

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

■■■

Support person present: No.

1. My name is ■■■. My date of birth is ■■■ 1983. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Alexandria, West Dunbartonshire. My mum is ■■■ and my dad was ■■■. My dad passed away in 2016. It was the same day as my daughter's first birthday. My parents weren't married. I am an only child. Once my dad found out my mum was pregnant, he disappeared. My mum told me a lie when I was younger and said my dad was a French. Later on, she told me he had died. I believed that my whole childhood. My mum then got me back in touch with my dad in 2013. It turned out he only lived ten minutes away and was Scottish.
3. I don't remember being at school much when I was younger. If I was at school, I struggled. I struggled to interact with other children. I struggled to read and write, and I couldn't really spell. I found it really hard to learn. I went to several schools as I kept getting suspended because of my behaviour. I found I spent more time staring at the wall than anything else or outside the classroom on a wee wooden chair. The doctor diagnosed me as being hyperactive back then. This has been confirmed in my social work records and it states that the psychologist advised I was not to be told about this. I was really, really young. I was up to all sorts of things. I wasn't given any treatment.

4. I am now getting assessed for ADHD and once I get that diagnosis that will probably answer a lot. It was quite hard. I was disruptive and would make noises or get into fights with other children. I was biting other children. This started at nursery.
5. I got a social worker assigned to me when I was about eight years old, but it was a bit too late. She would come into school and sit with me in class. She would take me to a quiet area and talk to me. I think she was trying to work out what my situation was. After that I started going into care. It was just me and my mum at the time.
6. I don't remember my mum working. She was quite lazy. She slept in her bed all day. She would just go down to the Post Office on a Monday and cash in her benefits.
7. My mum had me in several situations where she had abusive boyfriends. One of my earliest memories is staying in Knightswood in Glasgow with her boyfriend at the time and his mum. My mum and her boyfriend slept in a double bed, and I slept on this couch. I did that for quite a while. I was about four years old. Her boyfriend was quite evil and put an electric cable in my mouth once that was plugged into the wall and tried to get me to chew it. He is dead now. He was also giving me beer. He gave me my first Tennents lager when I was about four. It was a bad situation, but my mum stayed with him.
8. His mum was a bit of a bitch as well. She would force me to eat cabbage when I didn't like it. I still don't like it to this day. I wasn't allowed to do anything until I ate my dinner. Everyone was quite hands on with me, but I don't remember anyone hitting me. There are notes in my records that say this boyfriend did pick me up and punch me. My mum told the social that, but I don't remember it. I wasn't going to school either. I was eventually sent to school, but I then didn't know why I was there and didn't know what I was supposed to do.
9. I remember when we lived in Faifley I was at nursery and then when we moved to Knightswood and I was put to Knightswood Primary School. It was just a really hard time. My first memory was just thinking I don't know why I am here. It was all really

sporadic. It was a struggle. I used to walk to school on my own at that age as well. It was over a busy road. I can't remember my mum ever taking me to school really.

10. I remember when I got my social worker, I was in Linnvale Primary School in Clydebank. I think her name was Mrs White and she would come and take me out of class and spend time with me. I also remember having a Mr Blackstock, who wasn't just put in the class for me, but he would help me and was such a good person. I think he was a child psychologist and a teacher. It was after my time with him I was sent to Ballikinrain School. I don't really know if I was diagnosed with anything, but something must have been there as I was sent to Ballikinrain. I had been put in foster care briefly before this.

Foster Care, Cove - 1990

11. I remember coming home from school once and my mum sitting me down and telling me that people were coming to take me away. I didn't know anything about it but sure enough they did come. I think they were maybe from social services. I think I was seven years old.
12. These people took me away in a car to this big, massive house somewhere. I remember the shore was nearby. I was devastated and in tears, but I had no issues in that place at all. I was just so young and felt let down by the people that were supposed to care for me. I didn't know how long I was going for. I think I was there for a couple of weeks. I don't remember their names. I just remember there being two living rooms, one for the children and one for the adults.
13. I think there were three other children. I just remember a woman and that was it. I don't think I went to school. I don't remember being anywhere else at all when I was there. I just remember the living room and a television. I think the woman used to be into knitting as there was a big, massive machine in the living room.

