

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

EIC [REDACTED]

Support person present: No.

1. My name is EIC [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Kilwinning, Ayrshire and spent my early childhood mainly between my parents and grandmother in the Stevenston area. My parents name were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] while my grandmother's name was [REDACTED]. My brother is called [REDACTED].
3. There were several moves for me between my parents and grandmother as my mother was regarded as an unstable character and my father, unfortunately, spent much of his time in prison and at one point when I was two or three years old he got a five year sentence. I have clear memories of this period up until [REDACTED] 1960 which is the day my grandmother died. She had been the main support to myself and my younger brother [REDACTED] who was eighteen months younger.
4. I have a very clear memory of my grandmother dying in the small hours of the morning and of being taken into care by the Children's Department on that day at 11:00 pm. I was taken to Clarke's House in Largs. We were taken there in a taxi by social workers. I'm aware that at some later date my brother [REDACTED] was returned to my mother who was at that time living with [REDACTED] in Southampton. I didn't see my mother after that until I was about fifteen.

5. From about that date I find myself in a state of confusion regarding where I was living or what was happening to me. I have been making enquiries for some time now and am aware that, at times, I lived in the following places:-

Clark House, Largs (twice)

Burnside Children's Home, Irvine (six times)

Gargath Children's Home, Mossblown (twice)

I was also fostered with the following relatives:-

Mrs [REDACTED], my mother's sister – [REDACTED] Saltcoats

Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] another of my mother's sisters – [REDACTED] Saltcoats

Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was my dad's brother – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Stevenson

I would be put into a children's home for a short period then sent to a relative's house before getting sent back to a children's home, basically going from pillar to post. This went on for years and I was constantly changing schools. This was all organised by social work and I think the main man that dealt with me was called McVie or something like that. Eventually I was put into foster care with EIB [REDACTED] who lived in New Cumnock when I was about eleven.

Clark House, Largs

- 6.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Burnside Children's Home, Irvine

7.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

8.

Gargath Children's Home, Mossblown

9.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Foster Care with ^{EIB} [REDACTED] [REDACTED] New Cumnock

10. ^{EIB} [REDACTED] lived with [REDACTED] and it was well known in the local area that they were lesbians. ^{EIB} [REDACTED] was known locally as ^{EIB} [REDACTED]. I didn't know what this meant at the time but, looking back, I do wonder about the appropriateness of putting us in the care of two such women. Especially in the 60's. I don't remember what we called ^{EIB} [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I don't know what age ^{EIB} [REDACTED] was but she used to boast about driving the lorries during the war.
11. The house they lived in had three bedrooms, one of which was downstairs. ^{EIB} [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] slept on the couch downstairs. There were another six boys who lived there who were all also being fostered by ^{EIB} [REDACTED] She got paid for fostering us and told us many a time that that was the only reason we were there.
12. It was social workers that took me to ^{EIB} [REDACTED]s but I don't remember arriving. As well as the bedroom downstairs there was a kitchen and a living room. The bedroom

downstairs was a show room and was never used. Myself and the other six boys all slept in the same bed though I tended to sleep on the floor. The oldest boy, who was about fourteen, was a pervert and what went on in that house was weird but it's things I don't want to remember and I don't want to go into details.

Routine at Foster Care with EIB

13. EIB would get us up in the morning by shouting and screaming at us and they would then make us breakfast. We got dinner at school. I think we went to bed about 9:00 pm.

Mealtimes/Food

14. It was porridge for breakfast every morning and we often got pigeon or rabbit soup. You got plenty of food but some of it was strange. There were no cups in the house and we drank tea out of jam-jars. We got dinner at school.

Washing/bathing

15. We had a bath about once a week on a Sunday night for school the next day and the water was normally refreshed with hot water between each of us getting a bath but not always. I don't recall brushing my teeth.

Clothing/uniform

16. I'm not sure where we got our clothes from. We just wore what we were given.

Leisure time

17. We were next to the River Afton and, when we got out, we played there or at a nearby farm. In bad weather, or if we had been misbehaving, we stayed in the house staring at the TV or just staring at each other. If you moved or talked you got sent to bed. I don't recall any books or comics.

Trips and holidays

18. Every couple of years ^{EIB} and [REDACTED] got a new car and they would take us to Girvan or Stranraer beach but it was all controlled. You would get out of the car after a long drive, play on the beach for a while, then it was straight back into the car.

Schooling

19. I went to the local primary school but I didn't enjoy it as I found I always had to fight for everything. I remember one teacher called Miss ^{EIE} [REDACTED] who I drove mad with my antics and at one point she grabbed me by the throat but that was me pushing her to breaking point. Going from pillar to post and changing schools so often really unsettled me and I always found school difficult.

