name since birth. My date of birth is 1982. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before care

2. I was born in Glasgow and lived in the Pollock area with my mum, my dad, and my older brother. My mum and dad split up and my dad moved to Surrey in England. My mum brought me and my brother up in Glasgow.
3. I went to a few primary schools in Glasgow. I went to Arden, St Roberts, Burnbrae and Gowanbank. I was quite a naughty, hyperactive kid and used to truant a lot. I went to Bellarmine Secondary School and was still truanting and not going to school.
4. I don't remember any social work involvement or anybody talking to me about going to school. I was just told one day that I was going to a children's panel. I went with my mum. Nobody even told me why I was there and the panel made a decision to send me to Ballikinrain Residential School. Nobody told me why. I presumed it was because I hadn't been going to school and had a couple of charges for petty things like shop lifting sweeties, but nobody explained the reasons to me.

5. I then just remember my mum telling me one day that my social worker was coming to see me. I think her name was May McKinnon and she came to my house and took me and mum away in her car. I was told we were going to see the new school.

Ballikinrain Residential School, Stirlingshire

6. I was taken to Ballikinrain in 1995, when I was twelve years old, and I was in there for about eighteen months. It was a residential place that you stayed in Monday to Friday, and got home at weekends.
7. My mum and social worker took me there. We drove up through the Stirling countryside and got to a place with a big, long driveway. We drove up to the front door and went in.

First day

8. I was given a guided tour of the place by a member of staff. I was then told that I would be staying there and then my mum and social worker left. That was me, out of my comfort zone. I remember being quite emotional. It was quite daunting and scary. I will never forget it.
9. I was taken upstairs by one of the wee catering women, who was called [REDACTED] and given some lunch. I even remember that I had a sausage roll and beans.
10. The staff gave me a couple of fags because I was upset and didn't want to be there. They just tried to settle me in. I was taken to my room and introduced to other boys my age.
11. The age range of boys in Ballikinrain was about eleven years old up to fourteen years old. I don't really know why boys were sent there. I presumed they were there for not going to school, the same as me, or picking up a few charges and going through the children's panel.

12. There was a hierarchy in there amongst the boys that was quite obvious and you just fell into place.

Layout

13. There was a huge, big building, like a castle which was the main building, and then a couple of bits that had been added on later on. There was an educational department around the back, which was like porta cabins joined together.
14. The grounds around the building was all countryside and it was beautiful. There was a football pitch and a tree house out the front of the building.
15. There were three levels in the main building. As you went in the main door, there was a staircase that went up to the reception area, which was the middle floor. There were also offices, an assembly hall and a main kitchen on that floor. From reception, the stairs went down to a lower level, which was the bottom floor and a higher level which was the top floor.
16. The boys dormitories were all divided into three units. In the main building, there were dormitories on the bottom level for about twenty boys who were a bit younger than me. I can't remember what that was called. The Drumoig Unit was on the top floor, and there was a third unit to the side on the top floor, which was called the Leddy Unit and that had about ten boys in it. There was also a room with a pool table, a TV room and a smoking room on that floor.
17. I was put in the Drumoig unit on the top floor, which had about eight dormitories for about fifteen to twenty boys all about my age. Some of the rooms were bigger than others. There were mainly two boys to a room but a couple of rooms had one boy. It depended on who was coming and going.
18. The room I was put in was just bare with a table and two beds. I don't think anybody had posters or anything personal in their rooms. It wasn't that kind of place. It was just

basic. Nobody had anything. You just came into the place with the clothes on your back.

19. I was put into a room with another boy when I first went in. He was the same age as me, but it was quite terrifying because other boys told me he was in there for hitting his mum with a hammer, and he looked quite intimidating. Nothing bad happened with him but I think he had mental health issues and was a bit of a loner. He left after a while and another boy was put in with me who was about a year younger than me. That was better and we became friends.
20. My unit had its own dining room which was more like a kitchen area. It was just a room with a sink and about six tables with chairs, with four people at each table. I ate there with my unit. The food came from somewhere upstairs and it was brought in and dished out.
21. Every unit had a shower room with three or four showers in it.