14. I remember there was this little boy there who used to sit on this rug that had a toy city on it and lots of roads. I remember he wasn't allowed to move from there and I asked him why. He said it was because he wet himself. I don't know if that child was hers or another foster child. I don't remember where I slept or if I shared a room. I don't remember anyone visiting me or leaving there. My records state that I was only there for about five days. It felt like it was a life time.

Foster care, Helensburgh - 1990

15. My next memory is being taken in by a family from Helensburgh. I remember they had a daughter the same age as me and were quite religious as they used to pray before dinner. I didn't go to church. There was a young boy there as well.
16. I stayed in a box room on my own with an old-fashioned laser printer in it. I remember there was a school at the end of the cul-de-sac and I went there. I don't remember the name of the school. School was a struggle there too. I wasn't able to learn. I was disruptive all the way through school.
17. I remember every day going to school there and then coming back and having dinner, playing, having a bath and then going to bed. They would take me out in the evenings for walks. I remember hills being nearby and it was quite nice. I think the guy worked in the naval base as I remember them taking me to a party in there. It was like a kind of kid's day. As far as I was concerned that was my new family, but the next thing I know my mum and my grandmother turn up to their house to get me and I am back with my mum again. I hadn't seen them or any social workers before that. I felt like I was there for a couple of months but my records state it was only a month. I could not tell you my foster carers names. They were good people.

Family Home, [REDACTED] Clydebank

18. When I went back home with my mum, she was still in her council house on her own. Things were just the same. I went back to Kilbowie Primary School, which is where I had been before I left. It is quite muddled because I moved about so much and got expelled a lot. Back then if you were a kid that was misbehaving you only got so many chances. I was put out of class again and made to sit in the corridor a lot.
19. I don't know the reason, but I then got kicked out of Kilbowie. I remember I was sent back to Linnvale and was kicked out of there again too. I basically ran out of schools to go to. I think I was in primary five or four when I was talking to Mr Blackstock, and he said Ballikinrain was the best place for me. He didn't tell me that, I think I just worked it out. I just guessed that he made that decision to send me there.
20. I remember going to a children's panel a few times before I went to Ballikinrain. Most of the time I didn't know why I was there. I just remember being at them, but it is blurry. It was a building across from Dumbarton Sheriff Court and my mum must have been with me.
21. I remember one time being in my mum's house and I took her hairdryer and held it against the bed and singed it. That might have been the reason why I went to Ballikinrain actually. I thought it was Mr Blackstock's decision at the time but then again it could have been the panel. I have since read in my records that I was sent to Ballikinrain because of a breakdown in relationship with my mum. It was probably a combination of everything that was going on. The records also show that I was sent there by West Dunbartonshire Council.

Ballikinrain School, Killearn – 1993

22. I was sent to Ballikinrain when I was about nine years old in 1993. I remember the year as that was the first year, I had ever gone on holiday abroad. They took me to Spain. I think I left [REDACTED] 1994. I was there for eleven months.

