

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GNL

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GNL. My date of birth is 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Dumbarton. My parents' names were and . I have five siblings, in age order, , , , who is dead and . My dad worked as an engineer in Dumbarton. Our lives were all about boating. Every weekend we were on that boat and away on it. In the summer holidays my dad would chuck his job and we'd be away for six weeks, all over. My dad would work on the farms and other places. They knew him everywhere we went.
3. I went to St Michael's Primary School. School was ok for me. Then my dad started a job down in England. I was aged ten. We moved and got a new house. I didn't like it, I hated it. Plus, I was getting abused by my mother's cousin. It's always stuck in my head, if I told my dad what was going on would he have moved back to Scotland. But I knew my dad would have killed the man and he would have ended up doing time. I just kept pestering my dad and he said that's it, we're going home. I was close to him.
4. So I got sent up the road with my dad's cousin to stay with my grandfather, who was my dad's father. I was nearly eleven years old. I was up here for two weeks and my dad was phoning me every night and then I got a phone call to say he'd been in a hit

and run and he was killed. After that I saw my brothers, they all came up, but my mother just disappeared. We were all left.

5. Then my grandfather sent for my granny, my mum's mum, to take me. I didn't want to go. She was in Dumbarton as well. That's when it started, that was it. I went off the rails. They separated us all. They took my brothers and sister away from me. I wasn't allowed to see them till they were sixteen. I wouldn't go to school. I wasn't stealing or breaking into houses. Even when I did go, because I couldn't read or write, that would make me worse and anxious. They didn't want to know about me. I was still at St Michael's Primary School. I think I was in first year at secondary school for two weeks when I got put into Bellfield. The secondary school was called St Patrick's in Dumbarton.
6. I went to a children's panel in Dumbarton for the first time. My granny was with me. There was a social worker there but I can't remember them. I saw a social work report much later on and it said I was nine at the time and that wasn't me they were describing, it was my brother. It was his date of birth and my name. That was my brother [REDACTED]. They wrote my date of birth wrong. At the first panel I can't remember what they said to me, but I was told I was going away for a few days. I was in Bellfield for two months. My cousin was in there at the same time. You were supposed to be twelve onwards to go in there and I was too young.
7. I was in Bellfield twice. At first I did two months, then I went home for a couple of weeks and the second time was a week before I got moved from there to St Ninian's.

Bellfield Remand Home

8. Bellfield was [REDACTED] to my granny's house that [REDACTED]. I could [REDACTED] our boat as well. It was run by Dunbartonshire Council. Bellfield was horrible. It was like an old mansion house. I don't know how many boys were in there, but I think it must have been over a hundred boys from the west of Scotland. I was the youngest there. The boys would go from twelve up to sixteen years of age. I don't know who

was in charge. I can't remember the names of the staff. There was an old fella who stayed there and there was another guy who fancied himself. He was the one for slapping you about and all that. He's dead now.

9. I slept in one of the dormitories. Up the stairs there was about five dormitories. There were two floors to the building. On the ground floor was the sitting room, TV room and dining room.
10. There was a wee building at the bottom of the driveway and that was a classroom kind of thing. It wasn't really a classroom. There was only one teacher. It was one of my ex-primary teachers. When I walked in she asked what I was doing there? I can't remember her name.

Routine at Bellfield

First day

11. The social worker took me from the panel hearing to Bellfield in a car. I didn't get to go home first. I broke down greeting. I tried to run away, but I couldn't get out. No-one tried to comfort me.
12. When I got to Bellfield I knew a lot of the staff as they were [REDACTED]. They all had [REDACTED]. They were shocked and asked why I was there. You were locked in at Bellfield and you couldn't get out.

Mornings and bedtime

13. I don't remember what time we got up in the morning. We made our own beds. When you got up they made you do your chores. At night, I think we were in the dormitories and off to bed at 9:00 pm or 9:30 pm. The routines on Saturday and Sunday were the same things.

Mealtimes / Food

14. After we were up and dressed and got washed we went to get breakfast. Then we did our chores. Then we'd sit in the room with the TV before they came in to tell us who was doing the garden, who was staying in and who was off somewhere else. Then we got our lunch. The afternoon was a repeat of what happened in the morning and it was the same every day. Then we got our tea to eat. We had a sandwich.
15. I knew the cook as she stayed next door to my gran and they went to bingo together. The food was ok. I don't remember anyone having a problem with the food.

Washing / bathing

16. First thing after getting up in the morning we'd get washed and dressed. There were showers and we got one every day in the morning. If you'd been playing football you'd get a shower afterwards. There was no privacy. There were communal showers. I always remember what the staff member did, he was called AIA, he was from Dumbarton. He used to show off and make you stand in front of him and soap all your body and he'd stand and watch you. It was always him who was there. I don't remember his name. He was a big skinny fella. You could tell he was an ex-army guy. I think he was in his sixties then.

