

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HSA
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is HSA [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1958. I am 59 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background and life before care

2. My mum and dad separated when I was two years old. I stayed with my mum and we moved around a lot. My dad used to get me for a couple of hours on a Saturday. During one visit, when I was about two years old, he just took me and kept me.
3. My dad was a trawler fisherman and was away a lot so he sent me to stay at his mum's. I was then sent to my dad's sister's house. I was passed around his family for two years, before being sent back to my mum when I was about four years old.
4. I don't know if I had a bad experience with my dad's family because I was too young to remember, but I used to shout and scream if I saw any of his family in the street.
5. I have a memory of my grandfather, [REDACTED], calling me into the bedroom when I was about six years old. He was standing there with his penis in his hand. My mind has gone blank and I don't know what happened after that. I might have ran away. I also remember being chased down the street by my aunty in the car. I don't know if that was the same incident.

6. I then lived in Pilton, Edinburgh, with my mum who was called [REDACTED] and my stepdad, HRK [REDACTED]. They had a daughter when I was five years old so I had a half-sister. I also had an older sister who was married and did not live with us. I went to Craigmuir Primary School.

7. My grandmother moved into [REDACTED] when I was about eight years old. She was the cook there and lived in a cottage at the back of the home. My grandfather also lived there. He had a job as a pipe-layer during the day but he stoked the boilers in the home at night.

8. We would go to [REDACTED] and stay with my gran at weekends and during holidays.

Widowers' Children's Home

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life before going into care

46. When I went to secondary school, I had a lot of anxiety and stress. I wasn't able to cope with secondary school. It was too big and just had too many people, so I just didn't go.
47. I had to go to a children's panels for not going to school. Then one day at a panel, they said to my mum that they'd take me to have a look around Dr Guthrie's, just to see what it was like. When they took me there they never let me out again. I thought I was just going for a visit but I was being admitted.
48. I was thirteen and a half when I went into Dr Guthrie's. It was a List D school in Liberton. There was a boys' school and a girls' school within it.

Dr Guthrie's Girls' School – List D School, Edinburgh

49. When I went into Dr Guthrie's, I wasn't allowed to see my mum for three months. That was a rule when you went in. Maybe this was to let you settle in.
50. SNR [REDACTED] in the school was called Mr MTA [REDACTED]. SNR [REDACTED] was called Mrs EQE [REDACTED]. Mrs Pontins was the sewing teacher. Miss McLennan, Mr Currie and Mr HSB [REDACTED] were members of staff in the school. I think the staff found Mr HSB [REDACTED] intimidating.

Routine at Dr Guthrie's

First day

51. I couldn't believe my mum had went away and left me. I also had a lot of anxiety and stress from being around people I didn't know. It was horrible.
52. I remember SNR [REDACTED], Mr MTA [REDACTED], saying that I was to give him any cigarettes if I had any and that the school would issue them back to us. I was stupid and gave him my cigarettes, and he kept them. You weren't allowed to smoke in the school.
53. You also got de-bugged when you got into the school. This meant a member of staff would put you in a bath and put stuff in your hair to make sure you didn't bring lice or bugs into the school. The stuff stank to high heaven. I can't remember who did it. That happened to everyone when they came in.
54. There were maybe about forty girls in the school. There were two separate floors for all the girls, and about twenty girls on each floor. I think there were about six bedrooms on each floor, and two or three beds in each room.
55. My room had three beds in it. Nobody had a room to themselves, Secondary Institutions - to be
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Daily routine

56. The staff would get us up in the morning and we'd go and have breakfast. There was no education. I could never understand why they put me in there for not going to school, but never educated me in there. It doesn't make any sense.
57. We would be allocated jobs like kitchen work, working in the sewing room or cleaning. We had to clean our own rooms. I remember cleaning the corridors, sitting rooms and the kitchens. We just spent the whole day cleaning. There was no cleaner. It was all done by the children. The staff would just patrol the place and make sure everything was clean. I think we were just taken in as cleaners.
58. We had to make our own uniforms, which I quite enjoyed. The uniform was a green blazer and a green skirt, which we wore with a white polo shirt. I made the skirt and blazer. I ended up becoming the head sewing girl and helped out the sewing teacher, Mrs Pontins. I would help her to make clothes for the other girls. We also had everyday clothes, which were provided by the home. I made some of them too.
59. Staff would stay overnight. It would be different people, depending on who was on duty. There would be two members of staff on duty at a time.
60. The rooms wouldn't be locked at night, but the corridor doors were locked. We had access to the toilet in the corridor at night.

