

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HEJ

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HEJ. My date of birth is 1958. I am 62 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Hammersmith in London. My mother had fallen pregnant out of wedlock and went to London to give birth to me. Shortly after I was born my mother and I returned to Port Glasgow. My mother was called and I don't know who my birth father was. I was an only child and had no brothers and sisters.
3. I resided with my grandmother called and my uncle in an area of Port Glasgow called Woodhall. As I grew up I attended Holy Family Primary School. I don't recall my mother having to go out to work.
4. I became a bit feral as I refused to go to school or to attend church. I just ran wild. Life was fine until my grandmother was taken into an old folks home and my uncle passed away. They were the two people who brought me up.
5. I don't know what my mother worked as but she took up with another man called who then became my step-father. My mother and step-father were alcoholics and they spent most of their time drinking. I was basically put out of the house in the morning to go to school or church but I never went and just ran wild.

6. I was out of control and was running around with other boys who were feral like me. I seem to remember that there was a Children's Panel that I attended and a decision was made that I needed to go somewhere that they could get control of me. I think that I was twelve or thirteen when I first went in front of the Children's Panel. I don't recall any social work involvement with me before that.
7. I was stealing vegetables out of neighbour's gardens and shoplifting food from shops as we had nothing to eat and I was living in poverty. My mother and step-father were spending all the money on drinking and gambling. I remember I had to take my stepfather's betting line down to the bookies and get one of the punters to put the bet on for me.
8. There were always parties at my house and I recall on one occasion when an "auntie" came and got into bed with me. This was when I was much older at age sixteen and in the army but I remember jumping out of bed to get away from her. That is how things were at my mother's house.
9. I must have been about thirteen when I attended a Children's Panel meeting. There were a lot of official people at the meeting. My mother was also at this meeting and all I can remember her saying was "put him away", inferring that I needed to be in a children's institution. The decision was made by the Children's Panel to send me to Bellfield Remand Home.

Care at Bellfield Remand Home, Dumbarton.

10. I can't remember going to Bellfield which is in Dumbarton but I remember when I arrived there were at least fifty boys already there. I think it was like an assessment centre where the authorities would work out where you were to go to next.
11. Bellfield was a Victorian style stone house on three levels. I remember that there was a small out building which had a metal work room. There was a dining room with a line of tables where you sat and faced the staff who were sitting at tables facing you.

12. The dormitories were locked and they had large glass panels with reinforced glass. The staff didn't need to come into the dormitory as they could just look through the glass and check on what was happening.
13. There must have been about six members of staff and about fifty boys aged between twelve and sixteen, Bellfield was an all-boys remand centre. I am unable to remember the names of any of the boys or members of staff who were at Bellfield when I was there. I seem to remember a ping pong table and a snooker table but I can't recall if there was a recreation room.

Routine at Bellfield Remand Centre.

First day

14. Bellfield was very regimented and I think that it was the evening time that I arrived there. I was handed some bedding and put into a room that was locked. My bed was pointed out to me and I was left to get on with it. It felt like I was in a prison with prison officers looking after me. I didn't have any personal possessions with me I only had what I was wearing on the day.

Mornings and bedtime

15. The first full day started with a breakfast of porridge. I don't think that the day was structured. I do recall that there was a fenced off area where all the boys were put into. They would chuck in a ball and you all played "murder ball". If the ball went over the fence or the stone wall that was one time you would ask the member of staff permission to go and recover it. This usually led to the delegated boy taking to his toes and absconding. I certainly did this one occasion I was asked to recover the ball.

16. I think that there was a bell which woke you up in the morning all the boys had to wear a uniform which was dungarees. I don't recall having to do any classwork but there were metal work and joinery classes held in out buildings in the grounds.
17. As the dormitories were locked through the night if you needed to use the toilet you had to get a duty staff member to let you out. I was never a bed wetter although this was a problem for other boys. I think that the bed wetters were humiliated by the staff. They had to take their bedding to be washed. I think that there was a woman working there but I don't know what her role was. She may have been a nurse but she dealt with the bed wetters.

