

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GUE

Support person present: No

1. My name is GUE though I was born GUE which was my dad's name and is the name on my passport. GUE was the name I was known as when I went into care and is what everyone knows me by. My date of birth is 1983. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care


2. I was born in Glasgow and have one sister called who is four years older than me. My mum was called but I would rather not name my father who was abusive to my mum. This was why me and my sister first went into care in Glen Rosa when I was a year old.
3. My mum suffered from terrible clinical depression as a result of the abuse from my dad and the fact that my sister's dad, we have different fathers, raped her. My mum had a really bad childhood and was abused as a child. Her mum was a paedophile and my mum had my sister at a very young age so her early life was full of trauma then she met my sister's dad who was also a really bad guy.

4. My mum then met my father, another bad guy, who set the house on fire when I was one year old so we left and moved to Castlemilk from Drumchapel. Obviously I don't remember any of this but it's what I've been told but [REDACTED] says that my mum's clinical depression meant she wouldn't get out of bed and couldn't look after my sister and I.

### **Glen Rosa Children's Home, Glasgow**

5. 


Secondary Institutions - to be published later


6. [REDACTED] tells me that we were in Glen Rosa for about a year when we were sent back to our mum by social workers. Apparently mum didn't want us back but social workers were hell-bent on returning us to her and dropped us off there anyway even though mum was still suffering from depression. Apart from being in Glen Rosa I was also fostered for a while before I was four but all I recall is that they liked me but not my sister and would take me to church with them but leave her at home.
7. Social work apparently said to my mum that they were going to try and get us adopted or fostered on a full-time basis but my mum didn't want that.
8. I went to Netherton Primary from Primary one to four then Carmunnock Primary School from Primary four to seven. Social workers knew we were being beaten and at one point I was sent to school with no pants on and was sent home. Mum wasn't feeding us and was neglecting [REDACTED] and I and we went back into care. A social worker would come to mum's and she was brilliant to us.
9. [REDACTED] became almost like my guardian and protected me when I was younger. While we were still living in Castlemilk our mum simply didn't have the necessary parental

skills and was having no support that we were aware of though it's possible that she was offered support and didn't accept it and we weren't aware of it. I'm sure she would have been difficult for anybody to work with and would probably disengage from any support offered. Life was bad for me and [REDACTED] and we often went without food. [REDACTED] lasted until she was fifteen or sixteen before she got out though she felt terrible about leaving me with my mum.

10. When I was about twelve I burnt my foot badly with the chip pan when left alone. I didn't want to phone anybody as I knew my mum would get into trouble for leaving me alone. When she came home she was mad at me even though she could see that my foot and the floor were all burnt. She at first refused to take me to the hospital but her then boyfriend said that she must take me to the hospital or I would end up really sick. My foot looked like it had gangrene. So I was taken to the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow by my sister's friend.
11. A couple of days later I was back home and my mum had battered me again and I had two black eyes so I jumped out of the window, we were on the ground floor, and made my way to the social work department in Castlemilk. My social worker was called Irene.
12. They took me to my mum's doctor who photographed the bruises and after that I was removed from my mum's house and taken to Maxton Children's Home in Parkhead. I was then sent to Homehead then got sent back to Maxton. I was not the easiest kid to deal with and was a difficult child. I was traumatised.

### **Maxton Children's Home, Glasgow**

13. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
- 

14.

15.

16.

17. My mum was done with child abuse and appeared at Glasgow Sheriff in the family court. It was decided that I should go to Cardross Assessment Centre after I appeared at a children's panel on a Section 15 order which my mum had to sign. This was a voluntary order but what annoys me is that it was clear to those concerned that it wasn't me or my sister causing the issues. It was my mother though all the focus was on us.

18. By signing the order it meant that my mum agreed to it and to the fact that I was being put into an assessment centre. In her mind that said that I was the problem, not her, and that I needed to be assessed. That took me a long time to fix in my mind as I was only a child at the time who wasn't cared for properly.

#### **Cardross Assessment Centre, Cardross**

19. A social worker, who may have been called Irene, took me to Cardross and I remember jumping out of her car when we got to Dumbarton and trying to run away but the police

soon caught me. Cardross was a hell-hole and you weren't allowed your shoes which was to stop you running away and which I know now is against a child's human rights. Instead you had to wear slippers or nothing, simply to stop you running away.

20. There was a long driveway up to the main building which had adjoining units and there was a nice grassy bit outside which looked nice and the place itself looked pretty though the building is long gone. I have no idea who actually ran the place but I would assume it was the local council.
21. When I was older I tried to find out about Cardross but could find nothing. It was as if the place never existed though I knew it had. You couldn't move freely between the units as, while your bedroom door was always open, the main doors to each unit were locked. I was one of the youngest children in the centre and many of the other kids had been sexually abused or were self-harming and many had had horrific childhoods.
22. Each unit had a different manager but there's a lot about it that I don't remember. Other than getting battered one time I don't remember the staff being bad but it was very much a locked up place and you had to ask permission for everything. I kept a diary at the time that I still have which might have more information in it about Cardross than I can remember.
23. I was in a unit with twelve other children, all boys, and was supposed to be in Cardross for three weeks but was there for six months and maybe even as long as nine months. We had our own individual rooms and in our rooms we only had a bed and wardrobe and both were attached to the floor and wall and the door was always open. Each unit also had a living room and an office and that was it. I think there would have been three staff on a shift and I think there was one member of staff on overnight.
24. My memory of Cardross is really sketchy, probably because I was young and traumatised. I don't know who ran the place but it was possibly the local council. I remember we had three-weekly meetings with psychologists who would come in and have lunch with us. They were multi-agency meetings which my mum also attended.