Bath times

61. Bath times were horrendous. You had to put your name down if you wanted a bath because there were only a couple of bathrooms and lots of girls. None of the girls would put their names down when Mr ^{HSB} was on duty.
62. Mr ^{HSB} was an evil, horrible man. He used to walk into the girls' bathroom when we were having a bath. There was no lock on the door. He used to come in and start

grinning at the girls in the bath and puckering his lips at us, which is why we called him "HSB"

Sundays and religious instruction

63. Every day was the same in there. The only change was on a Sunday when we went to the church just behind Dr Guthrie's. I remember the people looking at us like we were the bad girls when we went in.
64. The minister would come to the school on a Sunday for bible reading. I got a certificate for bible reading. We only went because we were bored.

Food

65. Sometimes the food was ok and other times, it was horrible. If you didn't like the food, you had to just take it or leave it. You didn't get anything else. We were allowed to talk during mealtimes.
66. I remember going on hunger strike once because I thought the food was bad. The staff would put the food down in front of me and I wouldn't eat it. They would tell me that I would sit there until I ate it. I could be sitting there for hours, but I wouldn't eat it. This was for all three meals in the day. I did this for three days.
67. My mum was called in. The headmaster said to her: "I believe your dog gets fed better than your daughter." This is what I had said to him when I went on the hunger strike. I can't remember what my punishment was. I probably didn't get to go home that weekend.
68. I eventually gave up the hunger strike after three days. I thought that because everybody else was eating it, I may as well eat it too.

Leisure time

69. We used to go to the boys' school for swimming. I used to have blackouts so I was scared to go into the water in case I had a blackout. I was also petrified of water because I had fallen into the water in Inverleith Park when I was three or four years old, and my granddad had got me out. Mr ^{HSB} used to make us go and get our swimming costumes on whether we were sick or not. I think he enjoyed seeing the girls in their costumes.
70. We spent our leisure time just sitting in the sitting room and listening to records or watching television. We used to watch "Prisoner Cell Block H". We were never allowed out. Every door was locked behind us like we were in a prison. There was no freedom in the place.
71. I made friends in the school. Most of the girls were in there for staying off school, but there were girls in there for all sorts of reasons. There was one girl in there who was made pregnant by her dad, and she was waiting to be put into an unmarried mothers' home. There was also a girl called [REDACTED], who was in the school for breaking into a jeweller's in Tollcross.

Punishments

72. I remember somebody setting a fire once under one of the girl's beds. It was a joke that went too far. I think we were bored. We talked about lighting a fire under her bed to see if it would wake her. We started a fire with a match. We were smokers so had matches. The whole place burned down. We had to be moved to another wing until the place got refurbished.
73. I think the punishment was not being allowed to go home and not getting any visitors. We all got punished because nobody would own up to doing it. It was probably me who had done it. We didn't mean to do it; we just thought she would feel the heat and wake up. The things we done just for fun.

