

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IIA

Support person present: No

1. My name is IIA. As a child I used the surname IIA and it was only when I got married that I realised my birth surname was IIA. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. My mum is and my stepdad is. I never knew my biological father. I have four sisters. is a year older than me, is two years younger than me, three years younger and about six years younger. I was born in Glasgow and my mother initially brought us up on her own but at some point came on the scene. My mum was always drunk and life was quite hard at home. I was born with a visible birthmark on my face which had a massive impact on my life.
3. I went to St Robert's primary school in Priesthill but don't really remember much about my time there. There was one incident which I will always remember. We were in the class and the teacher was telling us about Halloween or something else like that. She told the class that if I had been born in a different period of history, because of the mark on my face, I would have been classed as a witch and burned at the stake. After that the other kids were calling me a witch and were horrible to me. There was another time when I was very young and the teacher gave us books to read. The girl next to me was reading hers and I thought she had been given

something different because she was managing to read hers. It wasn't. Our books were the same and I got the belt from the teacher for taking it from her.

4. According to the records I got from Quarriers we were put in there because of [REDACTED] regularly being drunk and because of his violence towards us. I don't remember any social workers having been involved with our family by that point.

#### **Quarriers Village, Bridge of Weir**

5. I have no recollection of going to Quarriers but my sisters have told me that I went there. I have managed to get my records from Quarriers which confirm I was there for a month. In my head I have a picture that at the time I was staying at a friend's house. The only thing I vaguely remember from Quarriers was being in a black car, eating chips and that within Quarriers there was a swimming pool. According to the records when I left there I would have been going to secondary school so would have been about twelve. All my sisters came with me to Quarriers, but when we left my oldest sister [REDACTED] stayed at Quarriers.

#### **Back home with mum**

6. I went back home to live with my mum and my sisters. My stepdad was still on the scene but he wasn't actually living with us. For some reason I don't think he was allowed to stay with us but he still came and got drunk. I started at Bellarmine secondary school in Pollok which was a horrible time for me because I couldn't read or write. Nobody picked up on why I wasn't learning. I was just sitting there blankly looking at paper when everyone else was able to read and write. It was even worse when I was asked to write something on the blackboard at the front of the class.
7. I was sent to remedial classes but there were other children there who were really disruptive. They were really noisy, throwing stuff about and lifting chairs and other stuff. The teacher would sometimes sit and explain things and I would grasp it but

when I went back to the class the next day I had forgotten what I had been taught. I just didn't retain the information. I couldn't cope with school so I started refusing to go.

8. The school board came to the house and told my mum I wasn't going to school and that I had to go. My mum couldn't make me go so I didn't. The next thing I knew was that there was a children's panel. I am not sure how long I went to the school before I was sent to the children's panel. It might have been anything from six months to a year and a half. I was told at the panel that I would be going to Beechwood for six weeks and would then come back to the children's panel.

### **Beechwood assessment centre, Glasgow**

9. Beechwood assessment centre is at the top of Glasgow beside a park and was only for girls. It was a big house which we never left. The front main door was locked and the staff held the keys. I don't really remember anything about the staff but what I do remember was that they were quite strict. I am not sure who was in charge and I don't remember anyone's name. They were all just staff to me. We were getting watched all the time but that was probably us just being assessed.
10. There were around twenty or twenty-five girls there and the age range was from thirteen up to fifteen. I was somewhere between thirteen and fourteen. A lot of the girls were in there because of truancy but some were there for other reasons. We weren't allowed to talk to the other girls about why we had been placed there. The staff told all the girls this. I shared a room with five other girls and I am not sure why they were there.

## **Routine at Beechwood**

### *First day/mornings and bedtime*

11. When I arrived my own clothes were taken from me and I was given pyjamas, a housecoat and slippers. We wore that all the time. Every morning we just got up and went for breakfast.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

12. We had all our meals in the dining room. There were things like mince and potatoes and chicken with vegetables. It was probably quite healthy. There was no choice and you had to eat it. I quite liked most of the food and I didn't go hungry. If you didn't like the food you were told that you still had to eat it. I remember one girl threw her plate onto the floor at lunchtime. She didn't get anything else for lunch and didn't get any dinner either.
13. I hated the porridge and one time I just didn't want to eat it. I was made to sit there for ages until I had finished it. Everyone else had gone by then so I was sitting there on my own eating cold, horrible porridge. Leaving food wasn't an option. I had to eat it. This happened a few times.