## **Routine at Cardross Assessment Centre**

### *First day*

25. When I first arrived at Cardross I was thinking that it might be better than where I had been previously and I thought that since I was on a Section 15 my mum could come and get me whenever she wanted but she never did.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

26. We would get up, washed and dressed then go for breakfast. After that we would have school, with lunch in the middle of it, and in the evening we would watch TV until it was bedtime which was at 9:00 pm. I don't remember anything else about the routine and that's probably because we were dealt like prisoners. I have no recollection as to what we would have done at the weekend, probably because I found the place so traumatizing.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

27. I don't recall the food being bad but I do remember that everybody ate together which was quite nice though all the cutlery was plastic and we all ate at long tables in a big room in the centre of the main building. Later in my time there I stopped eating but that was to get attention and to protest about being in there.

### *Washing/bathing*

28. I think we had a bathroom in our room.

### *Clothing/uniform*

29. We all wore our own clothes but we weren't allowed to wear any shoes. I recall that they took a lot of my clothes off me when I arrived.

### *Leisure time*

30. I don't recall there being any leisure activities at Cardross other than there being a TV in the living room. It was just like a jail and was run in a military fashion.

### *Schooling*

31. I remember the school being reasonably good, the teachers being nice and enjoying the classes we got though all I recall is writing poetry and doing artwork.

### *Healthcare*

32. There might have been a nurse who checked you on arrival but I'm not sure of even that. I had no need to ever receive medication while there.

### *Trips and holidays*

33. We never went on any trips while at Cardross

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

34. I have no recollection of celebrating Christmas or my birthday while in Cardross.

### *Personal possessions*

35. The only thing I had other than my clothes was a notebook which I used as a diary. I always kept that hidden because nothing that you had was private.

### *Visitors*

36. The only times my mum came to see me at Cardross was when she would appear for the meetings and I'm sure that was only to make sure I had to stay there. I don't think people were allowed visitors and I don't recall any of the kids getting a visitor.

### *Review of care / detention*

37. There was a meeting three weeks after I arrived in Cardross and I was begging to be sent home. My mum was at the meeting and they were all sitting there talking about me and I was promising that I would change if they let me go home. I knew it was my mum's fault that I was there but at the same time I assumed that I must have done something wrong to have been put in there. My mum said that it would be better if I stayed there a while longer and I ended up being there for six months, maybe longer.
38. I ended up having quite a few of these 3-week assessments and at the meetings would be psychologists who would have lunch with us afterwards as well as my mum and my social worker, Irene. All I recall about these meetings is that they were multi-agency meetings and I was begging them to let me go home. Those running the meetings clearly didn't think that sending me home was a good idea and I suppose my behaviour at the time didn't help.

### *Family contact*

39. I used to call my mum every night begging to get home but eventually it was my step-dad who would answer the phone and after a while he would pass me to my mum who would hang up or he would just hung up on me. I wasn't allowed to make the call myself and staff would make the call for me then put it through to me.

### *Discipline*

40. I don't remember any formal discipline but I remember being scared all the time and I think using that fear against us was their way of keeping us in line which probably meant they didn't have to use other discipline. When you saw other kids being dragged about by the staff you didn't want to do anything that would lead to you getting similar treatment.



### *Running away*

41. I tried running away a few times but only ever got as far as the local railway station because I had no shoes. Staff would come after me, put me in a restraining hold, put me in the car then take me back and lock me in my room. I don't recall any physical punishment for running away.

### **Abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre**

42. Staff used restraints and I was quite a hostile child. On one occasion I was probably being cheeky when GUF [REDACTED] and two other staff members passed. GUF [REDACTED] was about 27 years old and Irish. One of them said "grab her" and two of them grabbed me, one on each side which was called a "hook and transport", and GUF [REDACTED] said "Don't touch her face".
43. He then started punching and kicking me all over my body while the other two held me down. I remember one of those holding me down looked really ashamed about what they were doing and, to me, it seemed clear he didn't want to be doing it. I was screaming and trying to get up and it seemed to go on for ages.
44. I don't recall what had happened in the build up to this but, as I say, I was probably being cheeky to GUF [REDACTED] who was the manager of the unit I was in mainly because I just didn't want to be there. I think it was after that that I was moved into the boy's unit. Those were the only staff who ever beat me. One of the guys who held me down may have been called IDI [REDACTED] but I'm really not sure.
45. I remember being scared all the time and saw many kids being dragged by staff. All of the kids were scared and I think that was how the staff maintained discipline, by keeping us all too scared to carry on. The fact that all the doors were locked, we only had plastic cutlery, everything was screwed to the wall or the floor so as we couldn't use anything as a weapon and not being allowed to wear shoes meant that we were treated like prisoners, not children. It was like a jail.