Staff

22. I think Mr **KKM** was **SNR**. He was usually the one greeting people when they came in. I don't really remember seeing him doing anything else. There was also a man called Greg who I think was some sort of manager but I don't know for sure. His office was just past reception.
23. The staff members I remember from my unit were **ITK**, who was a little Irish man, **zHVJ**, **IKD**, Martin and **HVC** who was my key worker.
24. There were usually two members of staff working in one unit at any one time. The staff never did anything. They just watched us and sat about drinking tea. They would sometimes play games of pool and table tennis with us.
25. There was a little woman called **zHZC** who served the food and hoovered. She was a bit of a mother figure to everyone **[REDACTED]**.

26. The staff who ran the home were different from the teachers who came in to teach in the educational part of the building, during the week. The teachers I remember are a lady called Glenda who was the maths teacher, a guy called Bill took the science class and GOS who took a computing class
27. It wasn't uncommon to sometimes see one of the teachers also in the home doing a care type role during the week.

Daily routine

28. The staff would bang on the dormitory doors in the morning at about 8:00 am and just tell everybody to get up. You got up, got dressed and went to the dining area in your own unit for breakfast.
29. Then you went to the education block to go to your classes. You came back and had your lunch in your own unit dining area. You would go back to the education block after lunch for your classes.
30. At the end of the school day, everyone met up in the assembly hall and sat on the floor. We were told what activities there were to choose from that day. They were things like playing football, board games, arts and crafts or whatever else was on offer. There was also a room with a pool table and table tennis table. Staff members would be sitting there offering certain activities and you just went and sat next to the one who was leading the activity that you wanted to do.
31. You could just go and watch TV or sit in your room if you wanted. You weren't forced to do activities. You could do what you wanted. The only reading material I remember are comic books like The Beano or Dandy and we could read them and swap them round.

32. After activity time was over, you went back to your unit to either shower and get ready for bed if it was a shower day, or just get ready for bed. Then we had supper in the dining bit before going to bed.
33. I think everyone had to be in their bed by about 9:00 pm or something. Everyone went to bed at the same time.
34. I never wet the bed but there was a boy in the dorm next to me who did. The cleaning lady, ZHXC, was responsible for changing his bed. The other boys bullied him a bit for it.

Weekends and home visits

35. Most boys went home at the weekend and everyone looked forward to it. We gathered in the assembly hall every Friday. We were given about £4.50 in a brown envelope, which I guess was our pocket money and then driven in the mini bus to Port Dundas in Glasgow, which was the drop off point. Then we would come back on Monday.
36. When we came back on a Monday, we have to change into their clothes and we also get told what chores we had to do for that week. You could get something different every week, like cleaning the kitchen or bathroom. Nobody was really bothered about it and not all the boys did it. I think they just tried to give us a bit of structure.
37. Sometimes, boys would be made to stay in Ballikinrain for the weekend as a punishment, or just because their home situation was different. I was kept in over the weekend quite a few times as a punishment for running away. There would always be two or three boys there at the weekend in my unit.
38. The routine at the weekend was the same but without having any classes. Instead, you would have some sort of activity, like swimming, bowling or the cinema during the day.

39. I think the place was ran by the Church of Scotland, but I don't remember any religious people around or having to go to church on a Sunday.

Food

40. The food was prepared in the main kitchen on the middle floor and was then sent up and down to the unit dining areas. The boys would all have their meals in the dining area in their own units at the same time.
41. For breakfast, we had cereal. Lunch was the main meal in the day. Supper was brought in a picnic basket and was usually just toast or something.
42. The food was standard and was fine. There was no choice. You had to like it or lump it, but you weren't forced to finish your food. It was up to you if you ate it or not, but you would go hungry if you didn't.