### *Washing/bathing*

14. We showered every night and all the time there was a member of staff there watching us just to make sure we weren't mucking about or fighting. There was a big curtain going round all the showers, not individually.

### *Clothing/uniform/ Personal possessions*

15. The clothes I was wearing were taken from me and I was given pyjamas and a housecoat which I wore all the time. Some of the girls went to a school outside

Beechwood so they wore other clothes. I didn't have any personal possessions. Girls who came in with Rangers or Celtic football scarves had them taken from them.

16. There was a laundry in the building where we took our bedding and our pyjamas and we washed them ourselves.

#### *Schooling*

17. I never went to school when I was at Beechwood. There were no teachers there at any time. We were just there to be assessed. I am not sure what we actually did all day. Sometimes we were given books but they were no good to me because I couldn't read so I just threw them across the room. Some of the girls went to a school outside and would usually get taken there in a taxi.

#### *Assessment*

18. I saw an educational psychologist about four times when I was at Beechwood and we would go into a wee room where he made me draw and do different things. I remember one time he got a bit paper and made a paper aeroplane then threw it across the room. He gave me a piece of paper and asked me if I could make a bit paper fly across the room. I scrunched it up into a ball and threw it across the room into the bin. Another time he asked me to draw a house with a family as quick as I could. I drew a wigwam with some matchstick men. He did other tests which I don't really remember. He was the only person, in all my time in care, who I thought actually listened to me. He asked me questions which made sense to me unlike anyone trying to educate me.
19. I learned from my mum years later that she had been told after I left Beechwood that I was dyslexic and had a very high IQ. I was never told this at any time when I was in care.

*Healthcare/ Religious instruction/work*

20. I don't remember ever being unwell or needing any medical treatment. We weren't taught religion and there were no prayers or anything like that. We didn't have any real chores to do. We had to make our own beds but I think that was all.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

21. I can't remember if birthdays were celebrated and I wasn't there over Christmas.

*Visitors/ Trips and holidays*

22. We weren't allowed any visitors or to have any outside contact with anyone in the six weeks I was there. We were never taken on any trips or anywhere else and in fact I never left that building. There was no weekend leave either.

*Discipline*

23. The staff would often shout if there was any bad behaviour, or the girls would get separated if they were fighting and the girl who started it would be sent to her room. I never saw any of the staff getting physical or hitting any of the girls. The only thing would be the staff pulling the girls apart.

**Abuse at Beechwood**

24. We were made to wear our pyjamas and housecoat all the time when we were in there presumably to stop us from running away.
25. One time I had just come out the showers when two girls grabbed me and they said I hadn't washed my face properly. They used a sponge and tried to scrub the birthmark off my face. It was sore. The staff would have been standing at the shower room door and might not have seen this. This only happened once. These girls, at

other times, often made comments about my birthmark. They always said how ugly I was and other things like that.

26. I never saw any abuse by the staff in Beechwood but it wasn't a nice time for me. The staff were strict and it felt like a prison because I couldn't get out the locked front door.

### **Reporting of abuse at Beechwood**

27. I never told any of the staff about what the girls said or did to me. It is possible the staff weren't aware of what the girls did or said to me.

### **Leaving Beechwood**

28. My mum came to Beechwood just a few days before my six weeks was up. She went to a meeting with the staff then I was invited in. I think it was at that meeting it was decided that I would be referred back to the children's panel. I then went to the children's panel and my mum was there again. At the panel, which was mostly men, there was no mention of the assessment done by the educational psychologist or about me having dyslexia. The only time they spoke to me was when I was asked if I would go to school if they sent me home. I said there was absolutely no way I would go to school so they told me to get my 'wellies' on because I was being sent to Langland's List D school in Port Glasgow where I would get an education that I wouldn't forget.

### **Langland's List D school, Port Glasgow**

29. One of the members of the panel drove me from the panel to Langlands List D school which is in Port Glasgow. I would still have been thirteen. It was an old big school and there was a long path leading up to it with a graveyard beside it. In the

building to the left there was a corridor leading to the main hall. There was also a dining room. There was a small flat downstairs which was allocated to some girls who were nearly fifteen. There were two bungalows behind the building. One of the bungalows was where girls who were close to leaving were put so they got used to living on the outside. They learned to budget money and things like that. I was never in one of the bungalows or in the flat. The other bungalow was used by the staff.