46. Even now we wouldn't put kids in to such a place even if they had done something seriously wrong. Children these days would be put in to a place that would be therapeutic which Cardross certainly wasn't.
47. I hated Cardross with a passion because of the set up in the place and the fact it felt like that, as a child, I was in a prison because of something I was supposed to have done when, in truth, I had done nothing wrong. It was a case of them saying I was bad and that's why I was there which fed in to my mum's narrative and excused her of any blame for me being there. This only led to her feeling better yet she was an abuser. This also allowed the social workers to make it all about me or my sister whereas they should have been looking at my mum's behaviour and her inability to be a parent.

#### **Reporting of abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre**

48. I think I may have reported the abuse to my social worker but I have a feeling that I was probably too scared to say anything. I'm not sure.

#### **Leaving Cardross Assessment Centre**

49. I don't remember anything about how or why I came to leave Cardross and I don't know if I went to Bankhead next but I must have done though it would only have been for a short time. By then I wasn't eating in an attempt to get out of Cardross, I was self-harming and trying to commit suicide. Basically I was a broken child. I remember going to a panel, or maybe it was one of the big meetings they had at Cardross about me, and I then knew that I was getting out and I was so happy about it.
50. As I've said I was in there from between six and nine months but I don't have a clear recollection as to how long I was there but I was certainly there far longer than I was supposed to have been. I then got sent to The Good Shepherd in Bishopton and it was them who started to fix me. It was them who taught me that I wasn't a bad child and that it wasn't me and my sister who were to blame for being in the position that I was and that I didn't deserve to be in such places.

## **The Good Shepherd Children's Home, Bishopton**

51. The main building was old and looked like a church with several units around it. I was placed in St Claire's Unit which was amazing. Patricia Knox was one of the staff and was a wonderful person, an absolute life-saver. To this day I still have a good relationship with staff there and I actually went back to work there when I was studying at university.
52. A woman called Nancy spoke to me when I arrived and the way she spoke to me made me realise how good a place it was going to be, it had such a different vibe from the one I experienced at Cardross. I was taken to my room and was allowed to personalise it. The fact it was an all girls' place meant I felt safer.
53. The staff there were very loving, very nurturing and, importantly, very consistent. They were very much interested in the welfare of others and would do things like take people to Lourdes every year or arrange charity dos for things like McMillan Cancer. It was the way they treated people, and myself in particular, that gave me a sense of belonging for the first time in a long time.

### *Routine at The Good Shepherd*

54. After getting up, dressed and washed we went for breakfast in the main hall. We then met for assembly before going to school, pausing for lunch. On a Friday we went to mass. The place was very regimented but also child friendly. In the evening we could go into Bishopton or go ice-skating and sometimes they would take us trips in the van. They seemed to deal with us the way a normal family would do with their kids and try and keep us busy.
55. On a Friday there was a hair dressing salon where we would get our hair and make-up done before going out for the evening just like normal girls would. We would get our travel warrants and get dropped off at the train station and we would meet up in Glasgow before going home for the weekend. At night time there was a female member of staff called Marti who would make us all hot chocolate and we would have

girly nights watching films and it was as if we were in a family home together even though we weren't.

#### *Mealtimes*

56. As far as I recall the food was OK and I certainly don't remember anything bad about it. One thing I did like was that you could eat your dinner in your room if you wanted which was nice if you just wanted some peace and quiet to eat. It was so laid back unlike the military fashion we were dealt with in Cardross. When you did eat with the others there were various tables laid out and mealtimes were very relaxed.

#### *Washing*

57. We didn't have en suite in our rooms but bathrooms were available for baths and showers and we washed our own clothes in the laundry room. Of course you always had to keep an eye on your laundry as things often got stolen which was one of the few bad things about The Good Shepherd.

#### *Chores*

58. You kept your room clean and tidy and I think there was a rota for keeping the living room clean as well as the kitchen in a way that I'm sure a lot of families delegate chores in their homes. Basically you did such things to be helpful and because it was the mannerly way to behave.

#### *Clothes*

59. We wore a school shirt and long skirt for going to school and you weren't allowed to go to school if you didn't put the uniform on. At other times we wore casual clothes and trainers.

### *Healthcare*

60. We went to the doctor and the dentist in the village as most mainstream families would do and it just all seemed very normal.

### *School*

61. The schooling was awful at first and I would just be playing cards so after a while I thought it wasn't worth getting out of bed for. Eventually I complained about it and told them that if they get me a proper education I would get up and from then on I got properly educated. I'm assuming they then had meetings to discuss the fact that I genuinely wanted to be educated and that's what happened.
62. In fact at one point I was close to getting released and was back at home six days a week but my mum assaulted me so I got taken back into the home which I was pleased about as it meant I could continue my education. Turning sixteen and leaving care is usually the be all and end all for kids in care but my education was important to me so I was happy to be staying on.
63. Looking back now I realise that while playing cards was no good to my education it was good at building relationships between us and the staff though I didn't see it that way at the time.
64. In my fourth year I was still kind of messing about and not as settled as I should have been but staff even bought me a computer that I could use in my room and I was determined to get my standard grades. I did really well in my standard grades but was a year ahead and when I applied to go to Langside College they said they couldn't let me in because I was only fifteen.
65. This woman called Margaret Sloan who used to be my head teacher phoned them and begged them to let me in which they did. The fact that she told them how good I was and how reliable I was and how she would be responsible if I made a mistake was amazing for me to hear.