Clothes

43. When you went back to Ballikinrain after being home for the weekend, you had to wear their clothes. You had to change out of your own clothes and wear the crap that they had for the week. Then you put your own clothes on again when you went home at the weekend.
44. There was a cupboard with clothes in it in every unit where you had to go on a Monday morning and pick something to wear for the week. It wasn't a uniform, they just had piles of basic jogging bottoms and tops. They were second hand from charity shops or hand me downs.
45. It was first come first served for whoever got to the cupboard so there was always a bit of a race and fight to get there first on a Monday morning. It was all crap but some things were more crap than others.

46. We had to do that every week. It meant that you didn't even have your own set of clothes to wear every week and everything had been worn by loads of people before you. I am guessing they washed them at the weekends when we weren't there.

Schooling

47. There was an educational bit in the school, which had been added on to the main building. There were just porta cabins that were used as classrooms.
48. The home was quite strict about making you go to school. If anyone tried to get out of it or say they were ill, they would still be made to go to classes.
49. The teachers who took the classes were different from the staff who ran the home side of things. They came in from outside to take the classes.
50. Looking back now, I can see it wasn't a proper school and wasn't fit for purpose. They were just sticking us in there for the day. I don't think the teachers were properly qualified because I don't remember learning much.
51. My reading and writing was below average for my age in there. I know now that I am dyslexic but nobody knew that then. We weren't getting educated properly so nobody noticed.
52. I remember a conversation with a teacher called HVZ, and I told him that when I see a word written down, I jump to conclusions about what the word is but it can be a different word with similar letters, and he said that I was dyslexic. Nothing more was done about it. I think HVZ taught Religious Education. He was in the very first porta cabin at the front.
53. GOS took computing but we just went in and played video games. Most of the classes involved playing video games. It was like they were just people pleasing the boys. The only time I remembered learning anything was in Glenda's maths class. Everyone enjoyed physical education because it just meant playing football outside.

54. Sometimes, when I was kept in at Ballikinrain over the weekend, I would see the odd class teacher around the home, so they did have other care type roles. I don't know if they were doing over time. That is what makes me think they were not proper, qualified teachers.

Shower times

55. I think we showered about three times a week. There were about three single showers in the shower room in my unit so we went in three at a time. We were just left to get on with it. I don't remember it being supervised.
56. The towels were in the same cupboard as the clothes and you just got one for the week. The soap and stuff would just be in the showers. We never had our own.

Healthcare

57. When I was in Ballikinrain I think everyone just thought I was a bad kid because I was a bit hyper. Staff took me to see a psychologist in a community centre in Pollock, next to the old library there. I remember sitting in a room with a man wearing a suit. I didn't know why I was there and I don't remember much else about it. That was the only time I was taken there. When I was a bit older, after leaving Ballikinrain, my mum told me I had been diagnosed with ADHD. I don't remember going to a doctor or getting tests or anything.
58. **HVZ**, the religious education teacher, said that I was dyslexic when I told him in class that I confuse words with similar letters. I didn't have any test or anything. I don't think it was recognised back then as much as it is today.
59. I can't remember a matron or nurse there. I don't remember going to the dentist.
60. I used to walk funny when I was younger. My right hip and leg would move together and it looked like I was swinging my right hip when I walked. People noticed it. My dad

noticed it when I went to visit him in England and my mum noticed it when I saw her at weekends. I don't know if they mentioned it to staff at Ballikinrain, because the staff took me to Killearn Health Centre to get it checked, who then made an appointment for me to go to Stobhill Hospital. I have the letter that the doctor wrote making the appointment at hospital and it has Ballikinrain's address on it.

61. At first, there was a lot of talk about me just growing or having a twisted spine. I found out when I was an adult that I had a slipped disc which is crushing the sciatic nerve.