Mealtimes / Food

18. The food was diabolical. The real treat was a Friday when you got two meat pies, beans and mashed potatoes. You would get watery soups and a lot of the food had no nutritional value. I don't remember any force feeding because all the boys would eat what was put in front of them.

Washing / bathing

19. I think that you could wash every morning and night time. There were showers but I can't remember how it was organised or when I had a shower.

Chores

20. We did have to perform some chores. I had to clean the toilets and also clean the floors. We had to make our beds and generally keep the place tidy.

Clothing / uniform

21. I seem to remember that we wore a uniform of some kind that may have been a set of dungarees but I can't be sure.

School

22. I don't recall doing any classroom work. There were sheds where you could do car mechanics or woodwork.

Leisure

23. I think I spent a lot of time in either the fenced off playground or in my room. I don't think we did anything different at the weekend. Apart from playing "murder ball" I don't recall any other leisure time activities.

Trips / Holidays

24. On one occasion we went to visit the Ballantyne's whisky distillery which was no more than a ten minute walk from Bellfield. I think that was the only trip I had at Bellfield. I recall that during the trip the guide told us not to put our heads into a large vat and breathe the fumes or we would pass out. I of course had to put my head into the vat and of course I passed out briefly.
25. I also recall at the distillery there were a lot of geese and I learned that they were encouraged by Ballantyne's to be there so they could act as guardians similar to the role of a watch dog. I have no idea why we went on a trip there.

Birthdays and Christmas

26. I don't think that I was there over Christmas and I don't remember any birthday celebrations.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

27. I don't recall any visitors from my family coming to see me. I don't remember any social work involvement with me at Bellfield. I had no contact with the outside world and no one was explaining to me why I was there.

Healthcare

28. I don't recall visiting or being seen by a doctor or a dentist. There was a lady member of staff who may have had an unofficial Matron's role and was able to deal with minor injuries. She may just have been someone's wife.

Discipline at Bellfield.

29. If you did something wrong you got a kick in the backside, a clip round the ear a punch or a slap. Not all the staff hit you but it was very common place and it could be for anything. For example if you talked back, broke something or the likes it didn't take much to be punished. I don't recall anyone being injured as a result of these punishments. Don't recall a school belt or anything like that.
30. If you ran away you would put into a locked room and you would have to stay there for as long as they deemed appropriate. They could also take away any privileges and on one occasion they did not let me have my pie, beans and mash on a Friday and all I got was watery soup.
31. I had to constantly ask myself the question why did the staff have to hit you for very minor things that went on and what did I do to deserve this. They did it because they could and it was their way of keeping control. They thought it was the way to make you a better person but all I wanted was to get away from the place.

Gang culture at Bellfield.

32. I don't recall much of a gang culture although a lot of the boys were in gangs in their own neighbourhoods. I remember the "Boys United Never Die Young" and "Tiny Sinn Fein" being the main gangs. There was more of a religious rivalry between Protestants and Catholics.

Running away

33. I ran away on a few occasions but I never got any further than the train station. It was usually the staff that caught you and brought you back. I never got very far. I would get a clip round the ear or a kick on the backside for running away. You could also be put into a locked room for a day.
34. I ran away because I didn't like being there and it was a scary place. The staff never asked me why I ran away and I don't think I ever tried to explain it to them.
35. I recall an incident where some of the boys decided to try and escape from the dormitory. One of the boys whose name I can't remember used the bunk beds to swing on and then tried to break the reinforced glass. What happened was that he cut the soles of his feet open and ended up being taken to hospital. I don't recall seeing him again after he went to hospital so I don't know the outcome of his treatment. There was a lot of blood and we had to use towels to soak it up.

Abuse at Bellfield Remand Home.

