

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

William WHITESIDE

Support person present: No

1. My name is William Donald Whiteside although I've always been known as Bill Whiteside. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1938. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I had a junior, secondary education which I came through satisfactorily. Shortly after that I spent several years in the Merchant Navy.
3. On leaving the Merchant Navy, I served my time as a painter & decorator with British Rail. I got married and soon realised I needed further education. I went to night school to get my Highers in English and I also got my City & Guilds and attended Murray House College for lectures in working with young people.
4. I ran a youth group in Leith Methodist Church Hall. I felt we could use the church building for my youth group and include music which was very much the 'in' thing at the time with the Beatles coming on the scene.

Geilsland School

5. My first care employment was at Geilsland School in Ayrshire. That was an approved school for fourteen to sixteen-year-old boys and it was managed by the Church of

Scotland. The lads came from Glasgow, Greenock, Kilmarnock and other places around Scotland.

6. When the job came up at Geilsland, I was still running the youth group but I had the qualifications they were looking for. SNR at Geilsland was a Royal Navy man and with me being ex Merchant Navy, we just clicked. I worked at Geilsland from 1965 until 1971. I was a technical instructor involved in craft, design and technology but I have to say it was mainly general trades because we were building the works department at that time.
7. Kids received training in various trades from painting & decorating, joinery work, gardening, engineering and the like. All trades had an instructor who advised the pupils. There was also classroom work but there was great emphasis on practical work.
8. There was corporal punishment at Geilsland School which was a leather tawse on the backside. This was always administered on top of clothing.
9. During my time at Geilsland School I had a year out attending a course at Langside College. Things were moving on then because the Social Work Scotland Act was coming on the scene in 1968. As well as my job at Geilsland School, I was interested in working with families. SNR, EZD, said that he saw potential in me and seconded me for the year to Langside College. It was a general course on working with children who had been in care, looking at what was happening in caring establishments and generally widening my knowledge.
10. Because I had shown an interest in this area of work, SNR would ask me to carry out assessments on particular families to see where we were going with them. I was working towards a residential childcare qualification which at the time and for some years after, was the recognised qualification for helping people who were voluntary workers or had temporary jobs in children's homes. This was an attempt to widening their knowledge and improve their skills.

Posting at Loaningdale School, Biggar

11. Loaningdale had a different approach altogether to working with children. It was based on the thinking of A.S. Neill who was an educator at the time and ran schools. He believed that children in care should have a guided say in running their school. John Wilson, the headmaster of Loaningdale at that time, modelled himself on A.S. Neill.
12. John Wilson was a lovely man, a wonderful headmaster and he liked the qualifications I had. In addition to this, I was an outdoor man, a mountaineer and I canoed. John Wilson told me that was what he was looking for. He said we can catch up with social work but thought if kids could have the experience of climbing a mountain or canoeing a river it would give them a sense of achievement.
13. John's thinking was that children should have a say on whether they could go down to the local community or not. Bearing in mind they were not angels we were looking after and the local girls fancied the naughty boys. In tragic circumstances one of our boys murdered a local girl. That happened before I went to the school. The school clearly needed someone with a little bit of bone behind them. Coming from Geilsland, which was very much structured, I was given the job and worked initially as a housemaster.

Working at Loaningdale School

14. I worked at Loaningdale between 1971 and 1990. Out of that time, I spent two years at Jordonhill College where I received the certificate of qualified social work. John saw my potential and told me that he wanted me to get the additional qualification. I didn't necessarily get the qualifications for the job of deputy headmaster, but I knew getting the qualification was the right move for me at the time. John Wilson said that if I was going to be his deputy one day it would be good to have that qualification. Two years training at Jordonhill gives you considerable insight into what was happening in the current social work practice. Times were changing, we had the social work act coming into force. Working with families was seen as the best way forward.

Interview process

15. I was interviewed by the school managers and the headmaster. I then spent part of the day in the school and had a meal with the young people. My first impressions were that I liked the school. There was something about the school. I liked the headmaster, he had a down to earth approach and what he was trying to do made sense to me. He was looking beyond the formal education. I thought that I could fit in with my own special interest in mountaineering and physical activities.
16. I did submit references to the school. First of all, I had a reference from SNR EZD. He was the main reference. I had references from the church I ran the youth club from and workplaces to show I was skilled in the trade of painting and decorating. Furthermore, I had the residential qualification from Langside College.
17. I became deputy headmaster in 1975. There was a new structure starting where we would have a deputy head social work and a deputy head education. That was rather than one deputy head. I was working as a senior housemaster in one of the units and it just seemed natural that I took up the role of deputy head social work. For that job, I submitted an additional reference from Jordonhill College.

Staff Training

18. There was no formal induction or training when I started at Loaningdale. Training at Loaningdale was an ongoing thing. We would have staff meetings and issues would be raised there. That would be one form of staff training. When I came back from studying at Jordonhill College, I drew up a paper on Task Centred approach to social work. I sat down with the staff and said that kids came in and drifted through the school and that we needed to be more focused. That had a good response.
19. The headmaster, John Wilson would enlighten us on what was happening in the changing world of social work. Other than that, there was no formal paperwork.

