

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

GDM

Support person present: Yes

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

### **Life before going into care**

2. I was born in Stobhill in Glasgow. I lived in Kirkintilloch with my dad, my mum and my two older brothers.
3. We stayed in a three bedroom house in Kirkintilloch when I was a bairn. I went to Hillhead primary school first but I got flung out when I was in primary seven. No other school would take me, so I didn't go to school for about two years after that. I ended up going to secondary schools in Clydebank and Muirhead, just whatever school would take me.
4. I've been to lots of schools. I was expelled for bad behaviour and that sort of stuff. I would climb out the windows and throw things at teachers. I just didn't know what was wrong with me.
5. When I was about four or five years old, I was in Buchanan Street Bus Station in Glasgow. I went on a bus and started smashing all its windows. My dad had to come and get me from Stewart Street Police Station. To this day, we don't know why I was doing that. I was only four years old. That's not right, so maybe there was something wrong with me from a very young age.

6. I remember having a social worker all the time while I was growing up. I don't know how old I was when I first got one but the first one I remember was Anne Pert. Anne was very good and I had her up until I was fifteen. Then I had Heather, I think that was her name. Everything was alright at home, it was just my behaviour at school.
7. I even saw a psychiatrist when I was about eleven. They thought there was maybe something wrong with me, because of all these behavioural problems. I was doing things a bairn just shouldn't be doing. I was assessed at Gartconner primary school in Kirkintilloch. I remember sitting, looking at all these pictures and being asked what they looked like. It was a male psychiatrist I saw. I saw him a few of times over a couple of months but I don't remember it ever making me feel any different.
8. It was just the same as when I came out of the home later on in my life and I saw a doctor to get put on tablets. I didn't feel like they were making any difference either. I didn't feel any different and they didn't change me in any way. I felt I was just taking tablets for no reason.
9. I remember going to temporary schools, Pentland and Middlemuir or something like that. One of them was in Clydebank. I was suspended from them as well. It was as if the Children's Panel could only do so much and I had done so much, that I had to get put into a care home.
10. Right from when I first started misbehaving, I was in front of a lot of Children's Panels. I think, to start with, they thought I wasn't learning quickly enough and that I maybe had some learning difficulties. After a while, they just thought I was a trouble maker and a stupid boy.
11. The Children's Panel had decided all the different schools within the radius of Kirkintilloch. It got to the stage there wasn't any schools left for them to try so the best place for me was a residential school.

12. It was the Children's Panel that told my parents there were no more schools that would take me and that I would have to go to one of these residential places. I remember my mum and dad driving me about the schools, visiting them to see which one would be good.
13. We visited Mayfield, Kibble and Ballikinrain and it was Ballikinrain that was chosen. I was about eleven or twelve then. I was told I would go for about a week to try it.
14. I knew it was my behaviour that was getting me put into the residential school and that was explained to me. I did say I didn't want to go and that I'd change, but I'd already had all my chances. I don't think any other school would take me back anyway.

### **Ballikinrain Residential School, Balfron, Glasgow**

#### *General*

15. It must have been discussed behind my back, because the week I went to try it turned into a month, which turned into a year and which then turned into three years.
16. I remember being dropped off and picked up every weekend by my dad, I stayed there through the week and went home every weekend. Occasionally I didn't get to go home at weekends, if I'd been bad.
17. The school was all boys. There must have been about fifty to sixty boys in total. The boys were aged from about eleven or twelve up to about fifteen. We were all in units. There were four units with names and mine was Endrick. Another was Dumgoyne, or something like that. They were all named after mountains or rivers but I can't remember the names of the other two.
18. The units were all separate and you weren't allowed to go into to any of the other units. We did go into other units at weekends, when not so many boys were in, but

not during the week. There were about fifteen boys, of all ages, in each unit. There were two units on the ground floor and two on the top floor.

