

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GZW

Support person present: No

1. My name is GZW. My name as a child in care was GZW. My date of birth is 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born at home in Easthouses in Midlothian. My mum was called [REDACTED] and my dad was called [REDACTED]. They had many children together. My sister [REDACTED] is eight years older than me. My sister [REDACTED] has passed away and she was five years older than me. [REDACTED] is four years older than me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are twins and are three years older than me. Then there's me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were born after me.
3. I don't remember much before first going into care when I was two years old. I believe I went into care because my mum and dad were having problems keeping and funding all their children. I don't know if they gave up a house or were put out of a house but it was something along those lines. We did a lot of moving about and at one point we went to England. After that, I remember absolutely nothing. Apparently, we were taken into care in England. I was four years old at the time. I have no childhood memories until the age of thirteen to fourteen when I went into Midfield Children's Home.

Nazareth House, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian

4. Everything I know about my time in Nazareth House and abuse there was told to me by my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Sometimes I could hear them speaking, looking at me and saying, "Shhh, GZW [REDACTED]'s there." They didn't want me to hear bits of what they were saying. They didn't think I was strong enough. I have rheumatoid arthritis and they are protective of me. [REDACTED] knows a lot of stuff. [REDACTED] also told me a lot and she was the one who told me about Nazareth House. She got quite emotional about that kind of thing. I've heard wee bits from [REDACTED].
5. I was told by my sisters that we were taken into care along with my sister [REDACTED] and my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I'm not sure if [REDACTED] was there. I was two years old. We were taken to Nazareth House in Bonnyrigg and stayed there for a few weeks. They told me social work took us into a big house and it looked like a castle. It was old and haunted looking.
6. My sisters said I sat with my hands over my ears and tucked myself closely to my sister's bodies. They thought it was maybe because of the noise. It would be nice to say something good but it's all bad I've heard. My sisters remember all this bad stuff that's gone on. I don't remember anything of Nazareth House.

Routine at Nazareth House

7. My sister [REDACTED] said that when we arrived at the door I got really scared. I was standing with my hands up waiting for her to lift me up and I was screaming.
8. I think I was put away somewhere else to sleep, away from my sisters because I was smaller. However, I don't know the layout of Nazareth House. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] used to come looking for me and get me into bed. We used to try to lie together. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] said they would get dragged out of the bed. [REDACTED] has a memory of living on a bed in a hallway.

9. My sisters said I wet the bed and I would get dragged out of the bed for wetting it. They told me the nuns would rub your face in the wet sheets. I get emotional thinking about it. I think, how can I be emotional when I've not seen it? Just to think of a child going through that is awful. [REDACTED] was a bed wetter as well as me. I think most of my brothers and sisters were.

Abuse at Nazareth House, Bonnyrigg

10. Sister LTX [REDACTED] was the nun my sisters mentioned all the time. They said she was evil. There was another nun mentioned in their conversations but I can't remember her name. I was apparently punished for wetting the bed. My sisters said I used to get pulled by the hair and taken through to the showers and put in a cold shower.
11. I was hit by the nuns with a big cross and my face was all marked. There were cuts and the cuts were bleeding. My sisters would panic and ask the nuns what they had done to me. [REDACTED] would put me on her knee and cuddle me. She would be asking the nuns what was wrong. Me and my brothers and sisters were made to eat stuff and we would turn our faces away. The nuns would force the food down our throats.
12. [REDACTED] said because of the brutality that was going on, my older sisters would follow where the younger ones went and watch what going on. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] saw a nun and a gentleman doing stuff to me in the showers. The nun and the gentleman turned round and told my sisters to get away. Either the gentleman or the nun had their fingers inserted inside me. I don't know if the gentleman was a caretaker. My sister described him as having something round his neck, like a white collar. [REDACTED] said something about the man. The name GZX [REDACTED] rings a bell but I don't know if that's the right name. My sisters were that bit older. They were seeing things and being punished. My sisters told me that they were punished by the nuns for seeing that in the showers.
13. There was an outing and [REDACTED] said I was sitting on the beach and wanted to be with her. When I did go to her, I cuddled into her. My brothers and sisters were given sandwiches covered in sand. [REDACTED] said the sandwiches were horrible and you could

feel the grinding of the stones when you were eating them. They didn't like the sandwiches but they were forced to eat them.