Healthcare

20. I don't recall much in the way of visits to the dentist. I think we went to see a doctor if we needed to but I don't actually recall going to see a doctor or a dentist. I think if I had it would have been a memorable occasion.

Religious instruction

21. Religion didn't feature in my life while I stayed with ^{EIB} [REDACTED]

Work

22. We would do the dishes and Hoover around the house and each took turns at doing these things like in a normal house.

Birthdays and Christmas

23. At Christmas we would be given a pair of socks and an orange but birthdays were never celebrated. We were never given any treats and, at Easter, we wouldn't even

get an Easter Egg. The only reason we knew it was Easter was because we were off school.

Personal possessions

24. I don't recall owning anything that I would call my own. It was as if we were just there to be fed and go to school

Bed Wetting

25. Bed wetting was never a problem for me while I stayed at EIB's.

Visitors

26. A social worker came once and I remember sitting on a stair getting grilled by a social worker but I have no recollection what that was about. Social workers never asked how I was getting on and I never felt that they were interested in me. It was as if they had found me a place to stay and that was there job done. I know I couldn't have said anything to a social worker because EIB would have been present and if I had said anything out of place she would have given me a leathering.

Family contact

27. While living with EIB I had no contact with my family whatsoever.

Running away

28. I ran away constantly and would always get a belting when I got back. I would just head off and try and thumb a lift but I never got far. On one occasion I got picked up by the police and they asked me where I was going. I told them I wasn't going back to EIB's and told them what she was like. They weren't interested and just dropped me back at the house where I got another beating.

Abuse in Foster care with EIB

29. I don't remember what I had done wrong but I was bent over a chair, had my trousers pulled down, and belted with a proper school belt. I just remember the horror of it and the feeling of wanting to just crawl away. I think this happened to me two or three times but it's that one occasion I really recall and I think I just got used to it.
30. EIB used to also slap me on the face on a regular basis which could simply be for getting in her way. It was EIB who did all the assaulting. was quiet and stayed in the background. Neither ever showed me any affection.

Leaving Foster Care with EIB

31. I ended up in court in Ayr though why I'm not sure. The court sent me to Dr Guthrie's in Edinburgh under, I think, some sort of Child Protection Order. I've always felt that I was shipped off to Dr Guthrie's because things were happening in Ayrshire with the Social Work that wasn't public knowledge. Edinburgh was miles away at a time when there were no motorways. Most of those in Dr Guthrie's were from the East Coast and I only recall about three boys from Glasgow.
32. After I left foster care I developed a hatred for New Cumnock, probably because of the horrible experience I had of living with EIB I still don't understand why I was placed with those women and I think the local council for that area has a lot to explain. I would say that most of the boys who were fostered there at the same time as me will be dead given their life style.

Dr Guthrie's School, Edinburgh – 1965 to 1968

33. When I arrived at Dr Guthrie's I went in a big front door where there was a meeting room, a gym hall and a long corridor. Upstairs there were four dorms, each of which had between eighteen and twenty boys therein. The boys were split into Houses and

I was in House Yellow. There were usually about 110 boys there aged from eleven up to fifteen. If there was 120 then it was considered full.

34. The place had a playground, gardens and a swimming pool. It was a great place to be. SNR [REDACTED] was GZP [REDACTED] but I don't know who ran the place though it was an approved school. When I arrived I was taken to a sewing room where I was supplied with all the clothing I needed before being shown about the place. I was then put in a dorm that had only one bed and a locker. Between the two big dorms was a room where a member of staff slept overnight.
35. I don't know how many staff there were but there were teachers and cooks and staff that were on overnight.

Routine at Dr Guthrie's

36. We would get up at about 7/7:30 am. We would get showered and dressed then down for breakfast. If it was a nice day we would go outside for a while before going to school. We stopped for lunch then it was back to school. After school we would go to the gym or do some other physical activity.
37. Tea time was about 4:30 pm and after that we would do some more activities which, for some, included music. There was always something to do in the evening. Lights out was about 9:00 pm.

Washing

38. There were six or seven showers and each one had its own cubicles so we could shower in private.

Mealtimes/Food

39. The food was alright and I the only thing I recall not liking was the gravy which was never done right but the kitchen staff were all really nice. We all ate at small tables in a big room. You didn't get any snacks between meals.

Clothing/Uniform

40. We were supplied with our clothes and uniform by the school.

Leisure Time

41. We went swimming and I learned Karate there. We also played on a trampoline.

Trips and Holidays

42. The school owned a place down past Dunbar called Thornton Loch and we would go down there every year and pitch tents that we would sleep in. Sometimes the army would come in and take us away and show us their camps and guns.

Schooling

43. Members of staff taught us though I was often in trouble for outbursts. I didn't like going to class and often helped those painting the place. When I left I couldn't read or write and didn't learn to until I worked in the steelworks when I taught myself while working on the cranes.
44. I had been in Dr Guthrie's for about two years when I was given the job of collecting money from everybody and would then go across to the shop and get their newspapers, cigarettes or whatever. This was considered a top job to have and was a position of trust.