19. We had our own pool table, a living room, a kitchen and shower room in our unit. I think each unit had all their own things. It was just like a giant house with a sitting area, an eating area, bedrooms, showers and toilets.
20. There were three or four people in charge of each unit all the time. The staff were on all the time. They worked dayshifts and nightshifts. There were also keyworkers and we all had our own keyworker. I think that was the same for each unit.
21. I think the church ran the place, but I'm not too sure. I don't remember the name of the person that ran the place, but he looked like Danny DeVito. His first name might have been Alan.
22. John Arnott was one of the people in charge at my unit. There was also a lassie called Gillian and somebody called Mary. It was always the same people in each unit. I think it was Mary that was my keyworker.
23. I think I was in my own room to start with, but I'm not sure. That might have been for a couple of weeks, then I had a roommate. I had a chest of drawers and a wee cabinet next to my bed but we weren't allowed stuff in our rooms. We weren't allowed televisions or computer games or anything like that, just our clothes.
24. I was moved into a double room after the first couple of weeks. All the rooms were doubles, apart from one room that slept four. My roommate was [REDACTED]. I think he's dead now. He left as he was a bit older than me. He had to move on when he got to a certain age, fifteen or whatever it was. I shared with him for about two years.
25. After [REDACTED] my room-mate was a half-caste guy. Every time I called him black, he attacked me. I actually meant that he was a tramp, a 'black bastard', which in Glasgow means you're a tramp, but he was picking it up wrong. We were fighting all

the time to start with, but we ended up being pals for years. We explained things to each other and I learned to speak differently when I was around him. You have to watch how you speak to people in a place like that as they can take things the wrong way.

26. I can't remember the names of many other boys. I remember a boy called [REDACTED], a boy from Dumfries and Galloway called [REDACTED] and an Irish lad, who I'm sure was called [REDACTED]. I don't know any of their second names.

### **Routine at Ballikinrain School**

#### *First day*

27. I remember going in on my first day. My mum and dad took me in and I had a case with me. I had clothes with me, but the home did provide clothes if you didn't have any.
28. The place was like a big castle and I remember there was a football park. It was alright looking. There was a big, long drive and it was in the middle of nowhere. It wasn't a secure place, but it didn't need to be because it really was miles from anywhere.
29. I remember going to my room and I might have been shown round. I met a teacher, a wee baldy guy. He might have been the head teacher and he looked like Danny DeVito.
30. I was shy to start with and the bolder boys saw that. They saw I was weak. They started giving me a hard time and started fighting me.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

31. We got up at quarter to eight, got a shower and got our clothes on. Then we went for our breakfast and got ready to go to school.
32. If you didn't get up in the morning, the staff would pour water on you and tip you out your bed. You'd then be told to clear up the mess once you'd had your shower. I think that was to discipline you but it wasn't funny, it was just madness.
33. After breakfast everybody had to be out the building as it got locked up, so you had to leave the building and go to school. If you wanted back in after that, you had to press a buzzer. If you'd left something in your room or left medication or something else you had to press the buzzer and someone would let you in.

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

34. Each of the four units had a wee kitchen but there was a main kitchen in the place as well. That's where all the main meals were cooked, like lunch and dinner. They cooked the meals in the main kitchen and brought the food to the units.
35. Breakfast and supper were just something like cereal and a bit of toast and a cup of tea, which we had in our own kitchens. We always ate in our unit. We would sit down, like a family and eat our meals.
36. The food was good. For all our meals we had fruit, cereal, biscuits, juice, toast, a lot of toast. There were cupboards of cooking stuff as well. We didn't go hungry. They had big store rooms with food.
37. We had our breakfast in the kitchen at a big round table. The boys were in and out all doing different things. Some were playing pool before school and some were getting ready for school. We had our breakfast and supper in there. I don't know why that was, it was just the routine.

38. I was allowed to go and have a fag after my meals. Some of the boys watched cartoons or played pool. I would have ran away if I hadn't been allowed to smoke so it was either let me smoke or I'd miss another twenty minutes of school.
39. We were allowed to smoke and the staff kept all our fags in a locked cupboard. You had to ask them for a fag, but that was never a problem unless they were stopping you from smoking because you weren't behaving. You could have about seven a day. They kept it to a minimum but I would just run away if I wasn't getting any.
40. We had a morning break at the school, but we came back to Ballikinrain for our lunch. We were in school again until about three o'clock then we went back to the main building. Dinner was about five o'clock and we would just sit about playing games or watching telly or playing pool until then. We were free to do what we wanted. I would play football a lot out the back in the park.
41. The staff would sit with you at mealtimes and talk to you about things. They would ask you about what you were doing and things like that.

*Washing / bathing*

42. The showers were in our unit near the bedrooms. Each unit had its own showers. They were fine. We took in our boxer shorts and a towel and got showered in these wee cubicles. We were left to get on with it as the staff were making the breakfast.

*Leisure, trips and holidays*

43. I remember we had a big meeting for the whole school in a big hall in the main building. It was on a Monday and Friday mornings. The headmaster would tell us what was happening that week and he would tell you about any trips that were on.
44. We had a lot of fishing trips, which I enjoyed. We could also go to the cinema, or go swimming or bowling, things like that. It was mostly day trips and we didn't go away

overnight anywhere. There was an activity every night. We also watched videos and TV, played on the computers and played pool.