36. I recall that staff at Bellfield were all like prison officers in that they all dressed the same. They would sit at a table in the dining room where you would be eating and light cigarettes which they would leave burning in an ashtray. This was done deliberately to taunt the boys who smoked because the boys were not allowed to smoke when they were at Bellfield.
37. There was physical abuse going on all the time I was there. Boys would be slapped and punched by the staff. It went on every day and I saw it happening to other boys. It was just considered to be normal behaviour. There was no sexual abuse.

Reporting of abuse at Bellfield Remand Home.

38. There was no one to tell about the abuse happening at Bellfield. Your only contact with adults was with the staff and you couldn't tell them as they were the abusers, Some of the staff who didn't do the corporal punishment would not have listened to what you had to say and I don't think I would have got anywhere with them.
39. I didn't know that there were Inspectors who were supposed to be looking out for you. There was no outlet to voice your concerns to. There were no telephones and these people had complete control of you. I was controlled by fear and as such I had no respect for the staff because you cannot respect someone you fear.

Leaving Bellfield Remand Home.

40. I have no idea how it came to be that I left Bellfield Remand Home. They just came to me one day and told me that I was going to another place. I remember being put into a car and driving for what felt like ages until I arrived at Falkland House in Fife. It was a place run by the Christian Brothers called St Ninian's. To my knowledge I didn't have any personal possessions to bring with me.
41. There was a high of turnover of boys at Bellfield so leaving there did not come as a surprise to me. It was just like a staging post and a lot of the boys were having their first experience of the care system. I was like a new fish in the pond and I felt just like that. I was not there for a long period of time at Bellfield but I can't be sure exactly how long it was.

Care at St Ninian's Residential Care Home, Falkland, Fife.

42. I think that it was a staff member from Bellfield that took me to St Ninian's but I can't be sure. I remember arriving and seeing this huge country house in the middle of the countryside. It looked lovely. I can't remember much about the first day apart from the grandeur of the establishment that was Falkland House.

43. I am not sure what time of day that I arrived but I remember thinking that life was looking up and that this was going to be a great place to stay.
44. St Ninian's was run by "God's gestapo" the Christian Brothers. SNR [REDACTED] was called BHD [REDACTED], there was Brothers Sweeney, Farrell and Ryan. There were four or five Brothers. There was a nurse, a cleaner and a cook. I think that there was other lay teaching staff but I can't be sure.
45. It was an all-boys school where the numbers varied. I think that there were between twenty and thirty boys in dormitories. I think that the ages ranged between twelve and sixteen.
46. I recall the dormitory had two rows of beds with the headboard against the wall. There was also a room in the dormitory where one of the Brothers slept. It was "boxed off" to give some privacy. I think that there were about twelve boys in each dormitory. You had your own bed and a bedside table.
47. I remember that the Brothers would record the top forty songs in the hit parade on the radio and play them back to you at night when you went to bed.

Routine at St Ninian's Residential Care Home, Falkland, Fife.

48. I don't recall who woke you up in the morning. I would get washed and dressed and then go down for breakfast. After breakfast you would go to school classes which were held in the grounds of St Ninian's.
49. You would have lunch half way through the day and dinner at night. I also think that you had supper before you went to bed. I think that there were sporting activities in the afternoon. I recall that I won some medals for orienteering and cross country running. Being interested in orienteering and cross country running also helped me to run away.

50. In the evening time there was a games room to play in. I remember girls from the village coming up to the grounds to speak to us. The Brothers were not happy with the girls visiting us. I think that I was in bed about 9:00 pm. I think that this went on for six days a week and Sunday was for church.
51. I think that there were four dormitories but there were not enough boys to fill them so they probably had only two of them in use. I think that the brothers took turns to look after the children in the dormitories. To be honest I am not sure how the staff managed that. I think that I was in the same dormitory all the way through my spell there.

Food

52. I think that the food was alright and it was better than Bellfield. I don't recall anyone complaining about the quality of the food. I don't recall any of the boys being force fed food they couldn't eat.