Trips and visits

62. Any trips that happened would have been at the weekend if you had been kept back as a punishment and not allowed home to see your family. From the times that I stayed there at the weekend, I remember swimming being something we did and I liked it. We were also taken ice skating, bowling and to the cinema.
63. I don't remember any visits from anybody. My mum only came the one time when she dropped me off there. I was seeing her at the weekend anyway so she didn't need to come and visit. I don't remember my social worker visiting me there, or anybody coming to inspect the place.
64. I went to about five or six children's hearings while I was at Ballikinrain. My key worker would take me and my mum would be there. They would be sat around a table with the panel members, social workers and sometimes even a police officer.
65. I just felt like they were all talking amongst themselves and I was just there. They would talk about things that I had done. The only person who I felt was talking on my behalf was my mum. The panel members would then ask me questions but I wasn't really interested because I thought they were all against me and I just wanted it to end. I didn't feel like I could tell them about what was happening in Ballikinrain.

Holidays

66. We had the same term holidays as the schools and I would be home with my mum for the holidays.
67. One time I went to a children's panel in city centre Glasgow and my dad had come up from England to go to it. My dad told the panel he wanted to take me to England for the summer holidays and the panel said no and it wasn't a good idea.
68. My dad was quite angry about that and took me to England anyway. I stayed with him for five or six weeks over the holidays and he brought me back to my mum's. I just went back to Ballikinrain from there.

Birthdays and Christmas

69. We never had a party or cakes for birthdays. I think they gave you £40 or £50 as a present.
70. I was there over the Christmas period but I went home to my family for Christmas day. They did have a tree and stuff up in Ballikinrain over Christmas. There would have been some boys who stayed there over Christmas day because everybody's situation was different. I don't know what they would have done for the boys on Christmas day.

Discipline and punishment

71. I don't remember ever being punished by being given chores or having pocket money being held back.
72. In Ballikinrain you were punished by not being allowed home for the weekend. They would do that if you picked up charges while on home leave and appeared before a panel. This would be for things like shop lifting or breaking into places. So you would get charged by the police and appear before a panel for it. Then Ballikinrain would

also punish you by taking away your home leave the following weekend. This happened to me a few times.

73. You also got home leave taken off you for running away from the home. This happened to me a lot because I ran away a lot.

Running away

74. I used to run away regularly, maybe about forty or fifty times while I was there. I just didn't want to be there. It was a long way back to Glasgow and I didn't know the way at first but I learned it over time. It took hours to walk back. Sometime it would be pitch black at night and it was really scary in the countryside with the forest and trees, but that was how much I didn't want to be there.
75. I would go to my mum's house and ask her not to tell the home I was there. The police were always round at my mum's looking for me when I ran away so sometimes I would go to a pal's house.
76. If the police found me, they would take me to the police station and call an out of hours social worker and they would come and get me and drive me back to Ballikinrain. I would be plotting my next escape on the way back.
77. When I got back, my treatment would depend on what staff were working. Some were horrible and would shout at me, which didn't make me want to be there. Other staff were more understanding and would talk to me on my level. I would be punished for running away by not being allowed home leave the following weekend.
78. Sometimes I would run away as soon as I got back. The stand-by social worker would take me in the front door and I would run away straight out the back door. The staff started taking my trainers off me as soon as I was brought back. I still ran away once without my trainers on.

79. My key worker was a nice man and would try and talk to me but I never opened up and spoke to anybody.

Abuse at Ballikinrain

80. When we went back after home leave, we got picked up at Port Dundas in Glasgow and driven back. Sometimes, we would get searched for cannabis because a few boys used to run into the woods and smoke it when they were meant to be in classes.
81. Sometimes, when I went back, I was taken into an office by a guy called Greg. He was some sort of manager I think. You had to walk through reception to get to his office. You could also get to it if you went right from the assembly hall. He would pull me into this office to search me.
82. Greg would make me stand facing the wall with my legs open and would touch me everywhere. He would pull my trousers forward and have a look inside. It was a really intimate search and his hands were all over me. He would touch me over and under my clothes with his hands going right into my butt cheeks.
83. He searched me like this regularly and there was never anybody else in the room. I knew it was wrong when he was doing it because I had been searched by other staff members and they just checked you normally and turned your pockets out. I can see now that Greg was just using searching me as a front to touch me inappropriately.
84. There was also a mental side to the abuse. While Greg would be searching me and touching me inappropriately, he'd say that if I played up, they would make one phone call and I would be taken to the secure unit, where I wouldn't get out at all and wouldn't be able to see my family. He knew that going home to my family was all I looked forward to.
85. Greg probably did this to other boys too but nobody mentioned it. He was a monster. He was always shouting at boys as well. I hated him. He was tall and skinny with grey