30. Mr MSH, who we knew as MSH was SNR. His wife and daughters used to come into the school and they were all lovely. Mr MSH only came in during the day, spent most of it in his office and was rarely there in the evening. The other teachers I remember were Mr GYJ who was the keep-fit teacher and possibly taught something else. He too only came in through the day. Another teacher I can name was Miss Murdoch. She was lovely but was very soft and had a heart of gold. All the girls took the 'Mickey' out of her.
31. There were around thirty five or forty girls in Langlands aged from thirteen up to sixteen. Girls normally left when they reached school leaving age. There were six of us in each room although the bedroom was bigger than it was at Beechwood. I stayed in this room the whole time I was there. Some of the girls left at different times either because they were old enough or some after appearing at a children's panel then different girls moved in. Most of the girls were in there for not going to school but a lot were because they were out-with parental control. We chatted about it amongst ourselves and got to know why we were all there. I knew I was there because I wouldn't go to school.

### **Routine at Langlands**

#### *Mornings and bedtime/mealtimes/food*

32. We got up around seven in the morning. We made our beds, showered, got dressed then went down to the main hall where everybody would wait. The staff would then unlock the door and take us into the dining hall for breakfast. After breakfast we

would have a cigarette in the main hall. Langlands was quite strict and disciplined. All the meals were at set times, breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper then bedtime was either nine o'clock or nine thirty. Staff came in and put the lights out. We had all our meals in the dining hall. I don't remember there being any issues with the food.

#### *Washing/bathing*

33. We usually showered in the morning when we got up and in the evening. There was usually a queue so you had to stand and wait with a towel around you. A member of staff would hand you the shampoo and soap when you went in. I think we had small toilet bags which we handed back after the shower. I think there were shower curtains but again I can't remember if it was one big curtain round us all or round the individual showers. Staff popped in occasionally just to make sure we were washing ourselves properly.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

34. Initially I wore my own clothes or it might have been other clothes they gave me because I had so little. After about a year we were all issued with black trousers, a T shirt with a collar and a red sweatshirt. We did our own washing and this included our bedding. There was a washing machine and a dryer and we all had to take turns to wash our clothes. Each dorm had specific times.

#### *Leisure time*

35. We were allowed to smoke in the main hall. If you wanted to smoke they bought you a packet of twenty to last you the week. At set times the staff would give you a cigarette so you had four every day. This was after breakfast, after lunch after tea then after supper. If you got home for the weekend you would get the two cigarettes you missed on Friday on the Sunday when you got back. The full twenty would start again on the Monday morning. They didn't give us cigarettes to go home at the weekend. This meant I was always keen to go back on the Sunday so I could have a smoke.

36. Around three o'clock in the afternoon every day I went out and delivered meals on wheels to the elderly in the community. There was a van that would come with all the food in it and we would follow it in the minibus and jump out and deliver the food. It took us about an hour. I enjoyed doing this.
37. Every day, after our evening meal, we would be taken in the minibus in our jogging suits to Greenock pier. Mr GYJ would make us run the full length of the pier regardless of the weather. After we got back from our run we probably showered then it was time for supper then bed. If we had any spare time we tended just to sit and chat with each other or watch the television.

#### *Smoking*

38. The staff offered me a cigarette on my first day at Langlands. I hadn't smoked before. I could have refused if I had wanted but all the other girls were smoking so I did. I nearly choked on that first cigarette but this was the start of me smoking.

#### *Schooling*

39. I can't remember there being any academic classes in Langlands but if there were I didn't go to them because I couldn't read or write. There was no point me being in these classes. I went to more practical classes where the staff did the teaching. There was sewing, cooking, music, art and other subjects. I can't remember if there were any actual classrooms. The only room I remember was the sewing room. There was a timetable made up which was on a notice board to tell me what classes I was doing. We did the cooking in one of the bungalows and it was like 'come dine with me' where we invited staff in and they would give us a score for what we had cooked.
40. In the sewing classes we made things like teddy bears and when they were finished we would give them to charity.