Reporting of Abuse

14. My sisters told me they were crying to my mum and dad to come and get us because Sister LTX was being bad to all of us. They told my mum and dad we were all being attacked, that we were force fed and that I was being forced into cold showers and being hit. Mum and dad said they were trying to get somewhere to stay and it wouldn't be long. My sisters thought what was going on was normal. They started to think that things like being hit was normal because they saw it so often.

Leaving Nazareth House, Bonnyrigg

15. We left Nazareth House and were put into foster care. My mum and dad agreed we could into foster care and social workers were involved.

Foster Care – Unknown location

16. We were put into some kind of foster care until my mum and dad found somewhere to stay. I don't know how long we were in foster care but I think it was for a short time. My brothers, sisters and I were split up. I don't know what age I was. I remember a house. As the front door opened, there was a bedroom at the bottom of the hall. There was a cot and a single bed in the bedroom. That's all I can remember.

Returning to live with parents

17. We went back home to live with mum and dad and I was still two years old, going on three years. We moved about. Mum got a house in England and we stayed there. I

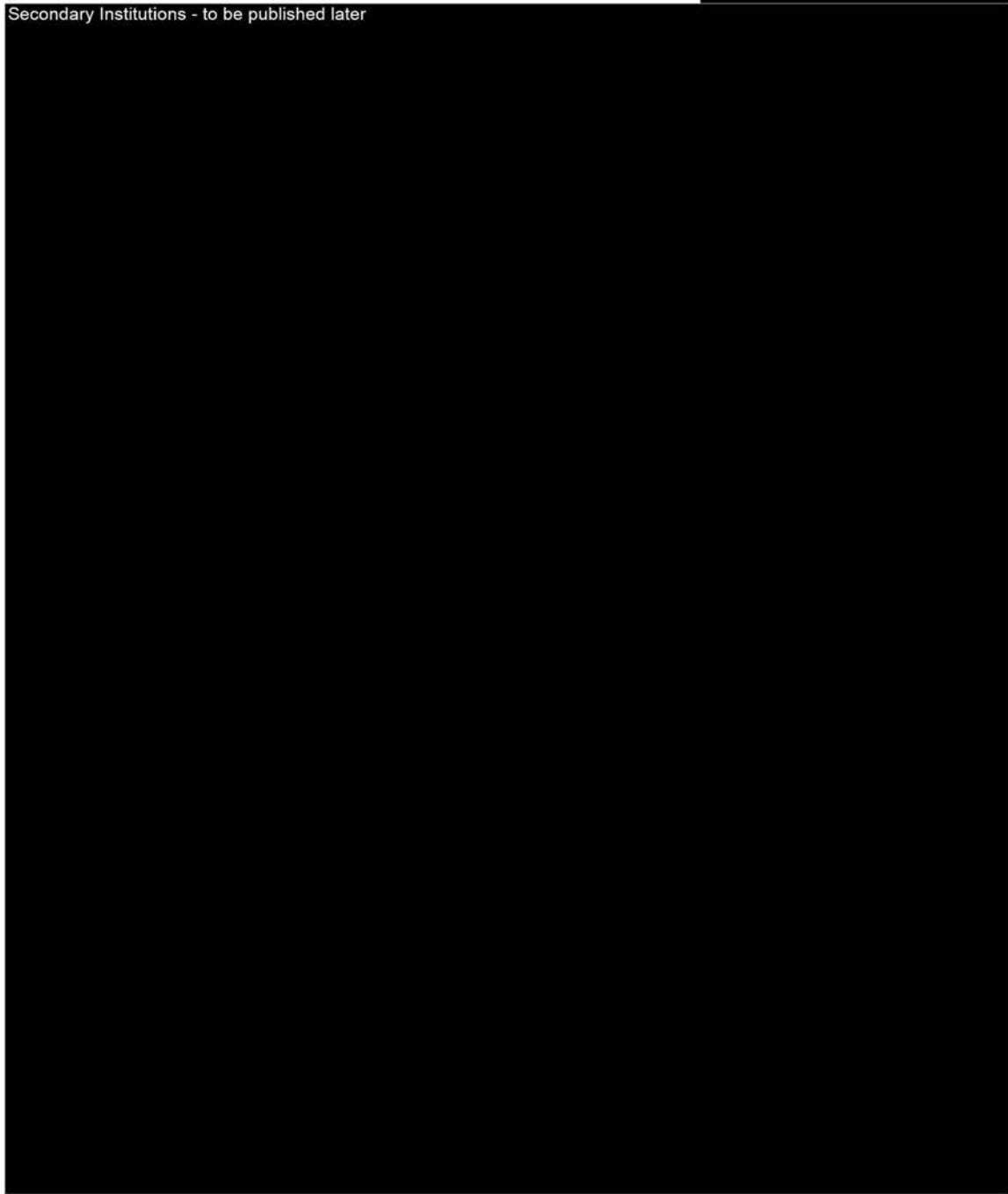
remember lots of us being in the car and dad singing. I also remember falling off a wall and being stung by a wasp. We had a few houses in Midlothian. My next memory is when I went to Midfield when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. My first memory of school is Lasswade High School, where I went when I was a teenager. Before I went to Midfield, I was living at my mum's in Bonnyrigg.