Healthcare

45. The only thing I recall was this strange thing they did where they got us all in to the dining room and would then measure our skulls and mark down the findings in a jotter. This was apparently to help some study being done at a university.

Religious Instruction

46. There were two churches that we used and, if you were there at the weekend, you went to one of the churches. Other than that religion wasn't a big thing.

Birthdays and Christmas

47. The other boys would go home for Christmas but I didn't and I recall at least on one occasion I went home with a teacher and his family which was a lovely time and I would be back for New Year. Birthdays weren't celebrated.

Personal possessions

48. You got money on a Saturday, 2s 6d, and I would go into Leith and get fags and matches and go to the cinema. Anything you did have you could keep in a wee cupboard in your dorm.

Bedwetting

49. I could be wrong but I think there was a small dorm used for those who wet the bed but there was never a problem about this and boys weren't humiliated if it happened. Nobody made a big fuss about it and I think wet sheets were simply taken away and washed.

Visitors

50. I never got any visits and most of the other boys would go home at the weekend usually leaving about thirty or forty boys there. They were unable to grant me leave apart from one period when I returned to Burnside Children's Home for a week. It was never found possible to make contact with my immediate family.

Review of Care

51. There was a psychologist who used to come over from Geilsland to speak to me. I spoke to her in both Dr Guthrie's and Geilsland where I went next. I don't recall her name but she has since died. No social workers ever came to see me. I always thought that the staff in Dr Guthrie's genuinely cared about us and we could sit and talk to staff about how we were getting on.
52. I never saw a social worker when I was there and I think all contact with social workers in my life ended when I went to Dr Guthrie's despite the fact that I was allegedly there under a Child Protection Order. I would never admit that to the other boys as they were all in for having committed some crime or other so, if I was asked what I was in for, I would just make up a crime.

External Inspections

53. I don't recall seeing any inspectors coming in to review Dr Guthrie's but I suppose it's possible that it did happen and I just wasn't aware of it.

Family Contacts

54. As with all the various places I was in I had no contact with my family while in Dr Guthrie's.

Discipline

55. The only discipline I recall was being put in a cell to calm down for a couple of hours. I think I was the only person ever put in there and it would happen if I got into an argument with another boy and I would go berserk. There was no hitting and I think the worse done was getting a telling off from Mr GZP in his office. On rare occasions I think some boys got lines or maybe you would have privileges like swimming withdrawn. The belt was never used.

Running Away

56. I'm not aware of anybody ever running away though it's possible that some of the boys missed their parents and did run away. You could walk out of the place whenever you wanted but you wouldn't go far and everybody would return when they were supposed to.

Abuse at Dr Guthrie's

57. I don't recall anything at Dr Guthrie's that I would describe as abusive. Yes we got shouted at now and again but you're talking about keeping over a hundred teenage boys under control so there had to be at least some sort of discipline.

Leaving Dr Guthrie's

58. I left Dr Guthrie's simply because I had turned fifteen. I was sad to be leaving because it was the first place I had been where I felt I had security. I went to my Aunt's in Saltcoats where I got a wee job with the local dairy and stayed for six weeks but arrived there. He was a foul-mouthed horrible man so I left and made my way back to Dr Guthrie's in Edinburgh on my own. However, when I got there, they said I was too old and I got taken to Geilsland in Beith.

Geilsland, List D School, Beith

59. I arrived at Geilsland on [REDACTED] 1968 and was there for about two months. I had no complaints about Geilsland which was [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED]. His [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] was Mr [REDACTED] GIJ [REDACTED]. I suppose my only complaint was that it wasn't Dr Guthrie's which I missed. I was friends with many of the staff for years after I left Geilsland as I stayed in nearby Beith with my wife years later.
60. Geilsland was an old mansion with modern buildings added on with greenhouses and workshops. It's now a community hub. It was run by the Church of Scotland and had about thirty boys therein aged between fifteen and seventeen.
61. It was run with a modern way of thinking and the boys were very much included in the running of the place. Sometimes some of us boys would even be involved in the interviewing of new staff. Geilsland is now shut down and I believe that was because [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] was too far ahead in his thinking for some people to accept.
62. Yes, we had to line up for parade and, yes, there were times we had to be in certain places at certain times but you always felt included. It really was an OK place to be. I spent a lot of my time there doing different jobs like painting, gardening and building which is what we did instead of having school classes. In fact the main building was built by staff and students.
63. We slept in dorms though I later had a room to myself. Sometimes there was trouble with the boys who came from Glasgow but I could look after myself and it never became too much.
64. Social Workers never came to see me but [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] was always on hand to speak to. Sometimes I would get in trouble with the local police and [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] would advise me about a lawyer and if I had to go to court he would come and speak up for me. I think the fact I was there under care and protection meant that [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] felt obliged to help me out.