### *Assessment*

41. A woman teacher, who was from the education board, was brought in and I think she was there to assess me. She kept giving me books to read but they were still no good to me because I couldn't read them. I usually just fired them across the room. It wasn't because I was angry or violent in any way. I think I was frustrated because I couldn't read. I was usually sent to see Mr MSH to get a row if I did.

### *Healthcare*

42. Mr MSH became aware of my issues with my birthmark. There was a new cook who must have heard the girls saying things to me and she must have told Mr MSH. It had been going on for years that girls were saying horrible things to me. The next day the cook brought in makeup for me to cover up my birthmark. That was when I started covering up my birthmark. He subsequently set the wheels in motion for me to get laser surgery to have it removed. This was laser treatment being piloted in America. Mr MSH took me to see my GP to find out more about it. I was then put on the waiting list to get treatment. At some point the Red Cross camouflage department came in and gave me some advice on how to cover up my birthmark.
43. If ever you were ill they would call the local doctor from Port Glasgow and he would come out. Sometimes he would just tell you to get bedrest and the staff occasionally looked in you to make sure you were okay. It never happened to me and I don't remember ever needing any medical attention at Langlands.

### *Religious instruction*

44. I was a Catholic but never saw a priest when I was at Langlands. I never saw a minister either. There were no prayers so I did my own praying in silence on my own every night. There was no consideration or recognition of religion. Girls who were kept there over the weekend were taken to church in Port Glasgow on Sunday mornings. They didn't have a choice. They had to go to church.

### *Trips and holidays*

45. Now and again there were trips away. Those that wanted to go had to put their name down for it and if you were lucky you were picked. Miss Murdoch and another teacher took us on a trip down to England somewhere in the minibus. We stayed in a hostel for a few nights. One night we went to bed at nine o'clock and climbed out the window. Myself and another four girls ran off and had a wander round the town for a couple of hours then went back. Miss Murdoch was in tears. I would have been fifteen by then. The police came and gave us a row. We were just curious to see what else there was in the area. During the day they kept us busy doing educational sort of things.
46. We also went to Belaire in France for four nights camping. Mr MSH came on that trip. We went by coach and boat. Myself and another girl got badly sunburned one day. We were swimming and they gave us suncream but we hadn't put it on. The doctor came and we ended up covered in calamine lotion. During the day one of the other girls was supposed to be looking after us and making sure we drank plenty water but she disappeared. There was a bottle of water there but we were too burnt and sore to reach it.
47. There was another four day trip somewhere else that involved going on a boat from Greenock then abseiling. I wasn't picked for that trip. The staff were always good on these trips and were there if we needed them.

### *Weekend Leave*

48. I got weekend leave and I went home to my mum's. All my other sisters would be there, apart from my oldest sister who was still in Quarriers. Sometimes my step-dad was there and he would be drunk so I didn't like staying there. Quite often I would stay at my friend's house. Langlands didn't get to know that I wasn't staying at home otherwise they would have stopped my leave. I got leave every weekend. Some girls didn't get weekend leave depending on what they were in for.

49. The Langlands minibus would take us into the town on a Friday then I would get the bus home. They gave me bus tickets. Going back on the Sunday was just the same but in reverse. The Langlands minibus would pick us up in town and drive us back to Langlands.

#### *Work*

50. I cleaned the kitchen whilst some of the other girls washed the dishes. I moved all the chairs in the dining room then swept and washed the floors. I also cleaned out the storeroom. There wasn't a rota. We were just asked, or more like told, to do these chores. There were chores needing done in the kitchen every day.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

51. I would have had birthdays at Langlands but I can't remember if they were celebrated in any way. I don't remember getting any birthday presents. I can't remember any of the other girls birthdays. I don't think I got a Christmas present and was probably home on Christmas day.

#### *Bed Wetting*

52. I didn't wet the bed. I can't remember any other girls wetting the bed but I met a girl on the bus about eight years ago who had been at Langlands. She said she was put in the 'Pee' corner where girls who wet the bed were made to stand. I don't remember this punishment and I didn't even remember this girl.

#### *Visitors*

53. Langlands was the first time I was allocated a social worker who was called Maureen. This was the first time I had met her. She came to see me once every six months or so. We would be on our own and she would ask if everything was okay and I lied and said it was. She was nice because she brought me shampoo and conditioner. I would never have told her that I was unhappy.