18. I had a social worker but I can't remember her name, it may have been Blyth. I was irritated by her and wasn't nice to her. I saw her more at Children's Panels. My mum and dad were against social workers. They felt they could bring up their kids themselves.
19. I wasn't able to speak to my social worker. Before I went to Midfield, I was in a swing park with her. My social worker said I only had myself to blame. I was coming back and forward on the swing. I kicked her and said I didn't like her. After that, my social worker blamed everything on me.
20. In the records I have, it says that when I was thirteen or fourteen years old I asked to get put into Midfield. I was saying I wanted to be back in a care home and I didn't want to stay with my mum and dad. I don't know why I was saying this as mum and dad had a lovely home and the house was very well-kept. My sisters, brothers and I were well-fed and we all sat together for big, cooked meals. My mum and dad didn't have a lot of money but they tried their best. Mum and dad had a drink now and again. There were no issues at home.
21. I went to the Children's Panel in Dalkeith a couple of times. At first the Panel said I should stay at home. I fought against that and ended up in care at Midfield for about eighteen months. It was a children's home, not a secure unit. I was drinking a lot and not attending school so that was part of the reason for being sent away. The police had to visit school at times because I was boisterous. I was lashing out at boys and girls and I was arrested a few times. I was found intoxicated in the street by the police. I was off the rails. I assume I was a bad child.

Midfield House, Rosewell, Midlothian

22. I went to Midfield when I was thirteen or fourteen years old. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Midfield House

63. Secondary Institutions - to be published later I was taken to the assessment centre at Wester Hailes in a van. I didn't go back to Midfield.

Unknown Assessment Centre, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh

64. I was in the assessment centre for a very short time. A place came up at Doctor Guthrie's Girl's School and I was taken there.

Doctor Guthrie's Girl's School, Edinburgh

65. When I got to Guthrie's, it felt like I was in a jail. I was there for about a year, from when I was fourteen years old until I was over fifteen years old. It was an all girl's school. There were about twenty girls aged from thirteen to fifteen years old. It was a creamy, reddish building. It was a cold place. There were big locked gates and doors. From then on, every single day wherever I went, the door was locked behind me. Guthrie's was a secure unit. If you wanted to go anywhere, the staff would accompany you. All you heard was the bunch of keys rattling. We were locked in all day for seven

days of the week. We did everything in the building. That part of my life was spent under lock and key.

66. There were male and female members of staff. Guthrie's was brutal but not all the staff were bad. There were one or two who would take on board what was happening to you and feel sorry for you. You could see them watching what was going on. You could see they didn't like what was going on behind the scenes by the way they looked at you and asked if you were okay. They didn't say anything though. Even the staff you thought were nice had a bit of brutality in them. Some of the staff were evil. They made you feel low. I would swear at the staff. If the staff were bad to me, I'd be worse. I didn't want to be at Guthrie's.