65. We didn't get paid for the work we did but we did get credit put into an account from which we could get things from the tuck shop.
66. Some boys went camping but I never did, I preferred going into Beith where I had met some really good friends.
67. I had no family contact but I did start having contact with my dad who, it turned out, lived just down the road from Geilsland. He introduced me to his brothers and sisters and they eventually put me in contact with my mother's family. I was actually surprised just how many relatives I had.
68. The food was good and the woman who cooked the food ended up staying just round the corner.
69. The belt was given at certain times but I never got it because I was bad but never that bad. **EZD** would give the belt when it was necessary. He didn't believe in the regimented way of looking after young boys and believed that, if something went wrong, it was better to sit down and discuss what might be wrong with somebody in the background that was making them behave in such a way. Yes he would shout at you sometimes but shouting never hurt anybody.
70. We said grace at meal times and went to Church on a Sunday but I wouldn't say that religion was forced on you.

Life after being in care

71. When I was sixteen I went to Southampton and joined the Merchant Navy and did a trip from Las Palmas to Cape Town which was a five week, two day trip. I met my wife when I was twenty and got married a couple of years later. We waited another four years before we had our first child.

72. In those days my attitude was that I was the worker and had to go out and earn money for the family. I now have three sons and three daughters and none of them have a criminal record because I always made sure they had a different childhood to me. For me children come first although I was never one for cuddling my kids.
73. I spent much of my adult life working as a driver of a variety of lorries of all sizes. In 1988 I had a quadruple by-pass and had an initial bad reaction to it. I was only home a week when I was rushed back into hospital. For four or five years thereafter I was unable to work. After that I returned to driving lorries up to 7 tonners and also ran my own business dealing in fridges and cookers though it closed after three years.
74. During my early adult life I probably drank too much, smoked too much and worked too much. That sort of lifestyle catches up with you. However, I've always tried to do what was right and always did my best to make sure my family were safe and secure. I didn't get it right all the time, who does, but I always did my best by them.

Impact

75. Due to the lack of affection I received in growing up I always found it difficult to show affection to my children. That changed when my grandchildren arrived and I was able to show them affection and hug them.
76. For me one of the biggest impacts has been rejection. I spent my childhood being rejected by everywhere I was placed until I ended up in St Guthrie's. It still seems strange to me that the only place that didn't reject me was an approved school.
77. Being rejected so often made it difficult for me to form relationships and put trust in friends and it wasn't until I met my wife that I realised somebody loved me for just being me. It still took a couple of years for me to put my trust in my wife and have children but we have been together ever since.
78. I certainly don't trust social workers due to their complete lack of support in my early life. This is affecting me to this day as there are problems with one of my grandchildren

and I truly believe that the social workers involved have got things completely wrong. I don't like working with them but the rules and regime mean I have no choice.

79. I often think about my time in care and think about those who are no longer with us. I think that given how my early life was my life hasn't worked out too bad. I also became very cynical in life and it takes a long time for me to trust people. I think my time in care has made me more aware of danger and that has helped me guide my own children through life.
80. Because of my time in care I came to believe that your time as a child should be spent being a child. Unfortunately I passed this to my children and wish I had made them realise how important education is for a chance to improve your later life and that of your family.

Treatment/support

81. I'm about to start seeing a psychologist. This is to help me get through life with the constant pain I'm in with my knees and shoulders and the painkillers I have to relieve the pain. I'm also riddled with arthritis. I have never seen a counsellor with regards my time in care.

Reporting of Abuse

82. I have never reported anything that happened to me in my early life to anybody in a position of authority and certainly not the police. My wife doesn't know much about my childhood and I would never discuss such things with my children.

Records

83. I have tried to get my records from my childhood but so far there is so much missing and my main concern is the complete lack of records about me from the early 60's.

The question is though have I forgotten that period to protect myself? Do I want to remember those times? I don't know and it's something I have to think about.

Lessons to be Learned

- 84. In my opinion there are two or three reasons why somebody would speak to The Inquiry. You either do it to help build better facilities so that people learn from the mistakes of the past or you do it for revenge. You can rule out revenge as far as I'm concerned because those involved are all dead and you don't get revenge on dead people. If you believe in God then they've gone to Hell and that's the end of it.

- 85. For me, this is about the truth coming out and the hope that children in care in the future will be better cared for. Children didn't matter when I was in care and that has to change.

- 86. You have to give children in care some targets to achieve. A routine for them would help and give them a sense of security but being able to work towards something gives them something to look forward to.

- 87. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... 

Dated..... 14 DECEMBER 2021