66. But I didn't make a mistake as the staff pushed me to be the best I could and were like pushy parents but it made the world of a difference to me. I started to believe in myself, had confidence in myself and was thinking how good it was. The teachers were all amazing to me which is probably why I still stay in contact with them to this day.
67. In doing well at my school work I started to realise that I was good at it and that I wanted to achieve things in life. I hadn't been like that when I was younger but when I turned fifteen Mrs MacDougall, an English teacher, would stay back to teach me and when they started to up the ante in my education so did I. They could see I was really bright and that became a resilience factor for me. They would tell me how good I was at the schoolwork and I had never been told that before and I really feel that the staff in The Good Shepherd pushed me forward in my education.
68. I remember that even when I was going home at times and I would be hanging about with my mates in Castlemilk and thinking to myself that this is not what I want to do with my life. I didn't want to just hang about the closes getting drunk, I wanted to make something of myself and do something with my life. I knew I wanted to go to college though I didn't know what I wanted to do at that time.
69. I went to Langside and met a girl who was studying psychology and I thought I would copy what she was doing. So that's what I did and how I came to be studying psychology at the age of sixteen which was the start of my career.

#### *Religion*

70. We went to mass on a Friday and always got fish that day. I would refuse to go to mass because I wasn't a Catholic but the staff were very good about that. When I did go to mass I didn't need to take the bread but would get a blessing instead. They also took us to Lourdes in France one year. Although the staff were Catholic they did not impose their beliefs on me and respected my point of view which, in turn, encouraged me to respect them. Prior to me being there I think nuns worked at The Good Shepherd but I'm sure they were all gone by the time I started.

### *Christmas/Birthdays*

71. I remember the home brought in reindeer at Christmas and made a big thing of Christmas and staff bought me the first birthday cake I had ever had. Some of the kids wouldn't have anywhere to go at Christmas and sometimes staff would take them to their own homes. Such practices would never be allowed these days but it was always done with the best of intentions and I never heard any child say anything bad about spending Christmas in a staff member's home.

### *Running away*

72. I didn't run away as such but sometimes I would just stay an extra night with friends in Castlemilk. When I got back to The Good Shepherd the only concern staff had was to make sure I was alright. They would ask me what I had done at the weekend and made sure that I hadn't been doing anything stupid. They would usually make sure that when I got back I had a shower and something to eat. When that happened I tended to feel guilty about having stayed away longer than I should have.
73. The fact that staff knew by that time that I wanted to better myself, and didn't want to go the way that many of my friends in Castlemilk were heading, probably helped them to accept that I knew what I was doing and knew how to keep myself safe.

### *Reviews*

74. I went to several panel reviews in Bell Street, Glasgow and had weekly meetings with Laurence O'Connor, a psychologist, which was really good. He didn't stay on the campus but was around every day and, like the rest of the staff, was very approachable. They all had an open door policy and were always willing to talk to you.
75. There were panels that I attended in Bell Street, Glasgow which social workers would attend but those meetings were just to continue the Section 15 order that kept me in The Good Shepherd. Those panel meetings were about the only times I saw social workers when I was there.

### *Discipline*

76. The nearest thing we had to discipline was that Margaret McAuley would give you a look and that was it. We basically had so much respect for the staff that we didn't do anything wrong so there was no great need for discipline and that was out of a mutual respect between the staff and the children.
77. Life in The Good Shepherd wasn't scary, it was a nice place to be and while the girls could sometimes be a bit mental the staff always knew how to handle us and would show us nothing but kindness. There was the odd time that a girl might needed to be restrained but it was a rare occasion and a whole different world compared to Cardross. To me it was a therapeutic and caring environment.

### **Life after being in care**

78. I obtained my Standard Grades and then my Highers and went on to do an NC in Psychology when I was fifteen. At sixteen I did Higher English then did an HNC and a HND in Social Sciences. I had done a Higher Psychology but my nephew died, it was a cot death, the week before my exam so I only got a C. I then went from Langside College to Paisley University.
79. At 16 I got a flat in Springburn which I shared with another girl and was given £2,000 to furnish it from the social services. Glasgow Through Care and After Care supported me through this and if anything happened I was always able to phone them. When I went to Langside College I got my first proper flat on my own in Mount Florida. Throughout all this I had social work involvement which stayed with me till I was 23 or 24.
80. At this time I had no family that I could depend on other than my sister and if I hadn't continued with further education I would have had no income and the only way I would have been able to get an income would have been if I was still in care. As soon as I was qualified and got my degree, my Honour's Degree in Psychology from Paisley University, that was when my social work involvement stopped.