23. It was a lovely big castle on huge grounds. There was a football pitch and a walk right around the whole area. It was hectares. There was a bridge and a river going under it. There was a big green where you could play football.
24. When you drove up to the castle there was an overarch and a set of grand stairs. When you walked in you could go left to the stairs that took you down or up to dormitories. The dining room was off the dormitories. In each dormitory there was a massive foyer area with a pool table and stuff like Nintendo. There were about seven dormitories with about two or three boys in each. There was also techie to the left with rooms for arts and craft, stuff like that. To the right there was offices for the people who worked in there. There was an outbuilding with a school and a little gym. It was like portacabins.
25. Ballikinrain was run by the Church of Scotland. It is near Fintry in the Balfroon area. I think they were close by and the closest towns. I don't know who the headmaster was. There was quite a lot of staff. There was a lot of good staff as well. Not everyone was bad. I had a keyworker. I think her name was Anne. I think she was in her forties or fifties. She was ok. She used to sometimes take the piss out of me because I was the youngest and had a high-pitched voice. You could hear me from miles away. She called me bubbles or squeak or something. That made me self-conscious a lot and didn't help. I used to cry quite a lot as well.
26. There were some staff that were teachers and care staff and some that were just care staff. There was a guy called Mario. I think his name was Nigel, but we called him Mario as he looked like one of the Mario Brothers with his moustache. He was a really, really nice guy. There was also a guy called ^{GPB} who lived with his family . He used to take the techie. I remember techie could be unsupervised. As a young boy I was using band saws and that.
27. It was all boys in Ballikinrain. There were older kids in their teens at the top of the castle. I was downstairs. I was one of the youngest kids to be taken in. I think there was about ten to fifteen children all together. I say that because when we went in a minibus it was about full.

Routine at Ballikinrain

First day

28. I remember my first day very well as that was the first time I was assaulted. I was taken there that morning by my mum or a social worker from my house. I know it was a Monday morning as the other children hadn't arrived back yet from being away home for the weekend.
29. I was being shown about by the guy who assaulted me, GOU He was in charge and had his own office. I think he was just in charge of the dormitory area, but I don't know, he might have been in charge of the whole place.
30. I was still with my mum and social worker at this point. There was a lot to see. Once my mum or the social worker left, I was put in this big room with a television. I was just left there and then when all the kids arrived back, they saw me, and all came over.
31. There was this older boy that sat beside me, and I clammed up, nervous. He was flicking his tongue and spit was getting on me. I said to GOU please can you tell him to stop doing that. GOU got up off his seat and walked over to us. I thought he was going to tell the boy off, but he grabbed me by the arm, pulled me off the seat and dragged me towards the door. I was dragged right out the room and threw up against the wall in the corridor. He was shouting at me, and I was terrified. I was crying and just wanted to get out of there. I felt really let down and disappointed.
32. GOU then took me back into the room and I was still crying. I felt humiliated and he wouldn't carry on what he was doing until I stopped crying. I saw him doing this to other boys as well, so I think this was just his tactics. I think that was his way of telling me don't fuck about.

Mornings and bedtime

33. The rooms were basic. We had a bedside table, wardrobe and a couple of chairs. I shared a room with two boys' downstairs. Sometimes we could go upstairs to watch television with the older boys. They seemed to have it a bit better up there and had televisions in their rooms.
34. I don't remember what time we got up, but school must have started at 9:00 am. We got up and took our dirty washing to this basket. We maybe had a splash of the face and went to the dining room for breakfast and then school. After lunch we were back to our dormitories. I don't think there was any more school after lunch. We were supervised at nights. I can't remember what time we went to bed and who switched the lights out. It must have been about 9:00 pm. If there was any noise, you would get shouted at and told to get to sleep. I wasn't really a noisy person in the evenings and used to just go to sleep.
35. I remember one time waking up and GOU was sitting next to my bed just staring at me. It was quite weird. There was nothing sexual he was just sitting in the corner of the room it was weird. We knew when he was coming as you heard him with his big keys, and he would whistle. It was like a taunt kind of thing.

Mealtimes/Food

36. Breakfast was just boxes of cereal on the table, and you just helped yourself. I would eat anything so don't remember any problems. I think maybe if you didn't eat enough you were told to eat more so you weren't hungry later. I don't think there was anything too serious. I always remember for supper we had super noodles and toast. I loved it. I still love it.

Washing/Bathing

37. There was showers and baths. It was quite a weird set up as the baths were in cupboards. If you wanted a bath you had to leave the door open. The showers were

cubicles and you got privacy. We mainly washed at night after supper. The option was there but not every night I think. I don't remember if the staff were there supervising.