54. My mum didn't visit me because I saw her most weekends when I was out on leave. My older sister [REDACTED] visited me from Quarriers probably three or four times. Staff from Quarriers brought her. She told me years later that she hated visiting me because of the smell of smoke. Everyone was smoking so the air was foul. When she came we sat in the main hall which is where all the visits took place. Depending on when she came we might be the only ones in there. The staff weren't there all the time and we were able to chat without anyone hearing.

*External Inspections*

55. People from outside the school came in and took some of the girls aside and were speaking to them about the school. They were asking if the girls liked the school and things like that. I think these girls were sometimes university students. I was never picked to speak to these people.

*Discipline*

56. If you did something you weren't supposed to, or if you didn't do something you were supposed to do you would get sent to Mr MSH [REDACTED] Mr MSH [REDACTED] was the discipline. Nobody would dare challenge or stand up to him. Mr MSH [REDACTED] shouted at you and quite often his face would go purple with temper. He was a big hairy Welsh man. I liked him because he was strict but firm and fair. He didn't take any nonsense. I had a few bawlings from him. The other staff wouldn't shout but would use getting sent to Mr MSH [REDACTED] as a threat to any girls who were behaving badly. I saw Mr MSH [REDACTED] shouting at girls but more often I heard him shouting. He never used the belt.
57. Sometimes they would withhold cigarettes when all the other girls were getting theirs. This happened to me a few times. They would do this if I had been caught fighting with another girl which was usually after they had made a comment about my birthmark and I retaliated. Another threat the staff may use was stopping weekend leave but that never happened to me.

### *Running away*

58. I never ran away from Langlands. If I had run away I would have missed my cigarettes. Me and a few other girls ran away when we were on a trip to England but we went back after a couple of hours.

### **Abuse at Langlands**

59. On my first day I had just arrived and went into the dining hall and sat down and waited for my lunch. One of the girls at the table looked at my face and said that she felt sick because of the birthmark on my face and couldn't eat her dinner. She said it to a member of staff, who I can't remember, and the member of staff asked me to move to a different seat.
60. Most of the abuse I suffered at Langlands was from this girl and one other girl. I don't remember their names but they were a year or two older than me. They said something horrible to me every day, every time they saw me, it was constant. They left after about a year so it got better after they left because the other girls were used to seeing my birthmark and a lot of the girls who came in were from the south side of Glasgow which was where I was from. They were like back up and stuck up for me.
61. At some point one girl, whose name I can't remember, said that she had been slapped on the face by Mr MSH I didn't see her getting slapped but her face was red. I had no issues with any of the staff in any way. If you were sent to see Mr MSH you knew you were in trouble. I was sent to him a few times for throwing books about and he screamed and shouted at me each time.

### **Reporting of abuse at Langlands**

62. I never told any of the staff what the girls were saying to me about my birthmark. It would have made my life worse if I had dared. It was an unwritten rule not to tell and

that was just the way it was. Nobody liked a 'grass'. The staff probably would have heard some of the remarks made by the girls about me and my birthmark but they must just have turned a blind eye to it. I think their opinion was that the girls should fight their own battles. It is possible some of the staff wouldn't have been aware of the abuse I was getting. When the girl told me to move because my birthmark was making her feel sick the member of staff was obviously aware but did nothing about it apart from asking me to move.

63. There was a new cook who came and she knew about the girls saying horrible things to me. She must have said something to Mr MSH because he apparently went ballistic at the girls. This didn't stop them and in fact made it worse for me because after that I was considered a 'grass'.

### **Leaving Langlands**

64. I can't remember what date I left Langlands but I know it would have been around the same day as my official school leaving date. That was when most of the girls left. I knew I was coming up to sixteen and that I would be leaving but I can't remember if anyone actually said anything to me. I did see my social worker Maureen a short while before I left. The first time I knew exactly when I was leaving was when Mr MSH told me that I would be getting released the next day. He told me that I shouldn't look back and warned me that if I flew with the crows I would get shot with the crows. I think I got released on a Friday so would have gone on the minibus with the other girls who were going on weekend leave.
65. I am not sure if it was just before or just after I left but my mum went to a meeting with Mr MSH and Maureen the social worker. I think it was a release or a closure meeting. I wasn't invited to that meeting. I was never involved in any of the meetings. I never saw Maureen again after I left.
66. Just before it was time to leave Langlands they brought in CSV which are community service volunteers. It was a company run by Lorna Carrick. I was allocated a