81. After I got my degree I went to [REDACTED] to be a forensic psychologist which was my first full-time job. I had done cleaning jobs and worked in Marks and Spencers to get me through uni. I loved working in [REDACTED] and worked with kids who had sexually harmful behaviours and I was basically thrown in at the deep end. I started as a CSW at [REDACTED] and was then an instructor for science and then did my post-grad TQFE at Dundee University in 2014. Even then people working in the sector would say things like "Kids in here won't do psychology or philosophy, they'll find it too hard, they're not clever enough". I feel we have to let the kids try as when they can do it they don't look back.

### **Impact**

82. I hated being in care with a passion and just wanted to be normal and have a family that loved me but it is only because I was in care that I have ended up where I am today which is a really good position to change practice and leave a different legacy. I feel if I hadn't gone through care or hadn't gone to Cardross, if I hadn't seen or witnessed horrendous practice, I wouldn't be where I am today. For that I am very grateful.
83. I still have attachment disorders to do with my childhood but I am aware of that and have to work through it. There are still family trauma issues that I have to work through and things haven't just magically got better but I suppose I have learned how to deal with it. I did have a really bad childhood but others had a much worse time than me and they didn't have the supporting factors, didn't have good social work support, didn't have good caring people that could help them that I had.
84. The through care and after care I got was massive and they got me through the university process. If I hadn't had that I wouldn't have been able to go to Uni because I wouldn't have had the money or anywhere to stay.
85. [REDACTED] to obtain a University Degree after having being in care and I think it was that that pushed me on further though that is only something I

appreciate now as I look back on my life with hindsight. I sometimes have anger issues but I know how to deal with such things. Some days I think that things are going to be hard but I now have the necessary tools to get through that which I didn't have as a child.

86.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



87. When I first returned to The Good Shepherd as a student I struggled with flashbacks because of the smells. When I first started working in kid's homes I was told not to tell the kids that I had been in care and I was made to feel ashamed that I had been. However, if I have a good relationship with a kid then I do tell them and they're fine with it. I feel that I'm in a privileged position and have met some amazing people and feel blessed that I am now in a position where I can help change practices.
88. When I was twelve people used to ask me why I had been in care. I was two when I first went into care so couldn't have done anything wrong but was still stigmatised by people thinking I must have done something wrong to have ended up in such places. Even today I'm very reluctant to speak about having been in residential homes because people assume you must have done something wrong to end up in such places.
89. I don't like having doors shut if I'm in a room and when I enter a room I scope it to make sure I can get back out. This is a long lasting thing and will never go away and I don't like to work in secure units because of the way I was treated in Cardross.
90. When I arrived at The Good Shepherd I was treated so well by the staff and that has stayed with me to this day. It was them that taught me that I wasn't a broken child and the way they dealt with me is how I now deal with children in my care. I was raging when I went in there, a very angry child, but they showed me nothing but kindness and care. It was such a valuable lesson they taught me.

91. I was very lucky when I was in The Good Shepherd and I know not all who went there went on to have a good life. But I had my sister and was very lucky that people saw potential in me. I had people that fought for me and that's what I try to do in my present work and take what I learned there and how I was treated there and help pass it on to the kids that I now deal with. I was in The Good Shepherd for three years and it was a game changer for me and I really don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't gone there.
92. I went back to work in The Good Shepherd when the two girls jumped off the Erskine Bridge. I was working there when the open school got shut. It was really sad and I felt that staff there were used as scapegoats because of that though, speaking to my old boss, there were other things that had happened that I hadn't been aware of because I was so young. I was nineteen and doing my degree at Uni at the time and was working there.
93. I remember the day the girls jumped off the bridge and the open school got shut. It was traumatic and horrific and all the teachers were absolutely broken and devastated because they felt that they were part of it as well. I think that's where my experience of having been in care has actually helped me. Looking back I still hated it but that changed everything for me.
94. I had a shit start in life, I know it wasn't great but I'm not going to let it cut about with me for the rest of my life. I'm not bitter about it. It's not great but I wouldn't be the teacher or care worker I am today if I hadn't been through the things that I've been through. I don't have any bitterness but just wish that other people who were in my situation had had the Through Care and After Care that I had because I know that is what made it different for me.

### **Treatment/support**

95. When I was seventeen, maybe younger, I had an eating disorder though that was probably down to my mum but it was definitely made worse by the places I had been in. I have been to the doctor about the reasons why I find it difficult to pee when in

places other than my own home and got my kidneys checked to see if it is anything to do with that.