Clothing/Uniform

38. We had communal underwear. It was all shared from this big basket it was quite weird. We had our own clothes, and we would get them back after they were sent to be washed.

Leisure time

39. We had motorbikes that we could take out and there was a lot of grounds and forestry work. There was quite a lot to do. We had the foyer area with pool tables and computer games. There was woodwork and arts and craft. It would swap all the time. You could choose what you wanted to do. I think you could also just stay in the house if you wanted. There was board games and televisions set up around the place with Segas and Nintendos.

Trips and holidays

40. We had an allowance and they used to take us into Clydebank shopping in the minibus. We could go into the Adidas shop, and they would buy us what we wanted. It was maybe every six months or so. I think that only happened once for me.
41. All of us from the school and another school went to Spain. That was my first time abroad. It took us two days in a coach. I remember it was terrible on the coach for two days, but it was an experience on the ferry. That was my first time on a ferry. We stayed in big, massive tents with army beds. It was a water sports place for children. That was the only holiday I had with them. It was a good experience.

Schooling

42. I was always in the same class. I had a teacher called [REDACTED] who did things like numeracy and English. It was all mixed ages. She would give out what you were supposed to do but I don't think much work was done. It wasn't forced on you. I didn't do much because I still couldn't really read or write.
43. It wasn't really like a full day of school if my memory serves me correctly. After lunch we just went back to our dormitories. I don't know if that was because the staff were lazy or that was just the schedule. It wasn't tough. We were still supervised in our dormitories.

Healthcare

44. One morning I woke up and I was in a lot of pain. I had a lot of stomach pain. What later transpired was that I had appendicitis. I didn't want to go to class so was trying to plead my case. It fell on deaf ears, so I was taken to class. They didn't want me in the dormitories as that would have meant a staff member would have had to stay there with me and I don't think they had enough staff.
45. I asked [REDACTED] if I could go to the toilet and was in a locked cubicle. I was in there for a while. I don't know if I was sitting on the toilet or leaning over it trying to be sick, but I just heard someone come in the toilet and the cubicle door was kicked in. It was [REDACTED]. She took me out the toilet and started shaking me. It turns out one of the kids had told her I was smoking but I wasn't. I found that out later on.
46. She just grabbed me by the torso and started shaking me. I was crying and still in a lot of pain. It was getting progressively worse. I was just sent back to my dormitory. I kept telling them I was in a lot of pain.
47. I think [REDACTED] was in her forties or fifties. She was a small woman and very athletic. She ran the hill walking club. I used to do that. She was a teacher and care staff.

48. They eventually got an Asian doctor out from one of the villages to see me. She said I had a urine infection, and I went home to my mum's as I wasn't getting any better. I was getting progressively worse and was hunched over in pain a lot. I was home for about a week.
49. One night at my mum's I was up being sick, and I was bringing up big chunks of red that looked like liver. It was really scary. My mum got the doctor out and he said he had never seen anything like it. It turned out my appendix had burst, and I had to go into hospital. I had to get my appendix removed and a blood transfusion. I think it was touch and go. I was in hospital for about a month. I remember while I was in there [REDACTED] came up to visit me with some other kids from the school and brought some juice and sweets. I remember thinking it was just a few weeks ago you were shaking me about.
50. I don't remember a matron as such at the school. I think just the staff dealt with stuff and they got a doctor out if they needed to. I saw a dentist too when I was at the school as I remember I had to get quite a few fillings. I think it was just in Balfron.

Religious instruction

51. There was no prayer or no mention of it being a religious place. There was nothing like that at all. I wasn't there at the weekends, so I don't know if they went to church.

Work

52. After dinner and supper, you had a choice to do washing or drying. The staff would pick who did what. We just did it because it was fair and not always the same person. We didn't have to do anything else as there were cleaners.

Birthdays and Christmas

53. I wasn't there for Christmas, but I could have been there for my birthday. I don't remember a birthday there.

Personal possessions

54. I remember we got a wee brown envelope with some money in it on a Friday. There was a wee tuckshop in the school that I think was run by a member of staff and you could buy things from there. I had forgotten about that.