74. I once took keys from a staff member and hid them in the food mixer. She was hunting high and low for her keys. The girls also used to play tricks on each other because they were bored. Sometimes you would wake up with toothpaste all over your face, but that was just kids being kids.
75. There were a few fights between the girls, but we all got on ok. I think I only had one fight when I was in there. I shared a room with [REDACTED] and another girl from Glasgow. I was sitting on my bed arguing with [REDACTED], and then the other girl jumped off her bed and went crazy. She ripped the hair out of my head. I ended up in detention for that even though I didn't do anything. The girl ran away after that, but was caught and brought back. The other girls wouldn't talk to her after that.
76. The kind of things you were punished for was if they thought you had given them cheek, or if you didn't eat your dinner. You weren't allowed to smoke in the school and that was another thing they punished you for. I remember sewing cigarettes into the hem of my skirt. I also hid some in a bag in the bottom of a talc powder tub. We used to smoke tea leaves if we didn't have cigarettes. You would not be allowed to go home or get visitors if you were caught.
77. There used to be a disco that only six or seven girls were allowed to go to. Only the best behaved girls got to go. You would not be allowed to go to the disco as a punishment for misbehaving.
78. Miss McLennan used to tell me to wind up ^{SNR} [REDACTED] for a laugh, and I stupidly used to do it. That was another reason I was always being punished.

Holidays and home visits

79. We didn't have any holidays away while we were in Dr Guthrie's.
80. Kids were allowed to go home at weekends if you were well behaved. You were not allowed to go home if you were badly behaved. That was the punishment.

81. I was only allowed home for two weekends in the three years I was in the school. Sometimes, the school would say that I could go home for the weekend but would turn my mum away after she had driven all the way to pick me up. This happened too often.
82. Mr MTA or Mrs EQE made the decision about who got to go home and who was allowed visitors. It depended who was on duty at the time.

Visits and inspections

83. I remember we had an open day and got to bake cakes., and we made éclairs. I think that was just to impress the people who were coming. It was the parents of the children who came. I can't remember if my mum came.
84. My mother would sometimes come to visit me and not even be allowed to see me. My sister and brother in law came to visit me once and wanted to take me out to the café. They were told that I wasn't allowed visitors because I had been misbehaving. They stopped you having visitors as a punishment.
85. I never saw either of my two sisters the entire time I was in Dr Guthrie's. They both got to go to school.
86. A social worker visited me about twice in the three years I was there. I don't remember her name and only vaguely remember speaking to her. I think she asked how I was settling in. I remember seeing her quite early on and then she disappeared. I remember some girls in the home getting visits from social workers, but not very often.

Birthdays and Christmas

87. I ran away during my first Christmas time in the school. There were only three kids left in the school. Other kids had all been allowed to go home but I was kept in because I hadn't been in the home long.

88. I smashed a window during the day on that first Christmas, in preparation for running away. Then late at night, I threw a mattress out of the window. Two of us jumped out and landed on the mattress. I remember seeing Mrs Pontins through the window. She was lying in her bed in the room next to us, reading a book. The third girl jumped out and landed on her knee on the ground. We had to just leave her there and run. She was there all night. She had to have an operation on her knee.
89. I got home for one Christmas out of the three that I was there. They made me stay in the school until midnight, and my mum had to come up to the school to collect me. She had to bring me back to the school at 9pm the next day.
90. I don't remember getting any presents from the school at Christmas time.
91. I remember my sixteenth birthday. My gran came in with a cake because I wasn't allowed out. Birthdays weren't celebrated by anybody in the school. They maybe just said "Happy birthday". There were no gifts or anything from the school.

Running away

92. I think the girl who ran away with me at Christmas time was called [REDACTED]. After we ran away, we went down the road and saw a man on the street. [REDACTED] asked the man if he had any change. He put his hand in his pocket and when he took it out, she snatched everything he had and we ran away.
93. We got a bus to Glasgow, which was where [REDACTED] was from. We stayed in a derelict flat in a tenement. We were away for about four days. We heard the police coming so we climbed up these ladders to the attic. The boards were all rotten so I fell through a hole and peed myself with fright. I was wearing about fifteen pairs of knickers because I had put everything on so I wouldn't have to carry a back pack.

94. We were caught by the police and taken to the police station. It was good because we got fish and chips. We were kept in overnight by the police, and then they drove us back to Dr Guthrie's.
95. The second time I ran away, me and my friend went to my friend's uncle's house. He went out and locked us in the house when he went on night shift. My friend took a hammer to his gas metre and stole all the money. Then we went to stay at her friend's house. That time, I got her to phone the police because we were starving.
96. We got de-bugged by a female member of staff when got back to the school. This happened both times I ran away. I remember Mrs Pontins being there one of the times. She said she was very disappointed in me.
97. My punishment for running away was being locked in the detention cell for four days. The detention cell was a bare room with a mattress on the floor. There was more than one detention cell, so the girl I ran away with got the same treatment.
98. I can't remember what I did to go to the toilet. There must have been a toilet in there, but I don't remember. Meals were brought up to me. I remember other girls shouting through the door and asking me if I was ok. It was horrible and scary in there.