96. If there was anything I could make right in my life it would be that as it can be a nightmare especially when I go to gigs and things like that. It might sound pretty stupid but even if I'm in somebody's flat for the first time it makes me anxious because I'm not able to use their toilet. At times it ruins my life as I have to plan what I'm going to be doing and where I'm going as I have to plan when and where I can use the bathroom. I used to go to T in The Park but for the whole weekend I couldn't pee.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

97. When I was about 26 something happened, I don't remember what, that made me think back to my time in Cardross. I was thinking about <sup>GUF</sup> [REDACTED] and realised he could have been of an age that meant he was still working with children in the sector and might even be in charge of a children's home. I just felt that that would be so wrong so I phoned the police then went to Aikenhead Police Office then went to Clydebank Police Office as it was nearer Dumbarton. I told them about how he had assaulted me but they didn't really seem to care.
98. That was the first time I had ever spoken to somebody in authority about what had happened to me at Cardross. They looked for information about Cardross but said they couldn't find anything. I explained to them that the only thing I was interested in was ensuring that this man wouldn't be allowed to work with children anymore and if he didn't work with them then I had no further interest in him. They investigated then came back to me and said that it was OK as he now worked with a charity and didn't work with kids.
99. At the time I just left it at that but, looking back, I wish I hadn't since just because he was working for a charity did not prevent him working with children. I felt that at the time I had done my ethical duty by reporting the matter to the police but I feel they were too dismissive of the matter. Personally I feel that it is a running theme with the

police and that when it comes to dealing with children in care they don't really care about them.

### **Records**

100. I have never sought my records and I'm not interested in doing so simply because I know that lots of people that I work with could be better at their job and some of what they record is inaccurate. Also there is a saying that says "if you fall in a ditch don't spend ages wondering how you fell in, just get out".

### **Lessons to be learned**

101. When my sister and I were taken from my mum at a young age we shouldn't have then been returned to her when she was clearly unfit to look after children. Those next few years with her caused a lot of damage to us. We should have been left in care at that point.
102. It's likely that if I hadn't gone through the system as I did as a child I probably wouldn't be able to make the comparisons with now and then . It has made me a very good member of staff because I know what you should do and what you shouldn't do. As a youngster I hated with a passion the fact that I was in care but I'm very good at what I do now because of what I went through as a child.

### *Training*

103. In my experience local council run homes are badly run and the children get away with murder.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

104. I remember being in Bridgeton and there was a young guy, now dead, who used to look after me and stop others in the community picking on me. It was a regular thing that people in the community would pick on us and the kids in care. It's the same these days when I see kids from places I work in go out in to the local community and there's no care given to how they will be treated by the locals. In such places the staff have to be trained better. Training is paramount.

105. Staff in such places have to remember that kids are in care for a reason and staff have to be very careful how they deal and speak with them. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

106. Even now I see staff who are started in post before they are given the proper training. That should never be allowed to happen. You should have the necessary intensive training before you are even allowed to step foot on the floor because the damage can be done really quickly to kids that are already traumatised. I think it is important that staff are trained, even to a basic level from the start and in trauma practice and then build up from there. I feel that that is still a big issue in the sector even now.

107. In places I work now I hear staff labelling children in care. They cannot be allowed to do that and should give such children every help they can be afforded. I hear staff say to the children "If you just behave and go to school you'll get out" but that's not the way it works. Such children haven't got themselves into this situation. I haven't met a child yet who, without looking at the paperwork, you would wonder how they had ended up in such a position and I don't understand how people who have been trained well would think that way.

#### *Stigmatisation of children*

108. Not all kids are in residential homes because they have done something wrong and even those who have done wrong almost certainly have a reason as to why they did what they did. However, such children are still stigmatised simply because they are in

such places and people have to understand that the children are victims and need understanding, not condemnation just because they are in a home.

109. Even now when I phone up colleges to try and get kids into such places you can hear the hesitation in their voices just because the kids we are discussing are in care. That's wrong. It is a passion of mine that kids in care should be afforded the same opportunities as kids who are their mainstream counterparts and they shouldn't be stigmatised just because they've had a shit start in life. As a sector we have to do much better at that.

#### *Education/Attainment*

110. Schooling is still a major problem in the sector but the low attainment expectations and the poor excuses put forward for this is just not acceptable. Kids leaving care and being illiterate is not acceptable.
111. I just ran Highers ██████ for the first time last year, chemistry, biology etc and made links with colleges, organised placements for universities and I think there is a whole different ethos as these kids now think "Hold on a minute, just because I've been in care doesn't mean I can't go on and do further education". That is the biggest thing for me in my job and I feel that that is where we need to be to close the attainment gap and give the kids the skills so that they aren't just going in to terrible life choices due to having no other options.
112. When staff in The Good Shepherd saw talent in me and encouraged me to do better, especially in education, it made a massive difference to my life and it's what I try to do with kids in my work. I feel it is important that these kids are encouraged when they show potential and all steps should be taken to help them realise that potential and the fact they are in a care system should not come into it.
113. One of the things that I'm proud of myself for when I left ██████ is that I have left a legacy of kids coming to you and they will be like "What can I get from your class? What can I get from your option?" The kids are actually challenging those of us that

teach them and holding us accountable as to what they can and cannot do and I think that is wonderful.

114. When I look back at my time in The Good Shepherd and compare it to Cardross I can see that they were a million miles apart in the way they treated children. The Good Shepherd was a place where the children were cared for and that is something I try to take forward in my present work within the system.

*Running away*

115. Another thing is how children are dealt with when they run away from these homes. Quite often they are not running away as such but are simply wanting to spend time with their friends at home. However, when children genuinely run away because of the way they are being treated, all too often they are returned with no questions asked as to why they ran away by the police or by staff at the homes.
116. The Good Shepherd knew that if I ran away all that was happening was that I was staying an extra night with friends. The staff were only interested in my welfare and making sure I was safe and were just very caring. That is how children that run away should be dealt with.