Loaningdale School, Biggar

20. Loaningdale School was in Biggar. The children we took in to begin with were from throughout Scotland. They were children who primarily were having difficulties at school. It was noted from the beginning that we couldn't be, all things to all people. John Wilson's regime was not particularly suited to more delinquent type of child. It was suited to children who needed education. Of course, there was still some offending but primarily it was about education.
21. The boys were aged around thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. We had approximately thirty boys to begin with. Fifteen in each house unit. Sometimes we had less boys, maybe twelve in one of the units but it was there or thereabouts.
22. Local authorities from all over Scotland sent the boys to Loaningdale. Initially we would get boys from Stornoway, from Wick and from Inverness. Equally, we would get kids from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dumfries. It was good because we had a guided say in the children we took. We worked out whether or not the child could benefit from the system we had. By and large that worked well but as time went on and money became scarce, local authorities didn't have the money to send their boys to us.
23. Strathclyde became the main supplier. I likened it to 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. They said that if they were paying, they would send us the type of people they wanted us to take. I made it clear to the director of social work at one time that we couldn't be all things to all people.
24. We then started getting the culture of the city coming in. At one time we could absorb one or two stropky and difficult teenagers but when you have five or six of them ganging up, breaking windows, bullying kids, fighting in transport when they were being taken home on leave, it did spoil things. That all happened in the latter years I was at the school.

25. I would say the typical stay for a child was nine months. Some stayed for a year and a half. That could be because they had no home to go back to or that they didn't want to go home but most would stay eight or nine months.

Staff and their relationship with the children

26. On the whole, over my time at Loaningdale, I'd say staff and children got along pretty well together. Obviously there were teenagers who didn't want to do things and they felt a bit out of it but by and large, it worked well. When I meet the young people later in their life, they will ask me if I remember the time we climbed the Cobbler, which is a mountain, or ask me if I remember us canoeing down the Tweed.
27. I'm not saying everyone was like that, there were some teenagers whose parents didn't like schools like us. They would blame us for taking their kids away from them and didn't believe they were doing much wrong in their local community. That was just the way it was seen by some whose children were clearly coming to us after a decision by a children's panel and social work department. I just saw it as natural that there would be some kids that would rebel.
28. There was no corporal punishment at Loaningdale, John Wilson didn't believe in it as did subsequent headmasters.

Structure at Loaningdale School

29. Loaningdale was approved by the Scottish Office in 1964 for the provision of education to boys thirteen to fifteen years of age. The school was run by a forward-thinking headmaster, John Wilson, and based on the thinking of A.S. Neill who believed children should have a guided say on the running of the school. In short the school was akin to a small community.
30. Outdoor pursuits were a big thing for Loaningdale and dare I say I played a major part in that. My initial role at Loaningdale was that of a housemaster to one of two units at the time. My main tasks were supervising and caring for children in my own house

unit, writing reports for care reviews, attending children's hearings, liaising with local social workers and occasionally jointly visiting family homes with the social work.

31. In 1973 I was appointed as senior social worker residential by John Wilson. In 1974, John appointed me as his deputy head of social work. Between 1975 and 1977, I attended Jordonhill College where I qualified as a social worker. Between 1977 until 1990, I was deputy headmaster social work. It was a time of change. The existing headmaster retired and the new headmaster was John Weatherhead. There was an introduction of girls to the school in 1985.
32. In addition to the headmaster and deputy head education and deputy head social work, we ran two house units. There was a senior social worker in charge of each unit and they were ranked one position down from myself. GYF [REDACTED] and Ron Reid were the senior social workers and we would meet and discuss where we were going with daily practice. GYF [REDACTED] and Ron were in charge of their respective units and they had the support of either one or two members of staff who were attached to the units. If there was an issue with night staff it was generally referred my way. There would be two-night staff on, one in each unit.
33. The headmaster and both deputy heads did on-call duties. Arthur Fossey was one deputy head of education. There were others but I don't recall their names. My day hours were 9.00 am until 5.00 pm. But then two evenings per week I would be on-call and could be in the school until 7.00 am the next morning if need be.
34. If on-call, I would go up to the school in the evenings or sometimes I was involved in activities myself. I was there for any issues that arose and that included the night staff who came on at 10.00 pm. They would phone me if they felt the house wasn't as settled as it should be and I would support and advise. I would always phone the night staff when they came on and ask if everything was okay. I would also do on-call one weekend in three or one weekend in four.

Loaningdale School Staff

35. Staff recruitment was based on a formal interview with the managers and the headmaster. Applicants would spend time at the school having a meal and meeting pupils. The units were staffed and in the east unit we had one male and one female member of staff who were Langside College qualified and had childcare certificates. We also had two male basic grade workers in the unit. In the west house we had one male and three females working. When the females came we still had one male running the unit but more young female staff came in.
36. We had fulltime teachers in English, art, metalwork, joinery, sciences and gymnasium. The art teacher was Liz McCulloch and she stayed in a schoolhouse on the premises. The metal work teacher was HIA [REDACTED] and the joinery teacher was George Hamilton. Both these teachers and the science teacher have passed away. IPW [REDACTED] IPW [REDACTED] was the gymnasium teacher. I don't know what he is doing with his life now.
37. The teachers formed part of the duty teams for evenings and weekend work. For night care we had local people that came in, both male and female and as we needed them. They came on at 10.00 pm.
38. We also had a gardener, HHX [REDACTED] who was probably the longest serving member of staff. Adam Burns was another gardener and they would both be around the school supervising.
39. Our matron was Neta Warnock and she was at the school for ten years. We didn't replace her when she left. We had a chef and other kitchen staff but other than kitchen duties they didn't play a part in the running of the school.
40. There was also administration staff. The head and deputy heads had their own secretaries and there was a main school secretary who has since passed away.
41. I was involved in the recruitment of staff. The headmaster and I would read through applications as they came in. We would speak about them and say how we felt and

perhaps put some on a short list. I wasn't at all the interviews but latterly I went along with the headmaster and the managers.