Bed Wetting

55. I never bed wet, but I think there was one guy that did it all the time. I don't know how the staff dealt with it.

Culture (Gangs, Fighting, Bullying).

56. The older kids' upstairs kind of all hung about together. There was a few from Easterhouse who were quite congregated. There was a couple of times I got a knee from one of them and had a dead leg. I think they just thought it was a bit of fun with the younger kids. I don't remember seeing any strong violence.

Visitors

57. There were no visitors from what I can remember. Social work never came. I just had Anne, my keyworker there who would take me aside sometimes and see how I was feeling. Though sometimes she would just take the piss out of me.

Family Contact

58. I went home every weekend from Ballikinrain. They took us all home at the weekends in the minibus. I think on the Friday they got us back to our house as close as possible, but I remember on the Monday I had to get the train myself to Cowcaddens where they picked me up.

Running away

59. I never ran away. It didn't even come to my mind. There were other boys that did go missing some evenings. I don't know what happened to them when they were brought back.

Discipline

60. The discipline was mainly verbal. There was a lot of shouting. If you did something wrong, it went back to GOU and he gave you a ticking off. It would depend on how he felt how he dealt with it. He took me to shout at me in his office once. I don't remember what it was for. It was just that one time he was physical towards me, and I heard of him being physical towards other boys. I don't remember seeing anyone being restrained.

Abuse at Ballikinrain

61. I saw GOU drag other boys out of rooms and shout at them. It was to get all the kids on side. It was his way of getting us to behave and install fear in us. He did it to a boy in the dormitory once, I saw it. He dragged him out the dorm and I heard him shouting at the boy. The boy then came back in crying and cried himself to sleep. He didn't say what it was for or what GOU said to him.
62. I think GOU was English as he had an accent. He was in his fifties and had a prominent beard. Other staff just wore what they wanted but he would always come in with a shirt and trousers.
63. GOU demeanour in general was quite scary. He would be talking to you and all smiles and then the next minute his face would drop. It was just all to install fear. That was his way of working.

Reporting of abuse at Ballikinrain

64. I never told anyone about what GOU did to me. I think the other staff must have known. I never told anyone what IIN did to me either. She made herself known anyway, the other children must have heard her. I never told my mum anything. I only told her a few months ago. My mum said she wished I had told her as she would have got me out of there, but I don't think she could have.
65. I just didn't really trust anyone when I was a little boy. I was just one of these kids that if anything happened to me, I just put on a brave face and got on with it. To be honest with you I did really enjoy it at Ballikinrain. If GOU was there, I would put a brave face on. I just tried to stay out of his way and avoid him as he was volatile but other staff like Mario, I would love it as they would play with you and stuff. If GOU wasn't there, I would have loved it but then again if he wasn't there would all of the kids just have been fighting with each other, I don't know.

Leaving Ballikinrain

66. I thought I was going to be at Ballikinrain for good because I had been in foster care before that. I never asked any questions. I left after eleven months.
67. After I had appendicitis, I went back to Ballikinrain a different boy. I was really scared and there were a few things that happened. My mum got a boyfriend called [REDACTED] who worked at Barlinnie Prison as a prison guard. I told the other children about him, and they were saying he did me up the bum. I didn't even know what that meant.
68. Things were getting tough for me, and I was breaking my heart to my mum about it. Her and [REDACTED] broke up because of it as it was too much for him to take on. I think my mum just decided it was time for me to leave. I don't know if there was a children's panel. I don't remember the day I left. When I came out, I was a different person, but not for the right reasons. I was about ten years old.