Routine at Doctor Guthrie's Girl's School

First day

67. I was taken to Guthrie's by a couple of people I didn't know. My social worker met me there. I walked up the steps. I was crying my eyes out. Someone said I wasn't free now and this was where they said I'd end up. I was presented with big rags to wear.

Mornings and bedtime

68. I sat in my room and cried. I cried for my mum, my dad and my sisters. I wanted to be back in their arms. I'd be told to get out of the room by the staff. The room was like a prison cell. There was just a bed in it. You were locked in your room at night. I put the bed up against the door so nobody could come in.
69. In the morning, sometimes you were physically dragged out of bed. The staff would tell me to get my Jesus sandals on because they knew I hated them.

Bed Wetting

70. I was still wetting the bed at Guthrie's and I had to strip the bed. The staff said it was disgusting and I should never be doing that at that age. The staff would pull the quilt and I'd fall onto the floor. The staff would say they didn't mean for me to fall on the floor and they were trying to take the cover off. One morning I was slapped across the head because my bed was soaked from the top to the bottom. The staff said the room was stinking.
71. Another time, the staff said they'd allow the other girls to smell it off me and I wasn't allowed a shower. I put on a lot of weight in Guthrie's. I had a rash right around the top of my legs. It was itchy and sore. I was too scared to tell the staff. I took a lot of brutality from the other girls because of wetting the bed. I sat on my bed and banged my head off the wall. I was always thinking how I could get out of there.

General Routine

72. You got what food was put out to you and you were made to eat it. Guthrie's was like a piggery. The staff would fling you sloppy food and they told you to get it eaten. You ate in the dining-room. Some girls got to walk away with their meal and sit in front of the TV. Others were told to stay where they were. I wasn't allowed to eat in front of the TV.
73. I was developing into a young woman. There was no privacy in the bathroom. The staff would come into the bathroom, look at my chest and laugh at me. You would shower in the morning if the staff felt like it. If you wanted to go the toilet, the staff would accompany you. You would go in and close the door. The staff would kick the toilet door open and tell you to move.
74. In the evening after your meal you'd get to watch a bit of TV. The TV was only on for a certain amount of time. The staff would put on the programme they wanted. There were no trips or holidays. You were at Guthrie's to be taught and to do what the staff

told you. I had Christmas at my sister [REDACTED]'s house. Nothing was done for my birthday.

75. I had to wear a big skirt, a long top, long socks and Jesus sandals. I wore that every day. I kept tripping up on the Jesus sandals. I was continuously asking if I could wear my shoes or trainers. Other kids had normal clothes on. I cried about what I was wearing. I felt like nobody's child. You only got to wear your own clothes when you went home at the weekend.
76. Everything was in the one building, including school. I went from living in a home and walking or taking the bus to school to not doing any of that. A teacher came in from outside. There was one classroom for everyone. I didn't put my head into anything. I was in a world of my own. I didn't focus on anything. My main focus was getting out of Guthrie's.
77. We had to go to chapel which was in a room in the building. I'm not religious and I wasn't as a child. There was no choice, you had to go. We went on a Sunday and a couple of nights through the week. You were given bread for communion. The staff told you to eat it. You were forced to listen and you got a slap round the ear for not listening. We said Grace at mealtimes. I had a terrible habit of laughing when things were quiet and I would get a slap across the head. I wasn't brought up like that, so it wasn't normal to me. My dad was a Catholic but my family didn't go to chapel.
78. You had to scrub floors every day on your hands and knees at Guthrie's. Sometimes I felt I was getting the dirty work, the toilets and the floors. Other people would get to be with the staff doing chores. You didn't get any pocket money.
79. I had my things from Midfield but I didn't have much. I had a picture of my mum, dad and sisters under my mattress. Once, a member of staff went to rip the photo. I begged her not to do it. I grabbed the photo from her and I got restrained for that. She didn't rip the photo. I got it back.