Washing and bathing

53. There were showers available to use at any time. I don't think there were baths. I think that you showered at least once a week or if you had been doing sports. There was no privacy and the Brothers would be supervising. There was all sorts of sexual abuse going on in the showers involving the Brothers.
54. This is all a bit sketchy to me and I feel that I only dreamt this and wondered if it happened. Brother Ryan did sexually assault and rape me.

Chores

55. You had to make your own bed and the bed wetters had to deal with their soiled sheets. There were cleaners employed at the school and I don't recall having to do any cleaning or clearing up after meals.

School at St Ninian's.

56. I had absolutely no interest in attending school. I just didn't pay any attention to the teachers. I doubt that the Brothers or teachers had proper teaching qualifications. It was very basic education and didn't lead towards passing any exams. They didn't seem to care about my lack of education. I think that they were required to provide education and that is what they did to a very poor standard. They were ticking a box for the authorities.
57. Brother ^{BHD} [REDACTED] was a psychopath and you would get regularly hit for very minor things like not paying attention. I would often get a clip round the ear. He would also hit you on your knuckles with the sharp edge of a ruler which was very painful. I watched him punch and kick a pupil to the ground. It was clenched fist punching. I can't recall who that pupil was.

Discipline

58. I don't remember a school belt being used. It was mainly clip round the ears or in the case of Brother ^{BHD} [REDACTED] you would be assaulted by kicking and punching. There was no formal discipline. You could be locked in the dungeon if you ran away. This was a room which was in the basement of the building. There were no lights or windows and the door was locked. There was a bed of some description and a bucket to use as a toilet.
59. I don't remember much about the civilian staff or how they punished you. I can't even recall their names.

Trips and leisure

60. You were pretty much left to your own devices. You would often share a cigarette with some of the local lassies who came into the grounds and spoke to you. The Brothers did not like this happening. I think at that stage I was questioning my sexuality because of the sexual abuse we were being subjected to by the Brothers. If you were caught speaking to the girls it usually ended up that you would get a slap.
61. There were no organised games or trips that I can remember. I don't recall a television or anything like that. There were no trips to the local cinema. The only thing we had was the music of the top forty hits on the UK charts being played to us when we went to bed.

Healthcare

62. I did see the nurse at St Ninian's who looked after the daily cuts and bruises suffered by the boys. You were never alone with the nurse and one of the Brothers was always in attendance so you could not tell her how you came by your injuries. The anal bleeding I had as a result of being raped by Brother Ryan I had to look after myself. I don't recall seeing a doctor or a dentist at St Ninian's.

Visits/trips/holidays.

63. I am sure that no members of my family came to visit me at any time I was at St Ninian's. I don't recall any of the boys getting visitors. I don't recall seeing a social worker. I don't remember any official visits. I didn't go home the whole time I was there. No one explained to me why I was there or what was going to happen next.
64. I didn't go on any trips away although I know that the Brothers took some of the boys on these trips. Knowing what I know now I am glad that I didn't go on these trips as I suspect that the boys would be sexually abused.

Religion

65. The school was run by the Christian Brothers and it was a Catholic School so you did attend mass on a Sunday. I don't recall any preaching or prayers during the week.

Christmas and birthdays.

66. I can't remember either my birthday or Christmas when I was at St Ninian's. I am not even sure whether I was there at these times. I know I was there for two years so I must assume I must have been there but I don't recall any celebrations.

Running away.

67. I ran away twice during me spell at St Ninian's. Despite my cross country and orienteering skills I was caught quite quickly by the police who knew the area and had cars to catch you. The reason I ran away was because I had been sexually abused. I didn't know in my own mind if the sexual abuse I suffered at the hands of the Brothers was normal behaviour. I was a young boy with no sexual experience. There was no way of resisting or fighting back and I had to escape.
68. After I was raped by Brother Ryan I decided to run away with another boy who had also been raped by either Brother BHD or Brother Farrell. Despite trying I just can't remember that boy's name. I think that we managed to get to Glenrothes which was a new town under construction and the whole place was a large building site.
69. The police caught me and rugby tackled me to the ground. I tried to explain to them that the reason we had run away was because we were being abused at St Ninian's. The next thing we were handed back over to the Christian Brothers who were our abusers. It was a ridiculous situation we were put back into the fire.