42. I didn't stay at the school, I had a house down in the town. Some of the staff did stay in two or three of the units we had on the school grounds.
43. I did go for the headmaster's job but the director of social work at the time told me that we would have to take every boy that they sent our way. I told him that we could not be everything to everyone and gave him my views. He told me I was talking myself out of a job. I said to him that I was saying what I felt was my experienced opinion. It was wrong just to flood the place with challenging kids but money ran out and that was exactly what happened. Thereafter the school closed.

References

44. In references, I was looking for someone who genuinely got a buzz when working with young people. I looked for someone who had something to offer and wasn't going to be someone who was just a talk person. Someone who was brilliant at football or brilliant at rock climbing or canoeing got a plus in my reckoning. I'm a great believer that education goes beyond the formal. I'd be looking for that, especially if I was looking for care staff, I was looking for people with a sense of humour or something I reckoned kids would identify with.
45. I think there was one or two references where I knew the referees. I'd give them a telephone call and it could be they would say, "*You're getting a good one there.*" That's what I would be looking for.

Volunteers

46. We did have volunteers working at the school. I had a neighbour who was interested in social work. She would come up to the school and supervise, not singularly but be there with other staff. She would sit at the pool table or occasionally read to the children. She eventually did qualify as a social worker.

47. There wasn't the same training or vetting checks for volunteers that I was aware of. In the case of my neighbour, she was able to work at the school because I knew her. I told John Wilson, the headmaster, about her and that she was a neighbour of mine and that was good enough for him. Volunteers were only working for maybe two hours a week.
48. The volunteers would be in the house units along with the staff that were there. They would maybe sit whilst kids were watching the telly or be in the room with them as a supervisor with staff regularly popping in and out.

Reviewing of Children

49. Both care and teaching staff provided full reports on the children for weekly review writing. These meetings were attended by the local authority and social workers, so we regularly reviewed the children in our care with reports from the house staff, teachers and social workers. My job was to chair all such meetings.

Reviews with parents

50. We would invite the parent along with the local social worker for a review meeting. One of my introductions was to say to the parent that we saw their child in a controlled environment but wanted to know before we started the review what issues they wanted to raise with us. If they were having difficulties at home we wanted to know what the feedback was from home so we could hopefully help.
51. These reviews happened about once every six weeks and would involve a local social worker, parent, member of the house staff and occasionally a teacher. If there was a child who was being difficult, say in the woodwork shop, these reviews would be a key part of our practice.

Supervision

52. Social care staff were supervised by myself both formally and informally and we did have regular meetings where good practice was recognised and weaknesses noted. Expectations were laid down, e.g., quality of report writing and consistency of practice. We had regular meetings but I would also meet individual staff from time to time and say, *"let's have a look at how things are going."* I would recognise if there was a good piece of work done by the staff member or maybe there was a change of practice and we needed to tighten up on certain issues. It was really down to earth practical things.
53. There was a supervision policy but given the demands of my time I have to admit that it fell short at times. I had other commitments like having to go to children's panels. It was a very demanding job but it was enjoyable.
54. Volunteers were supervised too. We had regular volunteers and student placements from universities and colleges. There were formal meetings two or three times a week where we would look at what they had been doing. We looked at the strengths of the individual to manage situations without necessarily running to the staff for guidance. I liked to see students take the initiative, even if they made mistakes because it tested out their personal authority.
55. Teachers had supervision from the head of their department and the deputy headmaster of education.

Strategic planning / School Policy

56. It was generally the remit of the headmaster and the managers when looking at strategic planning for instance taking girls into the school. There were a lot of meetings between the managers and headmaster in relation to this but also at times myself and the main staff were included.
57. The policy of the school was to treat each child within an environment that was safe and secure within a stimulating and caring setting where each child could achieve

confidence to return to their home and local school. That was the basic policy of the school.

58. In terms of strategic planning and written policies on how the school was to be run in terms of recruitment, child protection, complaints procedures and punishments, these were generally made known to us by the headmaster during staff meetings. He would enlighten the staff maybe on a recent paper from the home office and staff were generally kept up to date with expectations from what was happening out there.
59. I had the responsibility of overseeing safety issues for all outdoor activities.

Police Checks

60. Round about 1978, the Scottish Office sent a memo round saying that all staff had to be police checked. That was the first vetting process we had, before that it was just references. From the police checks, John Wilson, the headmaster, told me that we had a problem. He said that one of my care staff had previously worked in an assessment centre in Edinburgh and had been reported for being heavy handed in controlling children. John said to me that the staff member had to go. His name was HGK and he was out of the school within an hour. He was a housemaster at the school.

Mealtimes

61. We had a trained chef who came into the school. Her name was Helen and she would have been at the school during the school's last six to eight years.
62. Helen came to the school and said she was going to introduce two choices to the menu at lunchtime. I was quite proud of our dining room. I had it finished by the association for disabled people and they made our tables and chairs. It was nicely laid out.

63. The dining room was an important part of the day. There was a screen across the dining room and it doubled up as our conference room and court room.
64. A lot of thought went into the food and Helen is to get credit for that. I still see her in the street from time to time and we recall happy moments. If a child didn't eat the food they would be told that was all that was available and that they either ate it or they would have to do without. By the time tea-time came they were generally ready for their meal, the protest was over.
65. Nine times out of ten the children liked their food. They could leave food on the plate if they didn't like something, that was their choice. All meals would be taken in the dining room.
66. Supper time was a bit staggered depending on when the kids came in but we did want it over by 9.00 pm so kids could settle down and spend their last hour watching telly before bed at 10.00 pm.