placement with the social work department. I was to become a play leader when I got out of Langlands. It was basically a double decker bus, a play-bus, that had some animals in it and lots of toys. The toys were made in Barlinnie prison. We drove all over the south side of Glasgow and children and mum's came on the bus. The whole point of it was to get them to start their own mother and toddler groups. I wasn't getting paid. It was supposed to be a six month project but went on for another two years. Some of the girls got placements with the elderly and some with children at nurseries.

### **Life after being in care**

67. I didn't see Maureen my social worker again after I left Langlands, I was left to my own devices. I couldn't fill in job application forms but there was a place in Nitshill called the Hive and they helped me fill out forms and sent them away for me. These jobs I was getting were always just short term and temporary.
68. I went home to stay with my mum but my step-dad [REDACTED] was there and my mum and him were still drinking. I couldn't handle it so I went to stay with my friend. After a while the council gave me a flat but I was still doing the voluntary job on the play-bus and was only getting expenses so couldn't afford to pay for everything. I had to get top up benefits. I worked on the play-bus until I was eighteen. After that I did various cleaning and catering jobs at hospitals and schools.
69. I subsequently met my husband and had a child and that is when things really changed in my life. I became far stronger and one of the first things I did was to make sure she wasn't dyslexic. When she started at school in primary one I went into the classroom with her as a classroom assistant. This is where I started to learn to count and to read. I went on to have another child.
70. When I was doing one of my cleaning jobs I was working for a firm that dealt with college course and grants and sometimes had a look through some of the leaflets. I saw one for a National Certificate course in social care. One of the staff suggested I

go for it. I was reluctant because of my reading issues but I did the course and absolutely loved it. I had dyslexic support straight away and the tutors were brilliant. At the end I had to do an essay but I was told it wasn't written properly and they said they would provide me with a scribe. I refused because I knew I wouldn't have a scribe working beside me all the time. It ended up that I passed the course anyway and qualified with a National Certificate in social care.

71. It was only when I told my mum that I was applying for a college course she told me that I had dyslexia. She said I had been assessed in Beechwood by an educational psychologist and at the end she had been told that I had dyslexia.
72. I applied for and got a job as a support worker. I loved it. I helped another woman start a small business who was very artistic. I then got another job as a team leader. To get this job I had to get another qualification, a Higher National Certificate at university. When I started the course I straight away got dyslexia support equipment including a computer which I had never used before. It was brilliant. I then went on to do an SVQ level 4 in management.
73. When I was doing my qualifications I was studying the Equality Act 2010 and I knew it inside out. I also read up on the Geneva convention so knew all about children's rights. This enabled me to get help from Access to Work and get all the equipment I needed for college for my dyslexia.

### **Impact**

74. The impact of my birthmark on my life started when I was at primary school and the teacher told the rest of the class that had I been born earlier in history I would have been burned at the stake as a witch. I don't think she was deliberately picking on me and didn't realise what she had done. This had a dramatic effect on me and ruined the rest of my life. It was made worse at both Beechwood and Langlands because of the abuse from the girls. I think I became most conscious of my birthmark when I was at Langlands. I think it was because I was surrounded by teenage girls who

were pretty and they were calling me ugly because of the birthmark. Every time I looked at myself in the mirror all I saw was the birthmark. I was the only one with a birthmark and I kept getting reminded of that.

75. My birthmark has been covered up for the last forty years. You will never find a photograph of me and my birthmark. I won't open my front door without having my camouflage makeup on. My daughters won't be able to tell you the last time they saw my birthmark not covered up. I even have an emergency kit in my house in case there is a fire, that is how self-conscious and ashamed I am and how desperate I am that people don't see me. I am worried that when I become a pensioner I will be the only one still wearing makeup.
76. What the girls in care said to me about my birthmark, especially at Langlands, was extremely hurtful to me. It made me so ashamed of my face. I just wanted the birthmark to disappear, not so I could be pretty, just so that I could fit in with the other girls. I just wanted to blend in and not stand out for the wrong reason.
77. I was probably over protective of my first daughter and that is why I took on the job as classroom assistant so I was in her primary class. As a mother I had a fear that my children weren't going to do well at school and that the social work department would step in and put them into a List D school. I also had a fear that they would have dyslexia and that's why I had that checked very early on. I wanted to make sure my children were alright and were protected. The teacher even helped me when she knew I had difficulty reading and writing and set work for me to do at home.
78. When I was in care I am not sure if I was ready for the education side of school and learning things. It was probably my dyslexia that stopped that side of things from working for me. I don't blame anybody for me not getting a proper education in care but I know I would have been able to achieve much more in life if I had left with qualifications. I could have got a job that was more challenging and could maybe even have started my own business. I think any potential that I had was taken away from me.