45. All I ever wanted to do was play football. I was out playing football all the time and there were always about twenty four boys wanting to play. That was always from six until eight, then it was back for a shower, jammies on, supper and bed at nine o'clock, when it was lights out.
46. I would even swap my classes to get to go and play football. I didn't like maths or English and I would say there must be someone in the classes that didn't like sports, so why not make it easy and let us swap.
47. There were motorbikes there as well. A staff member had bikes and we got to go for rides on them. We just rode up and down on the football park.
48. We also went on trips to the pantomime and other activities. We did that in groups, and that was good, there were opportunities. We went sailing, kayaking, rock climbing, white water rafting, gorge walking and all that outdoor kind of stuff.

### *School*

49. The school was in Ballikinrain. It was classrooms which were built next to the main building, porta cabins or something like that. It wasn't like it is now, all state of the art. The classes were all mixed up from all the units, probably so all the boys were the same ages in the classes.
50. I think I got held back at school to try and help me learn. I didn't want that. I wasn't wanting to learn the stuff they were teaching, but what could I do? I was more interested in sports. There wasn't any uniform at the school, we just wore what we wore every day.
51. We had maths, English, science and things like that, but I didn't like school. I would go and sit in the woods, which were in the grounds of the school. I would sit there



with my mates have a wee smoke of weed. The staff would sometimes come and look for you but there were acres and acres of grounds so you could easily run off.

### *Clothing*

52. I had all my own clothes. I took my own stuff in with me and that was fine. Some other boys did get clothes provided though. There was a cupboard with trainers and things, so they could get things to wear if they needed them.

### *Healthcare*

53. If you were in a scrap with other boys you would just get plasters and a clean-up, if you needed anything like that. I think the staff all had first aid qualifications so they took care of that kind of thing. That happened quite a lot.
54. I never went to the hospital for anything, but I did have migraines quite a lot when I was young. They were sore. The staff thought I was kidding on at first but I wasn't. I had to go and sit in my room in the dark for a while and put my head under the pillow. I was sick when I had them as well.
55. I remember they called in a doctor or a nurse, as I got a jag in the bum once. A doctor also came in to see me for my migraines. If anyone wasn't well they would phone in a doctor. I don't know who it was or where he came from, maybe Balfron or Killearn.
56. An optician came in as well and we had eye sight tests about twice a year. There was a medical room or something like that where we would see the doctor and the optician.
57. A dentist came in as well. I remember getting a wee toothbrush and toothpaste and stuff. I don't remember how often that happened.

58. The staff didn't force anyone to go to the dentist or optician, so you choose not to go. Nothing happened to you if you didn't go and they didn't force anyone to go to the dentist.

*Work (chores)*

59. We had to make our beds and make sure the room was tidy. If I was bored, I would maybe go down to the kitchen and help to do the dishes, things like that. There was no one telling you to do things or anything like that.
60. If you were good you got your pocket money and if you weren't you didn't. That money just went back into the building as you just spent it all at the little tuck shop. There was nothing else to spend it on, unless you kept it and took it away with you on the Friday if you were getting home.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

61. I might have been at Ballikinrain once or twice at Christmas, I'm not too sure. They did celebrate it and you got visitors. They had a Santa and you got presents. You didn't get anything more than a selection box, or everyone would be fighting over the toys. There were decorations and a big Christmas tree.
62. We also did things at Halloween, dressing up and things like that, and at Easter we had an Easter egg hunt. You could just choose what you wanted to do, the staff didn't want anyone involved in anything they weren't wanting to do. It was fun at first but as you got older you would stop wanting to go to those sort of things. Those things were more for the younger ones.
63. I was there for a birthday as well. I remember I was put in a bath and they poured tomato sauce and eggs and stuff on top of me. It was boys and staff that did that and I did it to other boys as well. It was just a laugh, it wasn't bullying or anything like that. After it you would go and have a shower. You did get cake and a present on your birthday.