70. The second time I ran away the circumstances were very similar in that we were caught by the police and returned to St Ninian's despite the fact we told the police that we were being physically abused by the Christian Brothers. We spent a short period of time in the cells in a police station before we were returned to St Ninian's. I think that it was a sergeant and a constable that dealt with us. I don't recall any social workers visiting us at the police station. In those days "children should be seen and not heard" and that was very much how we were treated by the police. I did tell the police that I didn't want to go back to St Ninian's but it didn't make any difference.
71. When we were returned to St Ninian's me and the other boy were split up. I was put into a room the boys called "the dungeon" which was in the basement of the building. There were no lights or windows and the door was locked. There was a bed of some description and a bucket to use as a toilet. I don't know how long I was there until the Brothers let me out. I don't know what happened to the other boy.
72. On the second occasion I was returned to St Ninian's Brother ^{BHD} [REDACTED] set about me and physically assaulted me by punching and kicking. I think that it was only about six weeks between the first and second times that I ran away. It was quite soon after the second time running away that I was moved to another care home.

Abuse at St Ninian's School, Falkland.

73. There was all kinds of sexual abuse committed by the Brothers. They would watch the boys showering where there was no privacy. It was voyeurism. They would come into the dormitories at night time and feel under the covers of the sleeping boys. They would feel our genitals and allegedly check that we had not wet the bed. This was my first introduction to sex and my first ejaculation was at the hands of one of the Brothers.
74. I was raped by Brother Ryan. All I can recall was being grabbed from behind and then raped. I remember how painful some parts of my body were. I was in my own bed when he got into it and raped me. It happened through the night.

75. There were times when all the boys were made to get up out of bed and stand at the foot of their bed naked. It was usually well into the night and everyone was drowsy with sleep. The Brother would put the lights on and check to see if any of the beds were wet. It didn't matter if you were a bed wetter or not you all had to get out of bed and take off your pyjama bottoms. They would then touch your privates to make sure that you were dry.
76. Brother ^{BHD} [REDACTED] was the most violent Brother. He was a teacher and he was very violent to the boys in his classroom. He would hit you on the knuckles with a ruler. He would launch the wooden blackboard duster at you. It was like someone flicked a switch and he would flip and his temper would take over. He would literally beat a boy till he fell to the floor. He would punch and kick them. He was like an animal. You were beaten for not being able to answer a question.

Reporting abuse at St Ninian's

77. I tried to tell the police that found me when I ran away about the emotional and physical abuse I was suffering at St Ninian's. They didn't seem to care as nothing was done. I did not tell anyone about the sexual abuse that I suffered.

Leaving care at St Ninian's, Falkland, Fife.

78. I must have been at St Ninian's for between a year and eighteen months. I was not consulted about my move to a new home. I think that it was a social worker that took me in a car to the next home. I was taken to St Andrew's List D School, Helensburgh. I can't recall much about the journey but part of it may have been by train. I think that I was now about fourteen years old and was to stay here for two years.

Care at St Andrews List D School, Shandon House, Rhu, Helensburgh

79. I recall that St Andrew's was across the road from Faslane Naval Base. I can remember that there was a camp for the Greenpeace protesters. I recall that it was an old Victorian style country house set in its own grounds. There were some more modern out houses in the grounds. I also recall the long driveway and that there were members of staff residing in some of the modern houses.
80. There was a head man but I can't recall his name. Despite the fact it was a Catholic run school there were no Christian Brothers. Each school house had a head of house. I remember the names of some of the staff, there was a Mrs Smith, a Mr Boyden who the boys nicknamed "Basil". There was a Canadian man who took you for sports but I cannot remember his name. They were the main people I dealt with but there were other staff.
81. It was an all-boys school. There must have been twenty boys in each house making a total of sixty. They were all aged between thirteen and sixteen. I think that there were two dormitories in each house. The houses were self-contained and they had their own kitchen and dining areas. It was a work based place and there were no classrooms for teaching. I didn't leave with any academic qualifications.
82. I remember that there were three school houses called Rhu, Shandon and Fruin. I was in Fruin House and I recall that the head of house was called Mrs Helen Smith.