Bedtime

67. There were three kids to a room generally. There were four beds in each room and five rooms per unit but generally we had three kids to a room. Each person had their own space although it wasn't always partitioned off in any way. Latterly, that was something I had in mind, to partition off areas so each child had their own private space as it were but we never got round to that before the school closed.
68. There was an element of choice as to who they got to share a room with. It made sense because it kept the noise down, kept the peace.
69. The night staff would come on at 10.00 pm and there would generally be two of them. They would overlap with the care staff who would be around until 10.30 pm. I would be on-call for so many nights per week. If there was any disturbance after the care staff went home, I would get a call and I would go up and deal with the situation. I'd say to them that if they wanted to watch telly the following night that they were going

the wrong way about it. I could go for a month and not get called up and another month when I'd be called up every second night.

Washing and bathing

70. Each unit had its own shower arrangements. We had nice clean shower areas and I felt it was very important they were kept as such. We also had a couple of baths upstairs but they were rarely used, kids opted for the showers because it was quicker. I can't recall if there were locks on the shower doors or not. It was recognised that if someone was in the shower then that was it. The showers would accommodate two or three boys at the most having a shower at one time. Generally, it would be one or two opting for a shower at one time.
71. Staff always monitored showers. They were taken generally after an activity. The school day was over by 4.00 pm, kids would relax between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm and there would be tea in between that. In the evening there were various activities so showers would generally be taken after that.

Leisure Time

72. There may be a game of football out the back, some people would go to the gym to play badminton, others would go for a road run or canoe down the river. They had a choice of activity they wanted to take part in.

Trips and Holidays

73. Every weekend there were trips to the beach at Yellowcraigs or up to Edinburgh, somewhere that would occupy the kids. Some would go canoeing with members of staff, other might go and watch a game of football.
74. At other times, we would take them camping in the Lake District. That would be over three or four days on average. There would be three maybe four members of staff along with six to eight kids. I never liked to take any more than that, it allowed us to

do things with them. It was kids who had an interest in canoeing, rock climbing or hill walking. More kids soon volunteered when kids came back from the trip saying they did this and did that. Classroom reports of camping were generally positive with photographs appearing in the school monthly magazine.

75. Kids had their own tents. There would be two or three to a tent. They knew they had to settle down at some point because Bill Whiteside and others would be there at 7.00 am getting them up. Other staff were Derek Young, who was a housemaster and had very good mountaineering and canoeing skills. Alan Faulks was also a housemaster. He had more general skills but would assist on these trips.
76. We had days out which I called 'me and my pal' days. We would take the kids to Moffat and they were to get back to the school by walking over the hills. They would get an extra day's leave if they were able to complete it. Me and my pal was a very popular thing.
77. There were also occasional trips which were organised by the education department.

Schooling

78. We had a school assembly at 9.00 am. That lasted generally no more than ten or fifteen minutes and consisted of talking about the day's events. Then it was off to classes. There would be a morning break at 10.30 am and then back until lunchtime. Lunch would last for an hour and a quarter and then school would continue until 4.00 pm.
79. The groups going on trips would be taken out of class but we did try and balance it out between the kids. If I took a kid out of class it would always be on the condition that they had to write up on their experiences of the trip. That could be quite amusing. We also had a school magazine and kids could submit an entry into that.

80. We had a very good English teacher. I'm not sure we followed the national curriculum but I am aware the children sat exams set by their teachers. It wasn't standard grades or anything like that.

Healthcare

81. For a long time, we had a matron. In theory, she would be the one that would arrange for the doctor to come in. She retired early and after that we all just took on the role so it could be myself or anyone else that was responsible if a kid needed attention. We had a very good service from the local doctors. They came up on a regular basis and gave the kids their jags.

82. Dentists were the same. There were regular trips to Lanark for the dentist.

Work/chores

83. All the kids had chores as part of their morning duties. Some would be responsible for the sitting room, making sure it was tidy and the papers were lifted up. One would have to sweep the yard. It was basic things and I would say was for fifteen minutes before breakfast.

Visitors

84. Social workers came to the school. As I've said, we had formal reviews once every six weeks or thereabouts. We would always encourage parents to be brought along with the visiting social worker. The parents and the social workers were entitled to have private time with the children. That was normal.

Family

85. I seem to recall generally, Thursday was the family visiting day but there was always the odd other time that we would feel it was in the best interest of the mum or dad to

come to the school. By and large it coincided with reviews of the children that parents would come along. Not all parents came and that was always sad.

Inspections

86. I don't think there was ever any concerns raised about Loaningdale. We did have inspectors come into the school. I think that was once per year and generally the date of the visit would be negotiated through the headmaster so we knew when they were coming.
87. Generally, it would be one inspector who would come and they would spend the whole day at the school and would have a meal with us. Rarely would they speak to me alone, maybe in the passing.
88. I remember there was this wee lad from Dundee. He was sitting at a dining table when I walked in with this inspector. I told the inspector that this was our dining room and that we were about to have lunch. I asked the wee lad if he would like to tell the inspector what the food was like now that Helen had introduced two choices. He said, *"Mr Whiteside, it's worse than it ever was, because now there's two things I dinnae like."*
89. I think the inspectors would speak to some of the children alone but not many. We tended to ask two kids to show the inspector around the school and to tell him something of what we were doing and what was happening in their unit. It gave them a chance to say what they wanted to say out with the presence of staff. That would be organised via the classroom. To my recollection the inspectors never came back to say there was anything they were concerned about.
90. There would be feedback from the inspections and the headmaster would normally make a statement at the morning assembly. He would perhaps inform the kids that the inspector had been at the school and had been very impressed with a, b and c but there was maybe more work we needed to do for instance in sitting exams. I don't ever recall seeing any written feedback from an inspector. That might be to do with my

memory, I honestly can't recall. I know that my first headmaster, John Wilson, would immediately share everything with me. Other headmasters just got on with the job and would only mention an inspector's comments to me in the passing.