### *Visits*

64. If I got home at the weekend, I would get pocket money from my dad. I didn't always get home because if I was bad, I didn't get to go home at the weekend. I think that was worked out between your key worker and the manager of the place. They would then just tell you that you weren't getting home.
65. Normally my dad would come and pick me up on a Friday and I'd be dropped back off on a Monday morning. I went home most weekends. I only saw my brothers at home. They never came to see me at Ballikinrain. They were getting on with their lives.
66. At first, when I wasn't going home, I would just sit about and do nothing at Ballikinrain. If you'd been bad, they didn't reward badness with goodness. After a while, I was allowed to go fishing. There was no point in them being nice to you all the time, as you would just think you could get away with anything then.
67. It wasn't a boot camp. It was about trying to get you into the world and to fit in to society. It's hard to fit in though and I don't trust a lot of people.
68. At weekends all the boys who were not getting home were kept together. There could be about five of us. You would play pool together and do things during the day, then at night it was back to your own unit for bed. You always slept in your own designated bed every night.
69. My mum and dad would visit once a week at first. That was every Wednesday. My dad told me that, but I don't really remember much about that. I do remember speaking to them on the phone as well.
70. I don't think my social worker visited me at Ballikinrain. She did come and see me at the house, but that was before Ballikinrain. I had Children's Panels as well, but I missed a few of them, because I didn't want to go. I didn't want to sit and listen to

what they had to say. I do remember that my social worker, Anne Pert, was at the Panels when I was there.

71. I've lost count of the Children's Panels I was at, or missed. I remember saying I didn't want to go back to Ballikinrain and that I was being bullied but I didn't feel I was ever being listened to. There was no point in going to the Panels if I wasn't being listened to. It didn't matter what I said as I wasn't going to change the outcome anyway.

*Running away*

72. I ran away hundreds of times. I used to get fed up and, to do my own thing, I would just run away. There was no point though, as there was nowhere to go and you would just get caught by the police and end up spending time sitting in a police cell.
73. I once ran away and got to Kirkintilloch. It took me four hours to get there and then it was straight back to the home again. I was raging as I had managed to get that far and I was caught and taken straight back.
74. When I ran away it would usually be with others and during the day. Then when it got to night time, and it was getting dark, you would be afraid because you didn't know where you were going.
75. I was never asked by the police why I was running away. They just saw us as badly behaved boys and their job was just to take us back. I was just fed up with the place and I was missing my family as well.
76. The staff at Ballikinrain would be strict with you when you had been running away. You wouldn't get home or they would stop you taking part in all of the activities. There was never any physical punishment or anything like that.

77. I don't remember anyone at Ballikinrain ever asking me why I was running away. They had too many boys to deal with in the home, so I don't think they had the time. Maybe they did but I don't remember that.
78. I didn't know why I was running away, probably just to get to see my family. I was fed up and it was probably just a whole lot of the stuff that was happening in Ballikinrain, so I would rather run away than face it.
79. I did see my social worker, but not while I was in Ballikinrain. I didn't see her there, just at Panels. I don't remember her ever asking me about running away and why I was running away or anything like that. I probably wouldn't have been listening anyway, because I just sat there at those meetings and never said anything. I knew decision would get made and nothing I said was going to make any difference to it.

#### *Bedwetting*

80. A few people wet their beds. The staff would shout at you but they had these plastic mattress things they gave people. I didn't wet the bed, but I remember being given a plastic cover when I first went in. To start with you had to take one, but I didn't wet the bed, so eventually they took it off me.
81. I remember listening to boys greeting in their beds at night but I don't know if that was because they had wet their beds. Staff did come in through the night and check the beds. I was just aware of all that, but I'm not sure what the staff did.
82. The boys that wet the bed could have a shower if they wanted. The staff provided clothes if they needed them.

#### *Discipline*

83. I fought quite a bit when I was at Ballikinrain. I was just defending myself from the bullies, once I'd had enough.

84. The staff would restrain you and you could also get a punishment as well, once you'd calmed down. You maybe wouldn't get home at weekends and then you might react to that, so you could end up getting restrained again.
85. They would cut your fag breaks and stop you doing things as a form of punishment but it was so easy to run away. If you wanted to you could easily get out and have a fag. You just ran away.

### **Abuse at Ballikinrain School**

86. It was really just the bullying when I first went to Ballikinrain. I got bullied a lot until I'd had enough and started to fight back. The first thing was when I was kicked and punched by some boys and put in a cupboard, in the pool room, for about ten minutes. They told me that if I told staff it would be worse.
87. I kidded on that I had asthma to stop them doing it. I was crying and just went off to my room. The next day one of them came at me with a pool cue and I fought back. I'd had enough and decided I was going to fight back. I don't remember the names of the boys who were bullying me.
88. Another time, I was spat on by one of the same boys. They would hit me with things, like weapons. The weapons could be a pool cue or a plate or just anything that was lying about. I was picked on quite a lot to start with. That was the mentality, boys trying to prove a point.
89. I remember having cuts and bleeding and the staff there knew about it. They must have some of it on record. Staff were there and occasionally saw the fighting. They would stop it but by then we'd have smashed each other.
90. Staff would split us up and get us to calm down. They would tell us to go and say sorry to each other. If you were going that mad that you were wanting to fight staff,

they would restrain you. They did that when you were fighting, or being cheeky with staff or not doing what you were told.