Visits/Review of Detention

80. My mum and dad came to see me. They didn't get inside the building. They stood at the door and I was brought to see them. I was begging them to take me home. My mum and dad asked me and the staff what the hell I was wearing. The staff said it was routine to wear those clothes.
81. I had Children's Panels. They went from taking place every three months to every six months. They locked the door when you went into a Panel. After I had spent a long period of time at Guthrie's, I knew I wasn't getting away with anything. I started to write big notes to Panels, on A4 sheets of paper. I think most of the notes were put in the bin by the staff. One time, a staff member must have posted the note I wrote because everything about leaving Guthrie's happened from there.
82. I had written everything down. I wrote how I thought I'd improved, how I would be good and how I wouldn't be bad again. I asked the Panel to give me a chance. I said I wanted to get home to my mum and dad. I'd love to see that letter again. I went back to a Panel and my social worker was there. I spoke up for myself at the Panel and I was listened to. The Panel said they'd read my letter and it seemed promising but I'd have to show I meant it. They said they'd review my situation in a few months. The Panel allowed me home for one day at the weekend and then for two days. I went home to my sister [REDACTED]'s a lot or to my mum and dad's.

Discipline

83. There was a room at Guthrie's with just a mattress on the floor. The staff at Midfield had told me it was a padded cell. If you kicked off, you were put in the room to calm down. You were restrained by the staff first, with a few punches and kicks along the way. The door was locked. You could be left in there for a good few hours. The staff would come for you and tell you to get out and behave next time. I was put in there a good few times.

Abuse at Doctor Guthrie's Girl's School

84. I felt I couldn't do right for doing wrong. Everything I thought I was doing right was wrong. The staff told me my last home had said I was a 'waster' and I wasn't going to be like that at Guthrie's. They would say I'd end up in prison and it would be worse than Guthrie's. The staff would threaten you with another particular member of staff if you misbehaved. She was a wee woman with bandy legs and short hair. She wore tight trousers and a tight top. The woman was in her late forties or fifty years old. The woman was evil. There were a couple of staff members who were evil.
85. You couldn't laugh at a member of staff because you'd be elbowed by them. I was in the kitchen once and I had a disagreement with the wee woman with the bandy legs and she banged my head off every cupboard in the kitchen.
86. I was physically dragged around by the male and female staff in Guthrie's. My hair was pulled and I was elbowed. I was also kicked on the body. The staff would look round and make sure other staff weren't looking. They would do it quickly so other staff didn't see. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be pub I threw my dinner about and refused to eat it. I had food forced into my mouth by staff. I had bruises all over my body from being hit. You were never out so nobody saw the bruises. I would try to hide the bruises if the staff walked into my room.
87. At school there were a couple of teachers, a man and a woman. I don't remember their names. I got slapped across the face with a ruler by the lady teacher a couple of times. I got dragged out of the classroom on many occasions for not concentrating. I was put in a wee room and told to write lines. I refused, so the male teacher hit me, once, across the back with a cane. That happened a couple of times. I got the belt a lot from both of them. You were hit on your hands six times with the belt until your hands were red raw. In ordinary schools, the cane was used only for your hand. When you think about it now, you were hit with the cane where the bruises wouldn't be seen.

Peer Abuse

88. The staff targeted the girls to fight me. They said to the girls not to start with me or I'd sort them out. That happened a lot. There were physical fights and the staff would stand and watch it going on. Each thing the staff did to me made me harder. It made me fight more against them. One time, I was being dragged about by a bigger girl. Lumps of hair were coming out of my head. The staff stood and watched it all. They encouraged fights to happen. I took a lot of brutality because I wet the bed. The other girls would slander me and throw things at me. I was attacked by the girls and my hair was pulled out. I had big, bald patches on my head.

Leaving Doctor Guthrie's Girl's School

89. Things had improved and the Panel were happy for me to go home to my sister [REDACTED]'s house. I was told I was free to go by the Panel. I wasn't sure what that meant. I looked at it as though I had been in a prison. That had been drummed into me. I stood outside the Panel not knowing what to do. I went to live with my sister [REDACTED]. That was the end of my contact with social work. I was fifteen and a half years old.