hair. He was a bit of a fitness freak and used to go running in these high visibility vests. I am not too sure but I think he was maybe in charge of the education department. I think he was maybe in his fifties but I can't be sure.

86. zHVJ took me and another boy out for a bike ride in the countryside. They went ahead and I got lost so I made my own way back. I stopped a car to try and get a ride back but my bike wouldn't fit in the car so I was stuck. Hours later, a member of staff passed me as I was trying to get back and gave me a lift back.
87. When I got to the home, Mr GOU started screaming and shouting at me to get upstairs in the Leddy Unit and get a shower. It was next to the room where all the boys were playing pool.
88. I went to get a shower and five minutes later, Mr GOU came in and pulled the shower curtain back and started screaming and shouting at me, calling me a 'little bastard' and saying I stole the bike and ran away. I was standing there naked and crying, covering my private parts with my hand. He stopped shouting and just stood growling at me. He looked like he wanted to kill me. I think if there was nobody else nearby, he would have hurt me or done something to me. I'll never forget it. I was just a wee boy standing naked and trying to cover up. I think he was getting off on it and the fact that I was crying. He left after a while and I just closed the curtain and carried on showering.
89. He was a bully and picked on people by shouting and swearing at them. He picked on me quite a lot and would call me a wee bastard and other names. I saw him shout at other boys as well.
90. Mr GOU was one of the staff members that worked on the lower landing and usually stayed down there. That was the only time I saw him come upstairs. He was a baldy man with a black beard. He was in his fifties I think and always wore black trousers, a shirt and a waistcoat.

91. There was a member of staff called GPB who was the woodwork teacher. He would carry a conker tied to a piece of string, which he called "the bobble" and kept it tucked into his belt. He would walk up behind people in class and smack them over the head with the conker. He dished that out as a punishment every day in his class for little things, like if a boy came back from the toilet smelling of smoke or just for small daft things.
92. It happened to me a few times and I saw it happen to other boys. It was really hard and was very sore. It made me cry every time he did it to me and left lumps on my head so I dreaded going to his class. Any boy in Ballikinrain at the same time as me will remember him and the bobble.
93. When I was about twelve or thirteen years old, I was up in the tree house one day and refused to come down because I was upset but I can't remember why. The tree house was built on three skinny trees. GPB came out and started swearing at me, calling me a wee bastard and threatened to cut the tree down if I didn't come down. I didn't come down so he went back in and got an axe and started hacking the tree with it. I was just sat up there crying. I came down because I was terrified and it would all have collapsed in on me if I hadn't. When I came down I was dragged upstairs.
94. The staff used to restrain boys if they needed it. Other staff did it to stop you from running away and did it normally. When GPB did it, he would bend your arm behind your back and bend your thumb back to cause you as much pain as he could. He did that to me and to other boys. It was really sore.
95. GPB was one of the teachers who also worked in the home on weekends. He was just another bully. He was a skinny, lanky man that had a motorbike. He lived in the house [REDACTED]. He lived there with a woman who I think was his wife. She had a motorbike as well.
96. I never told anybody about what was happening in there. I don't know why. I didn't feel like I could tell social workers or police. I felt like I couldn't trust anybody in authority.