91. The restraints could be agony. There could be three of them sitting on top of you, three big people. They would hold on to you until you stopped fighting. That happened to me a few times. They could grab you by your fingers and crush them, that was agony, or bend your wrists back, that would be to get you out the situation. That must have happened to me nearly every week. I was really mischievous and I started to fight a lot but that was just to get other boys to leave me alone, to defend myself.
92. There was fighting all the time. The staff even allowed you to fight. You could say to the staff you wanted to fight a boy and they would arrange for you to fight each other. They would take you to the back of the shelters and tell you to fight and if it got out of hand they would stop it.
93. I think the staff just thought that you were going to fight each other anyway, and it saved anyone using weapons and doing it behind their backs. A lot of people would use a weapon if it was just a case of fighting. I think it was a case of boys egos and that kind of thing, it was really weird.
94. The teachers would rather get on with you than argue with you because it made it easier for them to get on and do their job. They would still give you a hard time. They would give you a slap or physically restrain you if you got cheeky.
95. They would also tell you that you would never amount to anything and that nobody in the place amounted to shit, things like that. The maths teacher, I think he was called **GUG** used to say mad things like that all the time, he was always belittling you and manipulating your brain. He was a guy and he had a beard, but I can't remember his name.
96. The woodwork teacher used to hit you with this wee wooden ball he had on a bit of string. It was like he was playing conkers with it and if you were caught swearing he

would hit it off your head. He would hit you on the back of the head with it and tell you to stop swearing, so we obviously never swore in front of him.

97. He did that to me and all the other boys who were lippy, or swearing or not showing any respect to elders, things like that. I remember it hurt, it was really sore when it hit the back of your head.

### **Reporting of abuse at Ballikinrain School**

98. I told members of staff I was being bullied at Ballikinrain and I was never listened to. I was just told that was what happened. I think I said things about the bullying to the social work, at Panels, and to my mum and dad, when I first went in there.
99. I remember telling them all about the bullying but it wasn't really anyone else's fault, it was my fault for the things I was doing. I was just told that those sort of things happen, because it happens to everybody when their new boys.
100. After a while I just started to fight for myself and then I got a reputation for fighting. I also decided to get new boys and have them hang about with me. I knew what it was like and I was trying to protect them. Other boys wouldn't touch them because they knew I would go fighting with them if they did.

### **Leaving Ballikinrain School**

101. When I got to a certain age, fifteen or sixteen, I was told I had to leave Ballikinrain. I knew that and had been told that and I had also been told I was moving on to St. John's. I think that was at a Children's Panel, but I'm not too sure.
102. I know we didn't check any other places out. I had already been to St. John's before, to visit a pal there. I knew people who were at St. John's as well, so that was different from when I started at Ballikinrain.



103. I think it was my mum and dad and someone from Ballikinrain that took me to St. John's. The staff wished me luck and were alright about it all. They looked after me and had their job to do. It was a decent place and I was a bit sad about leaving.
104. All I was really thinking at that time was that I would be turning sixteen fairly soon and I wouldn't need to go to any school anymore.

### **St. John's Approved School, Springboig, Glasgow**

#### *General*

105. St. John's was like a big factory or hotel. There's the building and a driveway and two giant walls. It had big grounds and there was a football park. It just sat on its own, surrounded by all the local schemes, with big walls and a fence going round it, like Barlinnie.
106. It was two stories high and I was on the top floor. The rooms had high ceilings. There was a kitchen with a wee sliding window and a wee dining area. The staff all had their meals with the boys. We just chatted and they would ask how things were going, things like that.
107. I remember having to get the bus there and as soon as you're in that area you have to fight the local youths, because you weren't from that area. It was in Easterhouse, which was a bad thing because the boys at St. John's weren't from that area.