Life after being in care

69. I didn't trust anyone after care. I was always looking over my shoulder and became more anxious. It was just too much for my head to deal with. I was just more subdued, and things got worse. I went back to school and found it really difficult. Before care I was more like the bully but after care, I was just really scared and nervous and more likely to receive bullying. I went back to Linnvale Primary in Clydebank. There was no more social work support. They must have just signed me off.
70. I stayed with my mum after care. We went down to England for six months and she didn't put me into school. She met some English guy that worked on a chicken farm and shipped me all the way down with him. She thought it would be a new life for us, but it didn't work out, so we moved back to Glasgow.
71. My mum then met a soldier and married him, and we moved to Germany. I think that was a better setting for me as I didn't know anyone and there was no shame. It was a new start. I still had a hard time with reading and writing at school. I think I was about twelve years old, and we lived there for two years.
72. We moved back to Clydebank after Germany, and I went back to Braidfield High School. I had been there for a few months before moving to Germany. I failed every class and was kicked out of school at fifteen. Another boy locked me in this cupboard, and I didn't know the teacher's bag was in there. I was sent to the headmaster, and he just told me to leave. I just couldn't apply myself. I was very messy and childlike.
73. I went to college when I was twenty-five and I can do it all perfectly now. I don't know what it was back then. It might have been ADHD stopping me from achieving my potential. It might be on my care records or medical records I don't know.
74. I moved to my gran's when I left school because I felt more stable there. I worked in a sorting office for five years. I lived for the weekends and started taking a lot of drugs. I was out drinking with my friends all the time. At twenty-five I knew something had to change as I was getting sacked from every job for not turning up or turning up late. I

think I was taking drugs because of the emotions I had from my childhood and being in care.

75. I did IT at Clydebank College and loved it. I was only supposed to do a HNC but ended up doing my degree at Glasgow Caledonian and got a 2:1. I walked straight into the job I am in just now. I have been there for ten years. I am proud of what I achieved myself.

Impact

76. I have had a lot of girlfriends and destroyed a lot of relationships because of the way I feel. I was emotional and anxious and was always thinking I wasn't good enough. I was scared to commit. I still live with it. I do have a criminal record and have done some things. A lot of these things I regret, and I am really embarrassed about.
77. My relationship with my mum is ok now. I have a seven-year-old daughter and my mum has a better relationship with her. My girlfriend doesn't like my mum very much because of what she allowed to happen to me when I was a kid.
78. If I didn't get myself an education, I think I might have ended up in jail. I get very low and lash out. I have not done that in a long time. I just put my time in care to the back of my mind but since hearing an advert from Digby Brown Solicitors on the radio about child abuse it has brought a lot of stuff back. I have started taking anti-depressants again.

Treatment/Support

79. My depression and anxieties started in my early twenties, so I went to the doctors. I have been on and off anti-depressants since then. I have had counselling through my GP and private counselling. I don't think it was helpful as it brings up emotions I then can't shake off. I am not getting any counselling at the moment.

Reporting of Abuse

80. I reported my abuse to the police December 2022. I heard an advert on the radio for historical child abuse. I spoke with Digby Brown solicitors and the Redress Scheme, and they both advised me to contact the Inquiry. They said it would be beneficial to speak with you and the police about my abuse. The police came to my house a few weeks ago and took a statement. Trying to explain my abuse to the police was a lot harder as I just felt like they weren't interested. I know they deal with so much stuff, but it just felt like, to them it was just another day. I felt like I clammed up as they were quizzing me. They just said they would pass my statement to Stirlingshire police as that is where it happened.
81. Digby Brown are pursuing a civil compensation claim for me and also the Redress Scheme as a backup. They said it all depends on whether my abusers are still alive or not.

Records

82. I requested my records through the redress scheme, and they have now arrived. I have read them and passed them on to Digby Brown.

Lessons to be Learned

83. I don't know if this would work with everyone, but I think a parent who is struggling should just have help every day. I don't think it is fair to take children away from their parents. Parents just need more support at home.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 84. I don't know if abuse still happens in children's homes, but if it does, I hope this Inquiry makes people think twice about what they are doing. Just don't do it as you are affecting someone's life. I will just leave it in your capable hands and help out if you need me.

Other information

- 85. 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..... 26 April 2023