Leaving Ballikinrain

97. None of the staff ever spoke to me about my progress or how long I was going to be in there.
98. I was sitting in the TV room one day and IKD, one of the staff, came in and asked to have a word with me. He took me to the assembly room and told me to get my clothes together because I was going to St John's Approved School. It was as quick as that. I started crying because I was worried and panicking and didn't know what to expect. I had heard bad stories about that place from other boys and didn't want to go. I felt like I was going from one bad place to another. I wasn't told why I was being moved.
99. I was just put in a mini bus and driven to St John's. I was in St John's for a few days, then I went on home leave and then went back to Ballikinrain. I think they were trying to integrate me slowly into St John's but nobody explained that to me so I was a bit confused. I was back in Ballikinrain for a few days before I was taken back to St John's.
100. That was the last time I was in Ballikinrain.

St John's Approved School, Glasgow

101. I went straight to St John's from Ballikinrain in 1997 when I was fourteen years old and I was there for about a year.
102. When I was dropped off outside St John's, one of the staff members took me out in their van because I was upset, and bought me ten fags and a bottle of juice and took me back to St John's.

103. I was there for the night and ran away the next day. I was caught by police and taken back to St John's by a social worker. When I got back, staff told me that when I got home leave at the weekend, I was to go to Ballikinrain on the Monday and not back there. I was a bit confused and nobody told me why this was happening.
104. I went home to my mum on home leave and after home leave I went back to Ballikinrain for a few days and then I was put back in St John's. I think the initial visit was just to introduce me to St John's and this was now me in St John's full time.
105. St John's was an approved school just for boys. It was quite a dated place with three or four units. The bedrooms had TVs in them. There was a room with a pool table and each unit had its own little kitchen area.
106. There was a school in there but it a bit 'mickey mouse' and the learning was non-existent. There was no curriculum and no structure. We just went in there and sat about or played video games. Nobody did any work and none of the teachers cared. I never got around to picking standard grades or anything. We all enjoyed physical education because we just got to play football.
107. I got a bit of bullying from other boys in there and got beat up from them. The staff didn't really do much about it. They didn't seem that bothered about anything.
108. It wasn't a secure place. I used to run away from there quite a lot. It was better there because it wasn't as long a walk to get home so it was easier to disappear. I would just get caught by police and taken back by the stand-by social workers.
109. The staff didn't really care about anything much so if you wanted to run away, they just showed you the door. There was no punishment for running away. They did start taking my trainers off me after a while when I got taken back, but I would just run away without them. I had a key worker but I don't remember much about him. Nobody spoke to me about why I was running away or about anything. They just weren't interested.

110. I was hardly in St John's for the year that I was meant to be there because I was always running away because it was so close to the city centre.
111. The only discipline the staff used was to restrain boys and that happened to me a lot. One time, a member of staff was trying to restrain me to stop me running away but I kept struggling so he sat on me for about an hour while repeatedly telling me to calm down.
112. I was still going to children's panels while I was there.
113. I was taken back by a stand by social worker after running away one time, and when I got back, I was just told I was going to St Mary's Secure Unit and that was that. I was then taken to St Mary's.

St Mary's Secure Unit, Bishopbriggs

114. I went to St Mary's when I was fifteen years old and I stayed there until I was sixteen years old. I didn't know why I was there.
115. It was quite daunting driving up to St Mary's and seeing the big fences that looked like a prison. I was put into the open house part of St Mary's and the staff said they would see how I got on there. They said I better behave or I would be put over in the secure unit part.
116. The secure unit part of St Mary's was all locked in and was like a prison because there was no way of leaving. I was taken to the secure unit part every morning because that was where the education department was. They would open the gates and take me in. This meant I couldn't just run away and leave during the day.

117. There were boys and girls at St Mary's. There were probably about 35-40 kids there. I recognised some faces from the other places I had been in. The boys in St Mary's seemed to be the worst of the worst boys. There was some really naughty kids in there who were in for some serious offences but were too young to be in adult prisons. Other than that it wasn't that different from the other places.
118. The education department in St Mary's was a bit 'Mickey Mouse' as well. It wasn't like a normal school. We didn't learn English or maths, but they did try to teach us practical things. I remember doing woodwork and making a bird house. I think they were just trying to get people to turn up and behave. That was a challenge in itself so they weren't bothered about actually teaching us.
119. St Mary's was a bit more chaotic and challenging than the other places I had been. Whenever I was in the secure unit part, the panic button was being pressed and someone was always being restrained.
120. I did run away a few times from St Mary's open house because it was easy for me to get home from there.