### **Routine at St. John's Approved School**

#### *First day*

108. I do remember Willie, he was my keyworker and met me there. He met my mum and dad and we had a game of pool or snooker. Then my parents went away. It was just like going back to Ballikinrain. I got to meet the staff, got shown my room, unpacked, then went to hang about with the boys.
109. There were three or four units, a bit like Ballikinrain, with different people in charge of each unit. I don't remember who was in charge of the whole place. There were key workers or care workers that ran the place and we all had our own keyworker.
110. The units all had names and there were boys in all of them, maybe about sixteen boys in each unit. The boys were aged from about fifteen to eighteen.
111. I had a double room with a telly in it. I think we were given a wee bit more responsibility at St. John's. We had a telly but had to turn it off by a certain time at night. I shared with another boy, but I forget his name. I think I shared with him all the time I was there.
112. I was at St. John's Monday to Friday, like Ballikinrain, and I went home at weekends. After a bit, I didn't get home at weekends though. That was because I stabbed a boy when I was on weekend leave. I went to court and the judge said I could stay at St. John's permanently for two years or go to jail, so I stayed at St. John's and didn't get home at weekends after that.

*Mornings and bedtime*

113. The routine and the rules were just like Ballikinrain. We were woken up in the morning and if we didn't get up the staff would tip us out of our beds.
114. I had a wee cupboard in my room and I kept possessions in there. People would come in and go through your stuff though so I didn't keep much. I had a watch stolen once.

*Mealtimes/Food*

115. The food was good. It wasn't bought in, it was all home cooked. There was cooks. I remember one of the cooks, who was called Ginge. He was at another unit. We could eat what we wanted and I never had any problems with anything to do with the food.
116. We could have crisps and chocolate and we could help make food as well. That was supervised, so no one got burnt or anything. We could make soup or things like that if we wanted.

*Washing / bathing*

117. There were only two showers in the place so we had to wait about for a shower in the morning. It ended up being quite rushed, if you didn't get into the shower first.
118. I think we had showers after sports if we wanted but I don't really remember. We were kind of trusted to wash and have showers. You would have them or you'd be getting told you were stinking.

*Leisure*

119. I used to play snooker, pool or darts or go swimming, they had their own pool there. They had a gym hall as well and I played a lot of football. When I reached sixteen and stopped going to school, I just kicked about the place.
120. I was just left to float about and do my own thing. There was nothing for me to do. I had the freedom to roam and just got myself into bother. I started stealing cars, robbing folk and breaking into things.

*Trips and holidays*

121. I went on a fishing trip for a weekend once. It was to a dam, in Dumfries and Galloway. That was rubbish because there was no fish, but we did go on some trips like that.
122. St. John's was more of a young offenders' unit and it was more about preparing you for going on to do things in life.

#### *School / education*

123. There was a school at St. John's which I had to attend until I was sixteen, then I told them I wasn't going anymore. I just sat about in school, I never learnt anything but I did get sixes and sevens, which are still passes, in English, maths, science and history. I got a one in sport and craft and design.
124. I didn't think about learning or that I would need that kind of stuff when I was young. I just wanted to get by. I did have home schooling and I think the teachers did try to help me but I wasn't interested. I should have wanted to do it but I just didn't.
125. Other boys went to the school, but if they didn't want to go when they reached sixteen, that was up to them.
126. After I was sixteen, I pretty much did my own thing at St. John's. I would go to the snooker hall, go for a swim and just kick about the place. I wasn't meant to go outside the place, but I did. I wasn't getting locked in or anything like that.
127. You could go and learn tiling and do apprenticeships, stuff like that. That's the kind of thing I wish I'd done but I wasn't into any of that back then and I chose not to go. They had work placements as well, but I couldn't do that, because of what I had done.

#### *Healthcare*

128. I remember seeing an optician and going to Shettleston to get my eyes tested. I don't remember seeing a doctor or a dentist.
129. When the boys had fights it would just be a black eye or a wee bit bleeding. I don't remember anyone ever having to go to a doctor after any fighting. The staff would just deal with it.
130. I mentioned I had migraines at Ballikinrain, and I got tablets for them. They were the worst and very sore. I don't think I had them at St. John's so maybe I grew out of them.

*Work (chores)*

131. We had to make sure our rooms were clean and that was about it. If we behaved we got our pocket money, just the same as Ballikinrain. We went to the petrol station on the Edinburgh Road and bought sweets and things in there.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

132. I've no memory of anything to do with Christmas or birthdays, maybe I'm just blocking that out, but I don't remember anything.

*Visits*

133. I was allowed to have visitors come and see me. Because I was on that two year sentence thing, I wasn't allowed to go out and visit anyone.
134. My mum and dad and my brothers would sometimes come and visit me. I remember telling my brothers to stop coming and visiting because it annoyed me that they were going home. The two of them would say they were away home to do this and that and I was having to stay at St. John's. I would rather just getting on with it and keep my head down.