79. When I have looked through the family photographs there are pictures of my other sisters but there are none of myself or [REDACTED] who was in Quarriers. Despite not growing up with them I now have a good relationship with my sisters. We were a bit distant to start off with but gradually we have got to know each other and have come together. My sisters still go to school reunions and if I had stayed at home and gone to school I would have had the same opportunity to keep in touch with my school friends. I don't have anything like that.
80. After leaving Langlands it was almost as if I had to acclimatise and get used to normal life. Everything was so structured in there. We ate at set times, we had a cigarette at set times and everything was programmed to happen at a certain time.
81. Because I was introduced and encouraged to smoke at Langlands I still smoke to this day. Sometimes I am really angry that they gave us cigarettes in the first place. I have tried everything possible to try and stop smoking but haven't managed. Nothing seems to work for me. I sometimes get dizziness which only stops when I have a smoke. I have tried anxiety tablets from my doctor but they don't work, but a cigarette does. I now have a constant cough which I have put down to my smoking for so long. I don't drink alcohol to excess, probably because I saw what it did to my mother, and I have never taken illegal drugs.

### **Treatment/support**

82. Mr MSH [REDACTED] at Langlands took me to the GP and set the wheels in motion for me to get laser surgery to have the Birthmark removed. I was put on a waiting list but when it was supposed to start the Falklands war broke out in 1982 so it was postponed. The Piper Alpha disaster then happened in 1988 so it was postponed again. I went on to have the laser treatment and have now had around sixty treatments. Initially it was done under general anaesthetic with a full surgical team but gradually I went to having the treatment without any anaesthetic. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

83. My own GP also referred me to the camouflage department with the Red Cross. They showed me how best to cover my birthmark. My surgeon was really impressed when I went for my laser surgery when he saw how the birthmark had been camouflaged and he suggested I get involved with a group called Changing Faces and get further training. This was to help other people who had birthmarks or burns. I started to get involved but Covid came along so it all stopped.
84. In one of my jobs after leaving care it was suggested that I go for a dyslexia test. I went for one through the department of works and pension in 2002. It came back that I had dyslexia and trauma. In a way I felt good because I had been blaming myself for years and convinced myself I was stupid but now I knew there was a reason. The trauma apparently related to my time in care.
85. Apart from going to my GP in relation to my birthmark the only time I went to see him was when I had a period of feeling very anxious. I was given tablets but they didn't work.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

86. I have never reported anything that happened to me to the police. I remember that when I was at Langlands at some point a black car took me to give evidence at court. I am not sure who it was that had been charged. Before I went to court my mum told me that I wasn't to say that and instead I had fallen. The charges were dropped.

### **Records**

87. I have been in touch with Future Pathways to help me get my records. I had tried before that and had been told there was a clause on my records that no files from Langlands were to be released for 100 years. I was sent a big pack of paperwork to complete. So far all I have managed to get are my records from Quarriers. They

were posted out to me. Future Pathways got them for me. There is nothing in these records of any note. They consist of only a few words. It does mention that someone was charged with an assault but it wasn't on me. I believe this was actually my sister who was assaulted. Attempts are still being made to try and find my records for Beechwood and Langlands.

### **Compensation**

88. Within the package that was sent to me to help me get my records there were details of a lawyer. I have contacted this lawyer who is pursuing a redress claim for me.