Discipline and punishment

121. I found St Mary's to be a bit like a prison but one that was run by social workers and key workers. They wore civilian clothes and sat in the office all day.
122. The boys did fight between themselves and the staff would just break it up. There wasn't much they could do as punishment in there because you were already locked up. They would sometimes lock people in their room as punishment, but then boys would kick off by kicking the doors in so staff would have to go and calm them down, so they didn't do that a lot.
123. I went off the rails a bit in St Mary's. I remember being taken to Morrisons supermarket by staff to get things for supper. I stole a bottle of vodka and took it back to St Mary's with me and drank it. I then stole the school car keys from the window ledge in the

office and took the car. I was driving about Bishopbriggs drunk. I burned the clutch out and caused so much havoc. I got arrested and was taken to a police station, which I think was in Kirkintilloch.

124. The staff came to get me and took me back to St Mary's. I remember being shouted at a lot because I had been drunk, stolen the car and ruined it.
125. My sixteenth birthday was just a few months away so I think they were waiting until then to deal with me properly and charge me as an adult.

Leaving St Mary's Secure Unit

126. As soon as I turned sixteen, all the children's panels stopped. It was like they just decided that I was an adult now and I was to be charged for everything I had done as an adult.
127. I was charged for a lot of things that I had done when I was under sixteen which had mounted up like stealing the car, thefts, being drunk and disorderly, and police assaults. When I was in the police station, I thought I would be out in a few hours like I usually was, and taken back by a stand by social worker. Instead, I was hauled into Glasgow Sheriff Court. All the things I had done, that I hadn't thought too deeply about at the time, had now come back to bite me.
128. I pled guilty and got bail. I breached bail and appeared before the court again. This time the judge remanded me in custody in Longriggend until he got my social work reports and until the date for my sentencing. That was a sharp shock to the system.

Longriggend Remand Centre

129. I was sixteen years old when I was remanded in Longriggend. I was there for a month or two.

130. I appeared in Glasgow Sheriff Court after a month or two for my sentencing and got my first sentence, which was three months in Polmont Young Offenders Institution. My mum was in court that day. I think my lawyer had prepared her for it.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution

131. I was sixteen years old when I first went to Polmont. I was worried because I had heard bad stories about the place.
132. I was locked up in a cell by myself. I couldn't run away and had to follow their rules. The staff there wore uniforms and carried keys on chains. They were basically prison officers. It was a shock to the system. When they punished you, they didn't let you out of your cell and that was that. There was nothing you could do about it.
133. I wore denim jeans and a blue, striped shirt with black shoes. Everybody wore the same.
134. They had jobs in Polmont that you could do. I think to teach you practical things for when you got out. I tried to get a job but I couldn't. I just spent the day locked up and got a hold of a book to read. They let you out for an hour or two in the evening, and you could watch the TV on the wall in the dining area. There were pool tables there as well.
135. You would be locked up again at 8:00 pm for the night. You could take a flask of hot water with you to your cell to make a cup of tea.
136. I only spent about six weeks of my three month sentence there. I was transferred to Glenochil to finish my sentence. I don't know why I was transferred. I think they maybe just needed to make space in Polmont.

HMP Glenochil, Alloa

137. I went to Glenochil when I was sixteen years old to finish my three month sentence. It was an adult prison but it had a wing for young offenders, which is where I was.
138. The staff were ok in Glenochil but it was a bit more of a military regime. You had to line up, follow orders and march.
139. I was just locked up, let out for food and then locked up again every day.