Routine at St Andrews List D School.

83. You did not get any schooling at St Andrews it was a work based place where you were taught practical skills for gardening, joinery, painting and decorating and metalwork.

84. You would be woken up about 6:30 am. You would get washed and dressed and then go for breakfast. After breakfast you would go to your allocated work for the day. It was ideal for me as I didn't have to do any school work. You would get lunch and then back to work.
85. All of the work was done in the grounds and we would maintain the building and gardens. We also built the headmaster's house from scratch. We didn't do the specialist stuff like gas and electricity as that was left to the tradesmen.
86. After work was finished we would have an evening meal and then we had spare time to watch television or use the facilities in the games room. There was a lot more to do compared to St Ninian's. I recall that you had a supper of tea and toast and would be in bed at 10:00 pm. I don't think we were locked in the dormitories but I can't be sure. You could get up in the night and use the toilet. I don't recall any issues with bed wetters. The showers and toilets were situated in your own house.
87. While I was at St Andrew's I was given permission to go home on leave to visit my mother and stepfather if I wanted to. I would travel by bus to get the ferry across the Clyde to Port Glasgow. The longer that you stayed the more trust you earned from the staff and this allowed you to have more freedom.

Food

88. The food was very good. You got a cooked breakfast in the morning. You could help yourself to as much as you wanted and there was no shortage of food.

Clothing

89. You were given boiler suits and wellie boots for digging. You were not given any safety gear or anything like that. It was basic labouring gear. Most of the time it was a pair of jeans and a tee shirt.

Showering and bathing.

90. You would be working all day so you had a shower at the end of the working day to clean up. I don't recall any issues with staff watching you are anything like that. You did have privacy but there were no curtains on the showers.

Chores

91. You would be working as a labourer most of the day as you didn't attend school. On one occasion I had to go under the floorboards to deal with an infestation of cockroaches. It was Helen Smith my house mistress who asked me to sort the problem. While I was under the floorboards spraying the cockroaches someone nailed the floorboard back down as they forgot I was under there. I am not sure how long I was there but I was shouting for help. I was breathing in all the stuff I had been spraying to eradicate the cockroaches. I felt very claustrophobic. I was never sure whether it was some sort of joke but I did not find it funny.

Serious incident involving one of the boys at St Andrew's

92. I am unable to remember the name of the boy this happened to but he was in the same house as me. While we were at St Andrew's we would often be sent to a company to gain work experience. On this occasion one of the boys was sent to a forestry company. At the end of the shift the workforce climbed aboard one of the lorries used for transporting the logs. The boy was unable to fit in the cab so he climbed up onto the stacked logs. When the vehicle was in motion the logs moved and the boy was crushed and died of his injuries. I don't know what the outcome of this event was.

Religion

93. I don't think that I ever attended church when I was at St Andrews.

Healthcare

94. The house mistress Helen Smith dealt with all minor medical complaints she was the medic for the school. I don't recall going to see a doctor or a dentist.

Visits/inspections

95. I don't think that I had any visits from relatives and I don't remember any of the other boys having visitors. I don't think I saw the social worker on any occasion I was at St Andrew's. I don't think that there were any official inspections in all the time I was there. It was the same situation for me as no one explained why I was there and what my future was.

Leisure time and trips.

96. We had plenty of spare time. I was allowed to have an air rifle while I was there, I recall going up to an old railway track which ran at the back of the school grounds. I used to shoot the pigeons that were there.
97. I can recall going on the school bus to Glen Fruin where there was a loch that you could swim in. You also did a lot of hill walking and canoeing. I recall spending one New Year's Eve in a shelter on the top of Ben Nevis. We were with some members of the Navy and I recall them handing round some rum when the bells chimed for the New Year.