Complaint process

91. If a child or a parent had an issue and wanted to make a complaint about something in the school, they would go to their social work department. If it was a really serious matter, they could call in the deputy or the director of social work. I honestly don't recall any issue the director of social work ever got involved in at all.
92. If there was an issue where for instance the child was getting involved in drugs whilst at home during the weekend, we would address that with the social worker, the child and the child's parents. We wanted to make the parents feel they were an important part of the process. All too often the parents just felt that their child was off their hands for a wee while.
93. I cannot honestly recall any issues. Nothing specific comes to mind. I'm sure at times things were recorded. Either in the house logbook or if it was a very serious matter I'm sure there would be an entry in the managers logbook.
94. Sometimes we would get feedback from families on how the children were doing at home. More and more parents were available on the phone. Sometimes parents would say that they saw little of the child when they were on home leave, when they were out hitting the drink and getting into trouble.
95. Occasionally the police would return a child. If so, the child would be confined to a house unit. That would only last for about a day and then we would involve him with others. The fact that they had been brought back to the school had hopefully given them the message.

Review of care/placement

96. The six weekly reviews would be recorded by house staff but I cannot recall either the headmaster or myself recording them formally. In retrospect maybe we should have.

Restraint Process

97. Restraint was used on children. It was a wrap around by two members of staff and generally involved wrapping your arms around the child. You had to use an amount of energy to get the child seated because they would be kicking like hell and making life very difficult. On occasions, they managed to land punches on staff. At times it was a difficult job caring for kids who didn't want to be there in the first instance.
98. There wasn't a written policy on restraint and maybe I failed there but we would talk it through at meetings. What was permissible, was made very clear to staff. I wish we had written an article on restraint.
99. If I had written a policy, I would have identified within the policy what approved restraints we could put into practice within the school. I would have included wrapping round the child. This would involve two staff members placing their arms around the child's shoulders and waist area until they managed to get the child seated. To avoid the child kicking out, each staff member would then place their own leg over the child's leg to prevent the child kicking out. This situation would last until we felt the child had sufficiently calmed.
100. In terms of strategic planning in relation to the more difficult children we were getting, we just had to up our game and be more alert. I don't recall any handout to staff we just generally responded to the situations we had. It was well known that physical restraint was only used to placate the child, calm the child down. That was the practice and it was for the child's safety and our own safety. The aim was to get the child seated and to calm them down.

101. When the girls started at the school we approached restraint the same way. It took two staff to hold a girl down when she got it into her head that someone had stolen her boyfriend for instance. We had some difficult situations with the girls. Male members of staff would restrain girls but there would always be a female member of staff present. It actually took the physical strength of a male member of staff for control. There were some very strong females. Fortunately, we didn't have too many instances like that. On the whole and listening to people speaking about their institutions, I reckon we came off pretty well.
102. The only training I got in restraint was from my brother who was a paratrooper. Every time he came home he would show me new tricks or holds. I suppose it's because I felt reasonably confident in myself. I always felt that if you knew the kid they were quick at calming down and sometimes saying sorry. They didn't hold a grudge.
103. I was made aware at senior staff development meetings that there were recognised methods of restraining difficult children e.g. wrapping round the child. I re-laid this to staff at Loaningdale during staff meetings and ensured they understood that was the way we restrained our children. I don't recall any practical training, it was all through discussion. I don't recall ever suggesting to social work that practical training would be helpful and certainly social work never suggested such training to us. I was not aware of any training being available for restraining children in a care setting.
104. There were no training techniques for me or my staff other than us talking to each other and saying that the idea was to get wrapped round the child so they couldn't thrash out, staying with it and not leaving them until you were absolutely certain they had calmed down.

Discipline and punishment

105. We were akin to a community based on A.S. Neill thinking that children should have a guided say in the running of the school.

Children's Court

106. The school had its own court and the children ran the court. They had their own president and assistants who would be on court duty for the month.
107. Something like bullying would go to the children's court. The boy responsible would be asked how he pleaded. After a few moans and groans, the boy would generally agree and the court would tell him he wasn't allowed to do that and order him to clean the toilets the next few nights.
108. If someone cheated someone out of their pocket money, the court may order them to pay a fine for that. Any pocket money taken from a child would stay within the school budget and be used for school excursions and such like.
109. Staff would always oversee the court meetings so we knew what was happening. If a kid was misbehaving I would sometimes say to them that they were going to be up before the court. That would generally work. We did see kids doing the tasks that the court dished out.
110. The court handed out fines, chores or confinement which may stop a boy from going out and taking part in a football match. The kids knew that it was general things that they would be told to do, tasks or taking off their time or taking off their pocket money, if they had been involved in theft.