Healthcare

99. There was a doctor that we had to see when we were in Guthrie's. We would be taken out of the home to see him. I started to get really bad period pains while I was in there and I went to see him about it. I think he thought it was all in my head and just dismissed it. He maybe thought I was making it up to get out of the home for half an hour.

Abuse at Dr Guthrie's

100. It was considered bad behaviour if you answered back to staff, or if you were told to do something and didn't do it. I remember I was asked to pick up milk bottles and

take them to the front door. I said I would do it in a minute. Mr ^{HSB} grabbed me by the hair and forced me down to pick the bottles up. Then he pulled me along the corridor by my hair to make me take them to the front door. He pulled the hair right out of my head. The sewing room teacher, Mrs Pontins, told my mum. My mum went to see Mr ^{HSB}. She was told that if there was any more nonsense, I wouldn't get out at the weekend.

101. Mr ^{HSB} beat me up about four or five times during the three years I was in the school. He would just lash out. I think he liked to show authority. Even a little bit of cheek would set him off. I don't think he was sexually abusive. He was just good with his hands at battering people.
102. I remember there was a girl called [REDACTED]. Mr ^{HSB} gave her a right doing in the sitting room in front of everybody. I don't know what she had done. I don't remember her doing anything bad, but he started punching and kicking her. The girls were all petrified of him.
103. Mr ^{HSB} was the only one like that. The rest of the staff were all really nice. If you told the other staff that you'd do something in a minute, they wouldn't mind as long as you did it.
104. The other staff would never lift their hand to you, but they would punish you by taking away privileges like going home or getting visitors. Mr ^{HSB} would beat you up and then take away your privileges as well. You got punished twice from him. I think he was in his fifties.

Leaving Dr Guthrie's

105. I was sixteen and a half when I left Dr Guthrie's. People were coming and going from the school, but I was over sixteen and still there. I had never gone to a children's panel again since I got into the school and I thought that they must have forgotten about me.

106. One of the girls in the school was allowed to go out and work because she was well behaved. She worked in Liberton Hospital. I gave her a letter to post to the children's panel on her way to work. In the letter I asked them if they had forgotten about me because everybody else was coming and going out of the school.
107. The children's panel then contacted ^{SNR} [REDACTED] at the school to say that they had received a letter from me. He went mental. Usually letters were read by the school before they were sent out and when they came in.
108. I remember ^{SNR} [REDACTED] coming to tell me that a panel had been fixed to decide if I was getting out. You had to have a job before you were allowed to get out of the school, so I had to go to the job centre. Somebody must have gone with me. I got a job as a wig maker at [REDACTED].
109. I was told to take all my stuff with me to the panel. I remember everybody sitting around the table. I think they asked me if I had learned my lesson, and that was it. I was free. I didn't go back to the school to say bye to everyone. I think I would have like to have said goodbye. I had been living with those people for three years.

Reporting of abuse

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Dr Guthrie's List D School

114. The minister who came for bible studies on a Sunday was a friendly person. I told him about Mr ^{HSB} beating me and watching us in the showers. He never said anything. The girls used to sit and tell him our problems. He never said anything. He just used to laugh. He must have just thought we were a bunch of nut cases.

115. When the police caught us after running away, we told them why we had run away. We told them that it was because Mr ^{HSB} was beating us and that we didn't want to be the only three girls in the school with him over Christmas. We also told them that he would watch us when we were in the bath. I think they just thought we were trouble makers. A lot of people wouldn't believe us when we told them anything and it would just be our fault.