Leaving HMP Glenochil

140. I remember being released from Glenochil and the police were waiting for me outside when I walked out, which is called being gate arrested.
141. The police took me in their van to Govan Police Station. On the way there, they were saying that I could be home in no time if I just admitted to committing some other crimes.
142. When I got to the police station, they came to me with a file of all these unsolved crimes from my area. They said that I could leave the station in an hour and go home to my mum if I admitted them, but I would be kept in the cells and taken straight back to court if I didn't admit them. They said I'd be sent to prison again without even getting the chance of going home. I was young and silly and just wanted to get out so I admitted to all these crimes I hadn't committed. I didn't have any lawyer present.
143. The police charged me with all these crimes and let me out.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution

144. I went back home after being charged and released from Govan Police Station. I had to appear in court a few weeks later to be sentenced for all these crimes I hadn't committed. I had a lawyer then but it was all new to me so I didn't really think about challenging the charges or go to trial. I got sentenced and was sent back to Polmont for a whole catalogue of things I hadn't done.
145. I was sentenced to twelve months in Polmont. I was about seventeen years old and this was my first adult prison sentence. I now had an adult criminal record that was starting to pile up.
146. It was just the same as the first time so I was used to it by now. I served six months of my sentence and was let out.

Life after care

147. I started stealing bottles of hooch and kept getting charged for alcohol related offences, like being drunk and disorderly or police assaults. The police and courts treated me like an adult after I turned sixteen. All through my teenage years, I had probation officers and community service sentences. Alcohol continued to be a problem in my life.
148. I went down to England for a while and got a job. I was in a relationship and had a son and two stepdaughters. I fell back into the drink and moved back to Scotland. My ex-partner still brings my son, who is now fifteen years old, and the girls up to see me. I don't get to see them a lot so I would like to move back down to England to be closer to them.
149. I had a job tarmacking roads but had an accident in 2017 while I was in a vehicle with my boss. Since then, I have a prolapsed disc. I can't even walk straight now and I am in a lot of pain so I can't work.

150. I was supposed to get an operation on my back but when the doctor started telling me about the risks, I got major anxiety and didn't go through with it so now I have to live with chronic pain.

Impact

151. I didn't like anybody in authority when I was in Ballikinrain because I thought everyone was against me. This included all the staff in the home, social workers, children's panel members and the police. I have always been suspicious of authority throughout my life.
152. Life has been horrible for me since I went into care at twelve years old. I will never forget the things that happened to me in Ballikinrain. The things that happened to me were stressful and that is why I started drinking. I don't want to think about it but it crops up in my head from time to time. I use drink as escapism.
153. I have always had problems with drinking, which has caused me to get into trouble with police. All of my criminal offending is definitely related to being in care. I am stuck in the system and deal with the same old shit. I have court cases pending next year and will probably go to prison again. The drink and prison sentences also ruined my relationship with my ex-partner.
154. I saw a psychologist in prison who thought I had post-traumatic stress disorder. I was diagnosed with depression five or six years ago when I was in HMP Highdown in Sutton. It is definitely linked to me being in care.
155. I suffer from anxiety, which meant that I couldn't get the back operation I needed. I spoke to my doctor a while back about my anxiety and depression, but I don't like getting bad news so even talking to a doctor is difficult for me.

156. I never got an education after going into care at twelve years old. The only thing I learned was playing consoles and video games.

Current treatment

157. I am seeing a counsellor now through the Glasgow Council on Alcohol. I am trying to control the drinking and have cut back but I still have wobbles now and then.
158. I am currently in contact with Future pathways for support and they have helped me with getting things for my flat, like my bed, carpets and other things I needed. I was sleeping on the floor before I got in contact with them.
159. I have never thought about counselling for my anxiety and depression because I always just turned to drink.

Reporting of Abuse

160. I have never spoken to the police or a lawyer about what happened to me in care. I really hope that Greg from Ballikinrain gets charged and gets a sentence though.

Records

161. I have never seen any records. I am in touch with Birthlink at the moment to get them.

Lessons to be Learned

162. Taking a child away from their family and putting them in the care system is not a good decision for a child's life. There must be better options than that.

163. When a child is put in care, they should get support and an education. Life could have been very different for me if I had gotten that.

164. 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..... 2 / 12 / 21