Running away

98. I never had to run away when I was at St Andrew's. I was very happy when I was there and I could go home for weekends if I wanted to.

Discipline

99. There was a room that we called "the cooler" where you could be put if you broke the rules. During the winter it was freezing and during the summer it was very hot. You were only put in it for at most a couple of hours. There was no physical punishment.

Abuse at St Andrew's List D School, Helensburgh.

100. I did not suffer any sexual or physical abuse during the whole two years I was at St Andrew's. Unlike St Ninian's the staff never hit you or punished you with corporal punishment. The regime was a bit like child labour and there was no requirement for physical punishment. The boys were used as labour for doing all the manual tasks like digging ditches or breaking up concrete. I don't think we were paid for the labour.
101. I do recall that I was very proficient in using the Kango hammer which meant I didn't have to do the much harder pick and shovel work. On one occasion I had another task to perform so I left one of the other boys called [REDACTED] to use the Kango hammer. While he was using it the hammer broke down. [REDACTED] tried to fix it but ended up blowing all the electric circuits. I went to report the breakdown and got the blame for breaking it. I was then put back on the pick and shovel detail.

Leaving care at St Andrew's Helensburgh

102. All in all I had a fairly positive experience at St Andrew's. There was no abuse and although we had to work hard labouring I didn't have to attend school which I had no time for. We also had a lot of freedom and spare time. We could go home if we wanted at weekends. It was a huge improvement on Bellfield and St Ninian's. I would say I was a model student.

103. It was still the case that no one explained what was to happen to me and what my future would be. I expressed an interest in joining the army so I was taken to the recruiting office in Glasgow. I had no desire to go home because nothing had changed and I realised it would not be the clever thing to do. I was told that they even had a letter of reference from the Scottish Secretary to say that I was of good character. I have no idea how St Andrew's managed to get that.
104. I was accepted as a recruit by the army and so I left St Andrews. I was now sixteen and became a boy soldier. I had to report to Bridge of Don Barracks in Aberdeen to start my training.

Life after being in care

105. I stayed in the army for twelve years and joined the Argyll and Southern Highlanders. I went on to serve in Northern Ireland, Canada, Germany, America and Cyprus. I spent five years in Northern Ireland because I volunteered to serve there. A lot of the soldiers I served with came from a similar background as myself.
106. Life at home was still the same. My parents were living in poverty and still drinking and gambling. I didn't go home very often especially after one of the "aunties" that hung around my parent's house got into bed with me. I immediately got out the other side to get away from her. There was another occasion someone painted on the windows of my parent's home "IRA Brits out".
107. My parents stayed in a ground floor flat and in successive years the roof of the tenement building blew off. All the other residents apart from my parents were temporarily re-housed. For some reason my parents had to stay despite the water leaking into their house and running down the walls.
108. My step-father passed away and so my mother moved out of Port Glasgow and got a nice lodge cottage on an estate near [REDACTED].

109. After twelve years I left the army with the rank of corporal. I met my wife and now have two girls and a boy. I also have two grandchildren. I have been married for twenty eight years. I worked as range warden at [REDACTED] army barracks. I worked for the M.O.D. I am still working as an engineer to do with COVID safety.
110. My mother was a drinker right up to the time she passed away. She died of cancer but she did manage to meet her grandchildren. I stayed in contact with her all my life.