### *Running away*

135. It was the running away that turned me into a car thief. It led to me meeting a boy who was a car thief and we ran away together a few times and stole cars. I did run away with a few boys though. We would run away to Shettleston, which is only a couple of minutes down the road, get stoned and then head back up to the home.
136. The staff would notice and come out to try and find us, but we would hear the transit van coming. We would jump a wall and hide until it was away again.
137. Sometimes we would get caught, by staff or by the police, and sometimes we would just make our own way back. We could phone up the home and tell them to come and get us, because it was in their duty of care to come and get us if we had ran away.

### *Social work contact*

138. Every week I had to talk to my key worker. That didn't really work, I was sixteen and just did the opposite of everything they said to me. He tried but I wasn't interested.
139. I don't really remember much about what we spoke about, it would probably have been about my violence, because I would always do first and think later.
140. I did go to Children's Panels all the time I was at St. John's, right up until I left when I was eighteen. My mum and dad, social workers and teachers were at the Panels. I did participate, more than at Ballikinrain, but everything just depended how I was acting on that day. I never thought anyone was listening to me anyway.
141. I realise now that they were trying to help me, but at the time I didn't know what I wanted. I never planned ahead, not as a child. I ended up hanging about with the wrong people, but they were the only people I could hang about with.

142. I got into bother, I would get picked up by the police, they would phone the home and someone would come and pick me up. I didn't get punished at the home because there was nothing more they could do, all my free time had been taken off me anyway.
143. My keyworkers would try and engage with me. If I was angry, they would tell me to sit outside and take deep breaths. That actually helped, so they tried but I just wanted to do my own thing.

### **Abuse at St. John's Approved School**

144. When I went in to St. John's it was like Ballikinrain at first, I was the new boy and the older boys would bully me. It was different though, because I knew boys and I was older and I had a reputation as a fighter. There's always someone that will have a go at you, but I would defend myself at St. John's because I had learned how to.
145. I was once locked in a cupboard at St. John's by staff, as a punishment. That was brutal. I was also locked in my bedroom, which was two stories up. I ended up climbing out the window, along a window ledge, to the next room and getting back in through his window. I don't remember who any of the staff were that did that. I'd gone mental for something or had been arguing or fighting with another boy, something like that.
146. It was more the other boys at St. John's rather than the staff. There was a lot of fighting and the staff couldn't control it. There was nothing they could really do to the boys in there, so the boys would just fight.
147. I carried a knife a lot at St. John's. A few of the boys did. You had to, to defend yourself. Three guys could come after you for something you did maybe three weeks ago, when they maybe got you on your own, so you had to be ready all the time. That's why I was always on edge.

148. A big problem at St. John's was with the boys from outside. If you were going to get sweets at the petrol station or go anywhere outside, you could end up getting into fights.
149. If you met local boys when you were outside they would go for you, and they would know you weren't from their area. The staff at St. John's would tell you that you were going outside at your own risk, that's how bad it was. Staff told me that.
150. The local boys would throw bricks, come at you with knives and everything. They once came into the school and stabbed one of the boys staying there with a knife. One of our boys, [REDACTED] was his nickname, was attacked by some young Shettleston boys and he had a cut across the top of his head. That was all reported and I remember the police were involved.
151. We wouldn't play on the football park, which was in the grounds, because local boys would jump the fence and come after us. We just played in the yard, which was solid concrete.

#### **Reporting of abuse at St. John's Approved School**

152. After not being listened to at Ballikinrain, I didn't think there was any point in reporting anything. I just got on with things at St. John's and I never spoke to any staff about any of the fighting or bullying that went on.

#### **Leaving St. John's Approved School**

153. I was meant to leave St. John's when I was sixteen. However, as I've already mentioned, I ended up stabbing a boy. Instead of going to jail I was given two more years at St. John's.



154. I didn't leave there until I was eighteen but I don't think that did me any good. I just got myself in bother all the more and was stealing cars and stuff. I just thought there was nothing more they could do to me.
155. I remember being told I was going back to stay with my mum and dad, when I turned eighteen, and that was it. I was collected by my mum and dad and I left. I don't remember there being any preparation or anything like that.

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

156. I went home and stayed with my parents for about a year but they couldn't put up with me anymore and put me out. I ended up staying in the streets for a bit. I then moved in with my brother for about six months, until I got my first house.
157. I've got three weans, from two relationships I've been in. I had my daughter when I was about twenty. I was okay for a few years after she was born, then I went off the rails again. After that I got in another relationship and had my other two weans.
158. That relationship ended as well but I still see those weans, at weekends. I don't think I'm the best parent, as I can lose my temper quite quickly and do stupid things in some situations. It just depends on how somebody speaks to me or what somebody does.
159. I did try to get into college when I was leaving St. John's. I couldn't get in because of my spelling and writing and I didn't know what to write on the forms. When I get paperwork put in front of me, that's when everything gets awkward for me. My reading is okay but my writing is bad which is just because I never learnt at school.
160. I've worked in a few places but I've just never had the right attitude for it. Someone will tell me to do something that I'm not into and I'll not do it. I've had some problems getting on with people and I've ended up arguing. That's led to me losing quite a few jobs.