Punishment at Loaningdale School

111. The children's court punishments were the same punishments the staff would give out except at a much lower level. The children themselves gave the punishments out at court however, in a more serious matter, where there was extreme bullying going on or the quality of life was being affected by breaking windows, the staff would move in. That would generally fall on me to decide on a punishment.

112. In a case of a broken window, I would reduce the child's pocket money for the following five weeks because that would be one healthy cost. I had this theory, and would explain to the child that a new window had to be paid for and that they would be putting something towards the cost of it. I would say that if they took a tantrum and did a crazy thing, they were going to have to pay for it. I would arrange for their pocket money to be reduced, not stopped but to be reduced for a considerable period. It was a token thing but it by and large worked.
113. If a pupil was causing an issue on transport whilst coming back from Glasgow, that would also become a staff matter. I took a dim view on that due to safety matters and it would result in the child not being allowed home the following weekend. That usually got the message across and was one of the more serious punishments we gave out. That was either myself or the headmaster who decided on that punishment. We needed those controls.
114. The duty staff would be responsible for giving out some punishments. They would also know who was on court duty and would stop someone from going to play football if they had been confined for the night by the court. That got the message home.
115. I personally didn't keep records of any punishment but journals would be written by house staff and they would make reference to a child being on court work. There was an expectation that if you did 'A' and 'B' then 'C' and 'D' would follow.
116. We never used physical punishment.
117. When on-call, I would pop in and walk around the units. I remember doing my usual one day and walking round the girl's unit about 9.00 pm. On this occasion, I remember they asked me if they could watch a late film. I told them they knew what the bedtime was but said if I didn't get a call from the house parents, I would think they had gone to bed on time.
118. About an hour later that night, I received a call from a police sergeant telling me he had three of my lassies down in the town in their night dresses. The police sergeant

said that one of the girls was already drunk because they had got into the back of a local shop and got beer there. I think it was 3.00 am before I got home having got them settled. I found that boys would plan things but lassies would do things as it came into their head.

119. The punishment for that would be that a member of staff would ensure they were in bed at 09.30 pm instead of 10.30 pm and if there was cost involved, they would be fined from their pocket money, a token amount. They seemed to accept that until the next time.
120. I remember an incident involving a boy called [REDACTED]. He had a chisel and he fell out with the joinery teacher George Hamilton who has since died. It was becoming very dangerous because this kid would have stabbed anyone. I came in on the scene and remember thinking I had to be very careful. I was not thinking of the welfare of the child, I was thinking of the welfare of the people roundabout, including myself. I said to George, let's keep talking to him until I very quickly put my hand down and grabbed the wrist he was holding the chisel in and managed to keep it away. I told the kids in the room that it was a serious matter and that I was taking [REDACTED] away so he was able to settle down. By this time, I had taken the chisel off him and I walked him away. Believe it or not, I had some sort of relationship with this kid. He was nicknamed [REDACTED] because he would flare up from time to time. I got him into a room with a member of staff and talked it through with him. That was the real world.
121. That incident would have been recorded in a house journal that [REDACTED] was put out of the class by Bill Whiteside and settled because he was threatening staff and others with a chisel. I don't think he got any punishment for that. I think it was containment more than anything else. Punishing that kid would make no sense at all, it was about bringing him down and containment. As I said, it was becoming more difficult as we got more and more difficult children from Strathclyde.
122. At staff meetings, it would be made clear that staff were to make sure that whenever there was an issue there should be two people present and to make sure it was a

holding job they were doing. We would talk through things and ask staff to be switched on to any pupil who appeared isolated, to ask themselves what was going on there.

123. Child protection was written about in journals and magazines that we read. 'Social Work Today' was a magazine I frequently read. I would talk to the staff about a good article I thought was relevant and put it up on the staff board. These things weren't written down, they were discussed informally at staff meetings.
124. On the whole, I find that young people I meet afterwards reckon they got a fair chance at the school. Their opinion is good and they generally can remember cracking days they had experienced.

Local Police

125. Latterly, the police were called maybe once a fortnight or once a month. It went in spates. We might have had a group of kids that were hell bent in making trouble, smashing a window just for the sheer hell of it.
126. I don't recall there ever being any high-level meetings between us and the police. The headmaster knew the local police as well and they would come up and chat to him. The police were made to feel welcome and we had them involved in football games and other games in the gym.

Running away

127. I would call the police if kids ran away from the school. The local police or police in Lanark would bring the kids back to the school or I would be called to go up to the police station and collect them. I had a very good relationship with the local sergeant.
128. I remember speaking to a boy called [REDACTED] who kept running away. I told him there was no use him running away because by the third day he was hungry and needed to eat and would end up stealing from a shop. By and large most kids would run away for three days before coming back.

129. [REDACTED] was a bright cookie. He ran away and went down to Hull, got on one of Olsen's Ships over to Norway and Sweden and had the cheek to send me a card saying, 'sorry Bill but I've broken your three-day record.' I've been down to London to collect him after he ran away. That lad became a radio operator way back when they had such a thing. He kept in touch with me for years.
130. I would always explore with the children why they were running away. I would ask if they felt they were being bullied at the school or whether there was a problem at home we needed to hear about and could address. The children would often tell me they were worried about what was happening at home or that they were being bullied by other pupils or just didn't like being confined at the school. For some, it was a challenge to prove to their mates that they could survive on their own away from the school. Any issues of concern raised by the children, I would ensure were addressed by myself or senior staff members.
131. I never felt or had reason to think the children were running away because of ill-treatment by staff at Loaningdale or in the past. There were often times that children would request to stay at the school during the weekends because of events at home. I don't recall a child ever telling me that they had run away because they didn't want to go home. It was difficult at times to know why a child was running away. There was not always an answer.