*Through Care and After Care*

117. I had social work involvement until I was 25 and one thing I would add is that I had fantastic through care and after care. That was something that was disbanded after I had been through the system. That helped me get a flat in Springburn at the age of sixteen and while I was very excited at getting the flat I had no experience whatsoever of how to run a home.
118. I realised when I unpacked my bags that I had no idea of what to do or what I was about to take on. I didn't know about bills, I didn't know how to feed myself; in fact there was so much I didn't know it was frightening. But that is what happens with so many kids leaving the system. They get places but just use them for parties, hang



about with idiots, get involved with people who can spot a kid from care a mile away and then they lose their tenancies.

119. I was so lucky because I had supported accommodation, through Glasgow Through Care and After Care who would come out and see me every week. They would help me with my shopping and give me money for college. If I had problems then they were always available to speak to on the phone. They got me through college, through university and got me my passport and my driving licence.
120. I remember when I got my HNC they took a copy of the certificate and hung it in their office in The Gorbals. I then won an young achiever's award with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which not only made me feel good but showed me that that was the way forward and the opportunity to learn was vital to me getting on in life.
121. This is what I tell the kids that I deal with now. I encourage them to go to college, go to university and get placements because you are entitled to get help off the Government but the kids don't know that. It is vital that kids leaving the care system are educated in what it is that they're entitled to.
122. Through Care and After Care were so helpful to me but I don't think it exists anymore and there seems to be a big gap between adult services and child services and especially the kids that are most vulnerable. For me, from a business and monetary point of view, if they just invested in kids a wee bit longer then society as a whole would benefit.
123. I wasn't ready to have a flat at sixteen but I was quite mature and if you kept the kids and worked with them a wee bit longer, maybe until they are twenty, then they wouldn't find themselves in adult services because they would have been helped before it got to that stage. For a kid at sixteen to be told "There you go, there's your funding" or they're pulling their placement which still happens makes no sense to me.
124. I was lucky in the help I got through the social work but I know many people weren't and the help available is even less these days. I feel that that was a pivotal point in my

life because if I hadn't had the people that cared for me then then all the hard work that had been done for me could have been undone by me putting myself in unsafe situations or having the wrong type of people in my flat.

125. I see it all the time with kids that I work with who just want to belong and have a sense of belonging. For me, going to university and having that support network made a massive difference to my life and I think that is what the system is really missing. When I was involved with Through Care and After Care it comprised of a group of people from social work who helped you find a flat, helped you find work, helped you with money and did whatever else was needed to help you settle in society. That isn't the case now.
126. I've had kids in my care who are ending up in places like The Blue Triangle when they are so vulnerable and have all this trauma associated with them and yet they are put in such places where people will use them for sex or to deal drugs and for me that is probably the worst thing about this whole sector that I work in. You spend all that money, put all the good practice to use and then the kid gets to sixteen or seventeen, all the funding is taken away and they just get thrown out into society with no back up or support.
127. What is really annoying is that the kids get so happy that they are about to leave the system simply because they are about to be of age and getting out but have no idea of what is in store for them. Those in authority don't seem to realise that the money they think they are saving in no longer having Through Care and After Care is going to cost them considerably more as they then have to deal with those kids as they end up in the adult system with all sorts of problems and the additional costs that that brings.
128. In addition to that is the fact that these kids then go on to have kids of their own who themselves enter the system and so a vicious circle goes on. This is a preventable problem if the system would just ensure that kids are given the proper support when they are leaving care. I personally was determined not to have kids the way my mum

had until I was better and had resolved my own childhood issues and able to bring them up safely and properly.

129. Many kids who are leaving the system are just looking for somebody to love and to love them in return. They themselves end up having kids at the age of fifteen and end up doing to their own kids what their parents did to them. And so the circle continues. Nobody in their right mind would give their own sixteen year old child a set of keys to a flat and say to them to go live on their own. If you have a service where kids are given the proper support, until they are at least eighteen, then they have a chance but until such commitments are put into law such kids will always suffer.
130. However, it's all about money with local authorities pulling the funding to use elsewhere which is short-sighted given how much more it will cost them in the long run. The Good Shepherd had an independent place for women or girls who were pregnant and also had an independent living place and that was great preparation for when they would move out on their own.
131. Looking back now I see how my psychology degree has helped me understand what I went through while in care and I talk to the kids I deal with [REDACTED] The psychology degree I went through was pretty intense and had a psycho dynamic approach with Freud and attachment theories and I teach kids about that.
132. It can either be helpful if they're in the right space or I've had kids who are self-harmers whom it has caused triggers with and I've had to take them out of that space, out of the psychology course, because it becomes too much for them. Part of my new practice, which is controversial, is teaching kids in a Scandinavian model teaching kids about trauma, physiological responses to trauma and what happens when we go in to fight or flight and similar things and I feel that is the way forward.
133. I think if you say to kids "This is totally normal, you've had a really bad experience, your senses are activated and you're trying to fight whatever" then that normalises it for kids. I think kids need to know that they're not abnormal because they've been sexually abused or because they lie behind their door because they can't sleep due to

not feeling safe. I think if you normalise things and give them the right tools to regulate their problems then they won't stay in crisis.