## Impact

161. I think I became institutionalised from Ballikinrain and St. John's. I had someone doing my washing and feeding me, somebody doing everything for me really. Then I get out and I'm expected to be just like everyone else. I had problems fitting in and being like a normal, civilized person, who could lead a normal life.
162. My two brothers have a better bond with each other because they weren't away in the homes like I was. I was only out at weekends and even then that was only occasionally so the two of them got on much better. I feel like an outcast with them. It was my own fault, basically, but that's something that happened in our family.
163. I don't know if I would have had a better job or a better way of life if I hadn't been in Ballikinrain, and I'd been taken away from there. I ended up stealing motors and fighting and hundreds of other stupid things.
164. I think being in Ballikinrain made me think violence was the way forward and I brought that out with me. That was all I knew when I was in there. That was my frame of mind from in there, and I thought whatever was happening in there was going to happen on the street.
165. I sometimes have problems with the way people speak to me and I'm always getting told not to react, but I do. I always react without thinking. I can't stand sitting listening to someone talking shite. I need to tell them or I need to do something about it. I don't know for sure but I do think that comes from me being in Ballikinrain. In places like that, you have to have a certain frame of mind to survive. You start thinking about feelings, like love and hate, and did my mum love me or not, or did I do something wrong to be in here, was it my fault? If I had done this or that or chosen to do something else, would things have worked out differently?

166. I was always on edge and always expecting something to happen, because I was used to being like that. I'm thirty five and it's still weird to get my head round that.
167. I do struggle a bit with my relationships with my weans. I'm not sure why that is. I get on okay with their mums but it was difficult to live the way they wanted to live when I've been so used to the way I've lived and the way I was brought up.
168. We were maybe just too different. To start with I would be happy to get on with it but the longer we were together the more I would have to say things and then we'd argue. I need to get away from situations like that and even after ten minutes away, I can come back and things are much easier.

### **Treatment / support**

169. I was on anti-depressants for years after I got out the homes. I was on Prozac for a while and they weren't working. I ended up going off the rails a couple of times, I was swallying all the time and tried to kill myself a couple of times as well. It's only really been the last couple of years that I've realised there is a life for me.
170. I went to the doctors and told them I felt the drugs weren't working. I just felt normal and no different from when I wasn't taking them. I then went to this mad interview thing and the woman who took it said I could have put up a mental block because of all I went through in my life. She said the medication might not be working so I might have to go to counselling or something like that.
171. I've not had any counselling or anything like that. I've tried to commit suicide a couple of times. I did speak to some people but it was weird and I don't think it was proper professional support. It was like alcohol and drug counselling.
172. I have been a drinker and I've smoked a bit of cannabis since I was in Ballikinrain.

## **Records**

173. I tried to get my records from the social work department at East Dunbartonshire Council but you had to do all these procedures and that was just too much. I gave up and didn't bother. It is something I'm interested in though. I would like to see what the social work have on record about me.

## **Lessons to be learned**

174. You go into these homes alright and then you come out worse. You have to do stuff to fit in with the other boys or you end up not being able to cope and you get bullied. I was bullied for six months before I learned that you have to fight back, you have to fight for yourself.
175. You go into care, to a new environment, you don't know what it is and it's even worse when people are trying to pick on you and bully you. They should focus more on the things you want to do and the strengths that you have.
176. There's no point in saying to somebody to go and do maths or English if they don't like it. I was never listened to when I was a wean. I feel as if I was just told you're doing this and you're going here, and that was it. There was nothing I could do about it.
177. I don't know if having somebody there, who would have listened to me, would have made any difference. I felt everybody was listening to me and it was mostly my problems, and I didn't know what they were. I still don't know what they were.
178. I think things are better now and they're improving. I'm trying to improve my relationships but I really don't know what could have been done to help me. I think a lot of it was just me and what was going on in my head.

179. Maybe they should have units that are just for new boys. Then again they could just group up and start bullying as well, so I don't know how you could have stopped the bullying.

**Other information**

180. 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. GDM .....

Dated... 27.1.20 .....