116. I would like to think that a report would have been filed when Mr ^{HSB} was seen by other staff dragging me through the school and battering me. Mrs Pontins told my mum, who had come in to speak to him about it. I don't know if it was reported to anyone else, but all the same staff were still at Dr Guthrie's when I left.

Life after being in care

117. During the time I was at Dr Guthrie's, my grandmother had left and moved to Wester Hailes. My mum had left Pilton and moved into the

██████████. My mother became ██████████. I moved into the cottage with my mum and stepdad.

118. I remember a girl from Dr Guthrie's ran away and came to find me soon after I moved into the cottage. She wanted money to go to Glasgow. I got money from my mum and gave her it. Her name was ██████████, and I stayed in touch with her for about six months. I kept in touch with Mrs Pontins, the sewing teacher. She lived in ██████████ and I visited her a few times

119. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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122. My mum separated from my step-dad ██████████. He stayed in the cottage and she went to stay ██████████. I went to stay with my granny in Wester Hailes, Edinburgh.

123. I got a new doctor when I moved to Wester Hailes, who sent me to hospital to get checked. They said my insides were all stuck together like a tennis ball. My bowel was stuck to my fallopian tubes and ovaries. I had to have a hysterectomy.

124. I left my work at ██████████ wig makers after three years, and started working in the laundry in ██████████. My sister also worked in the laundry for a while before me. I was about nineteen or twenty years old at the time. I would be

downstairs doing the ironing and washing, Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

125. I met my husband, [REDACTED] when I was nineteen years old and we got married. He was a painter. We never had any children because of the problems I had with my insides.
126. I worked in the chemist at [REDACTED] after leaving [REDACTED]. Then I worked in a butcher, and later in a shoe repair place. I then got a job in an [REDACTED] shop. I became the manager there and stayed working there until 2005.
127. I have had problems with anxiety and low self-confidence as an adult, and my husband really helped me. He would look after me at parties because I was scared people would come and talk to me. He would always tell me that I underestimated myself. My husband died of cancer in 2005. My anxiety went up again after he died.
128. After my husband died, I was diagnosed with anxiety, depression and stress. I got appointed a community psychiatric nurse (CPN). We talked about my childhood. That is when they told me that my anxiety and stress came from my dad taking me from my mum when I was two years old, and keeping me for two years.

129. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

130. [REDACTED]

Impact

131. I could never understand sending girls to Dr Guthrie's for not going to school and then not educating them. It had a huge effect on me. I could have had a better job as an adult if I had been educated.
132. I never liked to meet people and get into conversations with them in case they thought I was stupid. I was afraid that they would ask me questions and I wouldn't know the answers. I can read but I don't know anything to do with history, geography or maths. It made me really self-conscious as an adult. I think I lost all of my confidence.
133. I have always been very anxious. I can't even get on a bus if it is busy. I can't bear to have doors locked behind me. I don't even lock my bathroom door. This still affects me.
134. I see my CPN every two weeks. I often pass out. My CPN and doctor think it is a reaction to certain things. The last time it happened was when I was told my husband had cancer. One time I passed out because my friend threw a stone at my window. It is like a stress response.
135. I have never been able to have a family because the doctor in Dr Guthrie's School didn't take my condition seriously when I complained of period pains, Secondary Institutions
Secondary Institutions - to be published later. This meant that by the time I was seen by another doctor and sent to hospital, the damage was done.
136. I don't work now because of my problems. I am sometimes up all night because I can't sleep. I have osteoporosis and I can't sleep with the pain. I take tablets for that. I used to stay awake with things going on in my mind. I have been diagnosed with depression and take anti-depressants.
137. I have been diagnosed with emphysema, asthma and bronchiectasis. Second
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Records

138. I don't have my records, but that is something I would be interested in reading. They would probably just say I was trouble.

Other information

139. I want kids who were treated wrong in care to have a voice now. Too much was swept under the carpet when I was in care. Kids don't need to be hurt if you want to punish them. You can do other things like take away their pocket money. I don't think there should have been male staff at Dr Guthrie's when it was an all-girls school. I don't think male staff should be looking after a group of girls.

140. 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..... HSA [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 30/11/2017