### **Lessons to be learned**

89. Smoking should never have been encouraged at Langlands. Now that I am older I can see that they used the cigarettes as a way to control us. If we were bad they withheld our cigarettes. This turned out to be an expensive addiction for me because I have never given it up despite trying.
90. Consideration of religion and beliefs wasn't recognised. There was never any religion taught and I never saw a priest when I was in care. Even though there were mixed religions there was never a visit from a minister either. Having a priest would have made all the difference to me.
91. Looking back, I wish I had been told about the possibility and how to cover up my birthmark much earlier. It might have stopped a lot of the abuse from the other girls, and also made me a lot more confident within myself.
92. My dyslexia was identified when I was in Beechwood apparently but nothing was ever done with that information. The information may have been passed to my mum but it didn't go with me to Langlands. I may have been getting assessed further at Langlands but there was never anything put in place to help me learn. At neither

place was I given any learning tools to help me, and I always just thought I was a problem for the education department. I felt like I had something that they couldn't fix and that the education that was given to me was only because they had to by law. There is nothing in the law however that says if school doesn't work for a child where does the child go from there.

93. Langlands should have done more to help me get a paid job at the end of my time there. When I was at Langlands I felt I was helping other people with the community work I was doing but no one was interested in helping me in any way. By the end I needed a paid job so I could survive outside care. The main thing however that would have helped me get a decent and meaningful job after I left would have been the ability to read and write. For the first two years I was just a free pair of hands to help out the social work department and I felt they didn't know what to do with me. Just like I was a problem on the education side I think I was a problem for them in employment too.
94. I think it is important to recognise that all behaviour is communication. However bad that behaviour is in a young person there is communication behind it. Punishing bad behaviour, and I include sending children to List D schools, isn't the answer. We have to recognise that education doesn't work for everybody. I was no better educated when I came out of Langlands then when I went in. I don't mean that education doesn't work at all but it has to be delivered in such a way and with the appropriate tools if required. By that I mean with all the available learning tools to assist dyslexia.
95. Something else that would have worked for me was if the organisation that I went to work for when I left care, or some other company provided development funding. It would have worked if I was funded and they had an investment in me following up my development. A bank would be an ideal organisation to provide this funding. That way if they put money into me then they would follow it up and see the finishing results. Children who have been in care should not just be put out and left to get on with it. They should be supported into whatever they want to do and maybe even

checking up on them every six months. The government are sometimes good at giving money to individual cases but they don't follow it through.

96. I get help from Access to Work who provide me with all the necessary equipment if I were to get a job. All this equipment should be made available to any child with dyslexia who would benefit from it.
97. I didn't have much involvement with the social work department. They only became involved when I was at Langlands but didn't do anything for me and I don't think they had any say in things. Langlands were responsible for me.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

98. I hope that by coming forward it makes a difference and children are supported to reach their full potential. I would like to think that nowadays there are ways of identifying dyslexia earlier, and that people with birthmarks or who stand out in other ways are looked after and given support. Having a birthmark makes a massive impact on a child's life and it doesn't just go away. I don't want anyone else to go through what I did.
99. I think children with any kind of disfigurement or birthmark should have much easier access to makeup. The process just now is that you go to your GP and they refer you to Changing Faces, which involves going on a waiting list. Changing faces will then arrange for a colour match, then at that point you will get a prescription. Chemists can then take up to six weeks to get it delivered. If there is anything I would change about the process it would be that this makeup is made available over the counter and there to be someone who can help you apply it. There is far too much jumping through hoops when you have to go through the national health service.
100. Normal makeup brands won't provide for birthmarks. It all comes under the national health service. Some brands will say they cover tattoos but they will never say they

cover birthmarks. If I was to go into a chemist for something to cover a birthmark they will just say they have camouflage cream for blemishes or scars. They will never use the word birthmark. There is difficulty in promising to cover up birthmarks because they change colour so much. Normal makeup oxidises so changes colour. The real camouflage makeup available on prescription doesn't.

101. People involved in bringing up children, especially teachers, must be there because they want to be not just because they are getting paid. A child also needs stability when growing up. There should be an independent person who is able to relate to the child and be trusted. Every child must be treated as an individual and the most important thing is that every child must have a voice which is listened to. I think my priest would have been the best person for me because he didn't have an impact or involvement with my education. If not a priest then someone who I trusted as a friend. An independent mentor would have been good too. Someone not connected to the social work department or to the organisations that ran the establishments.

**Other information**

102. 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. IIA .....

Dated... 13 / 4 / 23 .....