Impact

111. I have been affected in so many ways. I started life with a “handicap” in my home life. I started drinking heavily when I was in the army and serving in Germany. There was a big drinking culture for most of the serving soldiers there. I was also self-harming. It wasn't until later life that I was diagnosed as being autistic.
112. When I left Germany which was the best and the worst of my army experiences I managed to get away from the drinking culture and things changed. My counsellor has often told me that what I did was develop a cloak or a shield around myself which served me well when I was in the military but now this cloak had served its purpose and it was time to try to shake it off.
113. I was not good at relationships. When I came out of the army I never thought I would get to be where I am now sitting here with a wife, family and grandchildren. I didn't plan this as I just drifted into it. I live day to day. I have always been quite relaxed in the army but find it more stressful dealing with civilians. I keep getting told to “play the game” but I keep asking what the game is and what are the rules? The life I knew in the army was that when you were paid a salary it was for beer tokens.
114. I have not had many relationships. I did have problems with authority in the army and I spent some time locked up because of my attitude towards the officers. I have always considered myself to be honest and I have learned that this is not always the best way forward.

115. On one occasion in army life a bayonet went missing. The Corporal lined up the men and told us that if the bayonet was returned and laid on a table in the barracks within the next hour nothing would happen. I applied my mind and did my own search and found the bayonet. I took it back and put it on the table. As I placed it there the corporal and the other officers came out of the shadows and caught me. They would not believe the story I was telling them. It was an example of my honesty causing me problems.

116. There was another occasion when I was walking back to camp late at night when I came across two boys who had been assaulted. I stopped to give them some first aid and try to help them. The police were called and I was accused by them of assaulting the boys. I spent a night in the cells before my name was cleared. It is because of incidents like that and the interaction I had with authority when I was in care that I have little trust of people in authority.

117. I feel that the whole care system let me down as it was allowed to do what it wanted with very little supervision. When faults with the system were identified they were never investigated or followed up. I can't believe that I was the only person who made a complaint about my treatment.

118. What happened has made me what I am. I do not know what that is. It is only the people I know that can reach that conclusion. Due to my relationship issues I can count the number of friends I have on one hand. I do know that I could have very easily gone off the rails and lived a very different life.

119. I think I got through everything because I locked it away and didn't think about it. Now I get flashbacks and am not sure whether they are real or not and or if they happened. I saw a counsellor supplied by my work for dealing with discipline problems I was having. They arranged twelve sessions. At the end of the sessions the psychologist said that she thought I was autistic and suffered from Asperger's. She could not make the diagnosis as she was not qualified. I never really talked about my time in care with the counsellor as she was examining me for the other conditions I was referred to her for. My time in care was hardly mentioned.
120. In 2017 I to see a psychiatrist at Fernbrae Hospital in Dundee who confirmed the diagnosis of being a functioning autistic Asperger sufferer. I was prescribed drugs but the drugs had to be taken in conjunction with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. I was unable to get the CBT because of NHS waiting times so I bought the drugs separately and self-medicated. I am engaging with Future Pathways now to try to get some more support.

Reporting of Abuse

121. The only times I tried to report the abuse I suffered was to the police who brought me back to St Ninian's when I ran away. They didn't seem to listen and just took me back to a place I was being abused at. I don't think that they believed me and nothing was done about it.

Records

122. I have never sought to recover my records from my time in care. I am currently in the process of seeking redress for my time spent in care. The money although it would be nice is not the primary reason. It is to get recognition for what happened to me in the care system. I am now keen to see my records.

Lessons to be learned

- 123. There were too many of these independent organisations involved in running institutions that cared for children. There was little or no monitoring of these places. In my experience there were no visits or checks made. I don't think that The Christian Brothers were even qualified to teach children. I think that all these places should be run by the Scottish Government and there should be accountability.

- 124. Training of people who are responsible for working with and teaching children should be more than just complying with the current disclosure rules. I don't think that is enough. I have experience of dealing with children through my work with army cadets and although I am not a social worker I feel that I should have more training for working with and identifying issues that children may have. Youth organisations are like a sweetie shop to the paedophiles and it is important to get a firm grip of this.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 125. I would like the Inquiry to enforce some of the recommendations that I have made. I would like to see the survivors of abuse being recognised and redressed for what happened to them. It would be nice to receive an apology.

- 126. 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..... 02 June 2021