Life after being in care

90. I went from being in horrible place to being in a beautiful place. I met my husband when I was on home leave to my sister [REDACTED]'s house. We were young when we moved in together. My husband has made my life. He cares endlessly for me and we've just had our 35 year anniversary.

Impact

91. My sisters would speak about Nazareth House on a night out or when we were consuming alcohol. Sometimes I would go home crying to my husband. I said to him that something had happened to me when I was small. I feel stupid because I can't

remember anything. [REDACTED]'s memory of her childhood was phenomenal. I would ask my sisters, how did they know about their childhood and I would cry. My sisters would stop talking about Nazareth House when they saw me crying. Each time a little more would come out. When I lived in Bonnyrigg, I got a paper job. I couldn't deliver the papers to Nazareth House. I dumped all the papers at the gate and ran away.

92. My sisters and I love each very much. We'd do anything for each other. They are very protective of me. [REDACTED] was more like a mum to me than a sister. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are quite deep people. [REDACTED] has gradually opened up. [REDACTED] is fixated on what happened with her at Nazareth House. [REDACTED] became a really bad problem child.

93. I've searched to find out about my childhood all my life, even a picture. Finding my childhood is the biggest thing for me. I have no memories until I am thirteen or fourteen years old. As you get older and have grandchildren, I'd like to know if I looked like my grandchildren when I was wee.

94. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED]

95. I cried a lot at Guthrie's. I blamed myself for where I was. I thought I shouldn't have done this and that. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED]

96. I wet the bed right up until I was going with my husband. I didn't stop wetting the bed until I felt comfortable with my husband when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old. My experience in care has impacted on the intimate side of things with my husband. I have three children but I haven't been open with my body. I've been very closed in. My husband has asked me if something has happened. I think it's something

to do with my childhood but I don't know what. I've been with my husband since I was fifteen years old. You'd think by now we could be more open and intimate. My husband has supported me through thick and thin.

97. I came out well on the other side, compared to where the care staff said I'd be. I didn't end up in jail. I didn't work because I was caring for my children. I wanted to be a mum to them. Nobody was going to take that away from me. I wouldn't leave my children. I am protective of them. To this day, I'm worried that something will happen to them.
98. My daughters are supportive. I don't go into detail with them about my time in care because I don't want it to damage them. They have children of their own. I want to be the mum I've been to them without putting any bad memories into their lives.

Revisits / Compensation

99. Years ago, my brother went to see about legal proceedings. Then my sisters went to see a lawyer about what we've been through at Nazareth House. I got involved and became part of the proceedings. Proceedings are still on-going. It's not for money, it's for people who are out there and are still being treated that way.

100. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Treatment / Support

101. I've been having telephone conversations with Future Pathways but I want face to face counselling. I want to see the person I'm opening up to. I've spoken to my general practitioner because I would cry about something and I didn't know what I was crying about. He recommended I put myself on a waiting list at the Community Hospital. I did that but I haven't heard back from them yet.

Records

102. A long time ago, I wrote to the social work department and asked for any information about my childhood or a picture. I asked could they bring back some memories for me. I must have contacted the wrong department. They told me I wouldn't get information from them and I'd have to go to the Midlothian department. I asked a social worker I knew if she could get me information. She said she didn't think they'd hold that information. That knocked me back. I thought I'd just leave it. I did some searching online to see if I could come up with anything at all.

103. I got information through a lawyer but it's from the time I was at Lasswade High School until Guthrie's. There was nothing from Nazareth House except our names and the ages we were, when my sisters, brothers and I were in there. It was social work records. I have a copy of the records. The information was me being a bad teenager. There is nothing nice in the records. It was nothing I wanted to know. I wondered if I'd done things when I was small. I wanted information from when I was younger.


Lessons to be Learned

104. Staff should care for the children like a mother would and not be brutal towards them. Staff should be more understanding. They shouldn't tell a child that they are a problem child. There should be more help, support and involvement with social work for children in care. Where staff see things going on that they don't agree with, they should feel able to report what they see to stop it happening again.

Other information

- 105. I hope children's homes will be more aware that they are there to look after and protect children.

- 106. 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..... 08 February 2021