Discharge/Life after Loaningdale School

132. We did prepare children for leaving the school. Sometimes we would give them extra leave although that did cut into their education. It had to be a balance. Children did go home most weekends and sometimes we had long weekends.
133. Sometimes as a prize for perhaps having the best kept dormitory or something I would let some kids go home a day early, the Thursday instead of the Friday.
134. I recall ex-pupils from Wick came back to tell me that they had their own fishing boat and were making a living from it.

Loaningdale Approved School – A study of the impact of an experimental regime on its boys 1973 by P McMichael.

135. I have heard of a book about the school but haven't seen it. That would be an interesting book to get a hold of. Back in 1973 I was in the school and John Wilson was the headmaster. John based his thinking on the fellow A.S. Neill. It was all about the community, it was John who formed the school courts and the school was recognised as something completely different from approved schools at the time.
136. The school was unique, approved schools at the time had corporal punishment and had fairly harsh regimes. It sounds like the book was written by a student. We always had students at the school on placements.
137. I think it was GYF [REDACTED] who mentioned the book to me one night when we were having a drink but I haven't seen the book and not heard of the man who wrote it.

Awareness of abuse at Loaningdale School

138. I think it was just generally accepted that we knew what abuse was and we didn't see it happening within the school. We knew that abuse would be inappropriate touch to either boys or girls but I can't recall anything of that nature. Corporal punishment was a non-starter because nobody hit a child. I experienced coming from Geilsland where kids got the belt on the clothed backside. I often wonder how SNR [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] EZD [REDACTED] operated because he took all the punishment on himself and no other member of Geilsland staff could lay a hand on a child.
139. I don't recall any open discussion about what abuse was and what would not be tolerated in the school. It was taken as read that abuse didn't happen in the school. Anybody involved in any abuse would be immediately dismissed. I can't recall anything being read out about abuse. HGK [REDACTED] was instantly dismissed from the school when we learned of his previous behaviour towards children and being heavy handed.

140. I never saw any behaviour in Loaningdale that I would consider abusive. I certainly would think that any such abusive behaviour would have come to light. I'd like to think that myself and one or two others had such a relationship with the young people that meant they could instantly come and speak to us about any such thing. I would very much doubt that abuse would have gone on undetected. Simply because I was head of the living department, I had a relationship with the kids and felt that they could come and speak to me about most things. It was well known in the school that I was regarded as a listener.
141. I suppose there are always vulnerabilities when only one member of staff was working at one time but I felt kids were good at speaking up. If they were not getting to play football for instance they would be quick to come down and see me about it. Nine times out of ten I would say to the child that the teacher had made their decision or I would listen and say to the teacher that I was picking up that something else was happening and on the odd occasion the child would get out to play his game of football.
142. Occasionally, a member of staff would say that there was something bothering a child. I would ask if someone could have a word with the child. It might be something to do with home.
143. Some girls in the school were cutting their wrists. Nine times out of ten it was because they were flirting with a boy or a boy was flirting with them and they thought he was their boyfriend or girlfriend. I would be called in and see cuts up the girls arms and it was usually to do with boyfriends. We dealt with that very gently, first of all we needed to get the cuts cleaned and bandaged and the child needed to rest and have some peace. We would look into the matter and find out what the moment was. Invariably it was over a boy and a falling out. Generally, they were superficial cuts but nevertheless [REDACTED] quite a lot. Occasionally, if the doctor was up doing standard checking, he would note how the injury had come about.
144. For ongoing support from there, I would call it 'creature comfort'. If the child was sobbing her heart out in bed at night, I would get someone she was really comfortable with, one of the house mothers, to go and sit with her. If there was any issue, the house

mother would speak to me about it. I wanted the girl to feel that people cared about her. That's the way I would deal with it, common sense.

145. We had house mothers and heads of house that children could speak to. They were all very caring individuals. I tried to leave issues with them and I had every confidence in the house staff to deal with everyday matters. It was only more serious matters that they would come to me with. It was seen as a collective effort between the house staff and myself. Where there was cutting of the arms, I would always be informed.
146. We didn't have any individually appointed guidance teacher for each child. If a child had a good relationship with one of the teachers for instance, I could ask the teacher to give support if there was a problem.
147. In terms of changing child protection issues, I would say things did improve. When I was at Geilsland, I don't think I ever heard the term 'child protection'. As the Social Work Scotland Act came in, things became more focused and child protection became something we would discuss at staff meetings.

School Records

148. We had house journals and the managers had logbooks. At the end of each day the house staff would write out their journal and note any issues, if it had been resolved or if the house had been settled that night. The house journal was kept in the house unit. It would be seen by me or the headmaster if we wanted to see it. I have to say, because I knew the staff well, I took their word a lot of the time.
149. I don't know where these journals are now or how long we retained them for. I don't think they will still be around.
150. I would generally write children's panel reports for the school. GYF [REDACTED] a senior social worker, was also good at writing reports too. I wanted reports just to reflect and

give an accurate picture. Some people were very good with young people are not necessarily good at writing.

151. These reports and the house journals were kept in files within the school until the day the school closed. I left the files in the building and took it that the management would return the files in the fullness of time to the authorities of the children concerned.