134. Nobody wants to stay in crisis or feel bad. I think it has worked and have started my own synergy programme for an eight week trauma informed method and I have just qualified in my yoga teaching training and mindfulness. My kind of practice is using trauma informed practice to teach kids about emotional literacy, self-regulation, things that are massively important and teach them that the way they are is because of the way their lives have been. It's not them but the way things have been for them up until that point and I think that is the way forward.
135. When I was interviewed for a job I was asked why I was so passionate and I had to say that it drives me nuts. I've sat in a staff room and been told that I help the kids too much but those staff have just been making up excuses and they now have to up their game because of what I do and as such the kids are getting a much better service in education.
136. I feel there is now a massive culture change [REDACTED] which I am particularly proud of. I think that and through care and after care has to change to support kids. Not just academically but also things like joinery, as a plumber or whatever it is that they are good at. Find their skill set and work with it to help prevent them going into adult services or becoming addicts or god knows whatever else.
137. We can look at bad practice but it's done, it's been and gone and done in all of these different places but there is so much stuff that has to be worked on, so many kids slipping through the net that I have seen with my own eyes. It's not acceptable and not good enough. I know that things are being put in place like looked-after accommodation, kids getting first shout at colleges but a lot of colleges won't touch them because they are from care.
138. If you just look on the surface things can look good because people just tick the boxes but when you scratch underneath and try and get a kid into college, like I have done, it gets hard because the kids are getting stigmatised just for being in care which simply

isn't good enough and that is what hurts me. I feel that education for these kids is the secret to stopping them going from child services to adult services. Unfortunately all too often it just comes down to money being made available and such kids are not at the top of anybody's priority list.

139. When I was young I was often let down by adults who would make promises and then not keep them. When I deal with the kids now I always make sure that promises, if they are mine to make, are kept so as the kids never feel let down in that way. If nothing else it's just good practice as well as good manners.
140. Don't get me wrong, some local authorities do it really well and put a transition plan in place for a kid who is fifteen while other authorities, Glasgow for instance, will just say that the funding is gone and will send a sixteen year old out on their own. A sixteen year old kid in care will be desperate to get out but they haven't a clue where they are going to go or what they are going to do.
141. But that doesn't matter, they will still get out and a couple of months later you'll see them and they're skinny and starving and living in a hostel and are prey for whoever wants to take advantage of them. You then have to wonder what was the point in all that work and all that energy to keep them well until they turned sixteen. They have nobody and need that extra help when they get out of care.
142. I mean, psychologically, their brain isn't even properly developed and, having been in care, they have no idea what the outside world holds for them. There is a statistic that says 80% of kids in Polmont were also in Kibble previously and it's just because they have been institutionalised. That is so sad and what it is that we as a sector have to get better at.
143. So much has improved but giving kids somewhere they can go, and they will make mistakes, but to help them grow into adults without ending up in Polmont or wherever is vital not only for them but for society as a whole. Much more work has to go into supporting them as well as finding things for them to do that suit them. They will never all go onto further education but many have skills that can be nurtured in

apprenticeships and such things that can not only help them but help society in general.

144. From a financial point of view, for the general public, does it not make more sense that such kids get a chance to contribute to society rather than be, not only a cost, but could then go on to have children that will continue the problem? [REDACTED] are very good at giving such kids such opportunities but we have to be better as a collective. I don't think it's acceptable to simply say that this should be good practice. It should be made the law.
145. Make it the law that kids don't get to leave before they turn eighteen. Make it the law that they are found a suitable placement and are given the proper support. And make it the law that it is appropriate and acceptable to whistle-blow on the wrong doing that you see towards kids. It's wrong that people don't blow the whistle on others simply because those doing wrong are their workmates or friends and they don't want to upset them. You also want to keep the money coming in from local authorities as too often things are done from a business point of view and not in the best interest of the kids in care.
146. There has to be a bigger understanding in society that just because kids are in care does not mean it is their fault.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

147. My hopes are that the Inquiry can help obtain change in policy and make things better by highlighting bad practice. I just want the sector to move forward with good and better practice. Some things have changed but such changes have to be maintained and we have to learn from the many mistakes that were made in the past. Those in charge must be made to listen and looking after children in care must never be a box-ticking exercise.
148. To me, politicians simply don't get it. They don't get how harsh life is for these kids and don't see what they have been through. There has to be a better understanding

so that people don't attach the stigma to kids in care that so many do. When I went for my first job I lied and said that I had been to an all-girl school because it sounded better than saying I had been in care. If I said I had been in care I wouldn't have got the job and I hope that is something The Inquiry can change.

**Other information**

149. In giving this statement I am hoping that it will be cathartic but I also know that what I am doing is good because it will hopefully help to improve things in the future for children in care. I know we can't change the past but we do have a chance to help shape the future and improve practices for children in care.

150. 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..... 9/12/22 .....