Reporting to police/criminal proceedings

152. Two police officers came to my door a number of years ago, after the school had closed. It was about an accusation of abuse at Loaningdale. The officers said that a male from Glasgow had made an accusation of abuse that had happened in Loaningdale when he was there as a child. I don't know the police officer's names but they were from Glasgow and were in suits. They didn't give me the male's name or any other information about it at that time. I told them to go to the social work department if they wanted to find out who had been placed in Loaningdale because they weren't giving me a name.
153. They came back to me and they said that they had been to several social work departments and none of them had records of children placed in Loaningdale.
154. I learned later that it was a child who had befriended a member of staff after the school had closed down. The child had called into the member of staff's house. Somehow or other a report went back to the police. I didn't hear anything more about it. Sadly, the member of staff took his own life. He was as regular a chap as you could ever meet. He was GYF [REDACTED] The school had closed by this time. I don't know if the boy found GYF [REDACTED] someone he could talk to, I never got the detail. When the police came and told me that no records could be found I said to them that I found that hard to believe. I wasn't asked to give a formal statement about this matter.
155. There were no other police investigations that I was aware of and I was never involved in any investigation on behalf of Loaningdale into abuse or ill-treatment of a child.

156. I was never involved in the handling of reports or civil claims made against the school by former residents.
157. I don't know of any staff member at the school being convicted of the abuse of a child or children at the school other than **HGK** who had worked at an assessment centre in Edinburgh although I don't know if he was ever convicted. There was no suggestion that he had ever been heavy handed with children at Loaningdale.

Helping the Inquiry

158. The following names are of staff members from Loaningdale School who have been names as alleged abusers of children. I have been asked if I know these people and if so what I know about them.

HIA

159. **HIA** was in his forties or fifties when he was at the school. He was a little bit fiery in making his voice heard. He would raise his voice to kids quite a lot however there was never a pupil came to me about him. He was a metal work teacher and ran quite a good outfit. Kids liked making things and he would produce things they made. In general kids quite liked **HIA** I worked with **HIA** and the kids, he wasn't one for the outdoor activities. There was nothing in **HIA** behaviour that gave me any cause for concern either at the time or since.

HHX

160. **HHX** was the gardening man. He was rough and ready and was a great storyteller. I never had any child coming to me and saying **HHX** belted me or anything like that. Nothing to do with **HHX** behaviour towards children gave me cause for concern at the time or since. I learned that he had a gun and he shot rabbits with it. He only had it for one day and until I found out he had the gun. I told him to get rid of it immediately and he did. He was a country boy and loved to shoot

rabbits. I saw **HHX** with the children and he had good banter with them. That was his style, it was banter. He would have them sweeping the leaves and occasionally he would show me or say a child had made a good job of something. I liked that in him, that he would point to a job that a child did.

HGK

161. **HGK** was a housemaster. We've already talked about him.

LUJ

162. **LUJ** was a gentleman, he would never ever put a hand on a child. He was temporary headmaster when the previous head died. He and I worked together, he was fond of the outdoor world and he was good with kids and had a sense of humour. I would have thought, if you have **LUJ** name, it would be for positive reasons. I never heard any member of staff saying there was another side to him. Units were close knit and you would hear via the jungle telegraph if there were any concern. **LUJ** was a keen outdoor man and there is a bit of me that generally gets on with outdoor people.

GYF

163. **GYF** was a senior housemaster for fifteen years and was there until the school closed. He sadly is the chap that took his own life. He was excellent with the children, very patient, very understanding and joined me on expeditions where he was very supportive, very encouraging of a child who completed a rocky section of a climb. The mention of **GYF** has surprised me. There was no cause for concern there at all. The school had been closed for a number of years when I heard that this lad had stayed at **GYF** house. I was too busy working at Loanhead Social Work at the time and didn't speak to **GYF** about it. Next thing I heard, **GYF** had taken his life. I have no idea what that was about. **GYF** was a comforting individual for kids. They would go and speak to him and maybe the lad kept contact with him, I don't know. Occasionally that kid's name comes back to me and I did try to recall it but it escapes me. I got his name from one of the house mothers but she is no longer with us.

Leaving Loaningdale School, Biggar

164. I left Loaningdale in 1990 because the school closed. I went straight into a job at Loanhead Social Work Department. A lovely job, I was school liaison person and I was there for ten years until I retired in 2001. That was the end of my involvement with social work. I retired to my garden.
165. After leaving the school, I think I wrote a reference for Bob Bailey who was a climbing companion of mine but that was the only one. I got a reference from LUJ when I left. It would have got me into heaven. LUJ recognised that I brought about a change in the reviewing of children that was recommended to Strathclyde. This was to involve the parents of the child. Making parents who visited the school feel welcome. Give them a chance to speak to me if they wanted to. We all had our agenda for review meetings but what did the parents want to speak about? I don't know if LUJ recommended this to Strathclyde in writing or verbally.
166. It surprises me that allegations of abuse have been made against the school. As I said, HHX would raise his voice to kids and just maybe swear but by and large kids liked him.

Explanation for Report of Abuse

167. I feel a bit guilty that there's not more evidence of recording decisions. Maybe that's down to my memory but I think more formal recording of decisions should have been made. It's great in retrospect. I don't know if any of the people mentioned had to physically remove a child from a classroom. That would require an unpleasant scene of taking the child very firmly. There would be a phone call over to myself because I always wanted two people involved so the child didn't cause harm to themselves or the staff member.
168. It was a demanding job but very rewarding.

Other information

169. Given that I am now eighty five years of age and it is over thirty three years since I left working in residential social work, this report is as accurate as I can recall.
170. 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.....27.07.23.....