Clothing / uniform

17. We wore our own clothes. They washed the clothes for us. You had a change of clothes and you had your own wardrobe. My granny brought in clothes for me.

School

18. There was no schooling. We went into the one room they had and we'd muck about at things. Before I left they brought a teacher in. Even she wasn't there long. We got no education at all.

Religion

19. Bellfield wasn't in any way religious and we didn't attend any church services.

Work/chores

20. As soon as you were up you were cleaning and bumping the floors. Then you were polishing brasses and the radiators and stuff. Then you got put out to tend the garden. There was a bit up the back that was fenced off with a cage and you could sit about there. That was it.
21. Later on you'd be outside in the garden cutting grass. I'd be standing there cutting grass and my mates would be walking by laughing at me. I think these chores were just something to make your day go by. They grew their own veg and stuff. I enjoyed that.

Trips / Holidays

22. We never went on any trips. It was a proper approved school and we never went anywhere. All you did was work in the garden or play football and that was it.

Leisure time

23. There was no games room and no pool table. There was books to read, but I couldn't read. There was comics you could take. All you did was sit in a chair and watch the telly. No radio or record player. There was nothing to do in leisure time. You'd sit and watch the telly or you sat at the bench seats in the football park in the grounds. All you got was a ball in that big cage and that was it.

Personal possessions

24. I had nothing with me. I just had some clothes. I had no toys or access to any toys.

Birthdays and Christmas

25. I wasn't in Bellfield at Christmas. I wasn't at Bellfield for my birthday. I didn't see birthdays being celebrated.

Visits / Inspections

26. I didn't get to go home at weekends. The only visit I got was from my grandad. He came down nearly every day to see me. My cousin was in at the same time. That was my grandad's brother's boy. He was four years older than me. When I was younger I went everywhere with my granddad. No social worker ever came to see me. No-one took me aside to explain what was happening to me. There wasn't a time when they were reviewing my detention and no-one told me how long I would be in for. I was always going to be in until I was sixteen and I was told that.
27. A male psychiatrist came into see me in Bellfield. I saw him about four times. He asked me daft questions and had drawings to show me. I couldn't open up to this man at all. I didn't trust anyone. I wasn't even allowed to have my grandad with me in these meetings and he was angry about them.
28. I didn't see any inspections taking place.

Healthcare

29. They had a nurse in there. She was alright. The nurse was married to the guy who ran the place. They stayed in the house next to Bellfield. I can't remember their names. For more serious illness or injury you'd get taken to hospital.

Running away

30. When I was there I saw two boys get onto a chair and jump out through the top window and right through the glass. The bottom windows had wires and bars across them. That's how bad it was.
31. I ran away once from Bellfield. The ball went over the fence and the boys had to lift me over to get it. I didn't go back over the fence. I got caught later that day and brought back. I had a pair of shorts and a T-shirt on that Bellfield had given me and that was it. I went straight to the house and my grandad just took me back to Bellfield. When I went back to Bellfield nothing happened. They just wouldn't let me out again for a couple of days.
32. When boys ran away from there they always ran straight to the boat yard and that was a dead end. I told them not to go that way and go in a different direction.

Bed Wetting

33. There was a problem with bed wetting as you were scared to get up in the night. I was alright as I knew all the guards. I'd get up and they'd be saying 'You ^{GNL} get to bed'. They were alright about bed wetting in there. They might have taken their mattress outside. No-one got slapped about in there, not that I saw anyway. The boys put their bedding in the laundry. Some of the older ones would bully them for it.

Discipline

34. They didn't use the belt in Bellfield. If you got out of hand you went in the room called the cooler. You could be in there for two to three days.

Abuse at Bellfield

35. There was a lot of bullying going on by the older ones. My older cousin who was in with told me not to let anyone bully me, and if they did I was to tell him. One day I was buffing the floor with the big bumper. A boy tried to trip me up. I just turned round and I split him wide open with the bumper.
36. They had a cooler with no windows. It was just a cell. I was put in there for two days. That was my punishment. That happened to me quite a few times and I felt like I was never out of it. I wasn't taking the bullying.
37. If you answered back to some of the staff they'd give you a slap on the back of the head. I used to go mad and I used to throw chairs and I'd be put in the cooler. There was just one cooler. I'd be in it on my own. The other boys didn't like going in it. It was cold. It was just a stone floor. The first time I was in Bellfield was a couple of months and I think I was in the cooler three times.
38. There was one staff member who always took you to the showers. He was a big, skinny fella. He used to drink in the Lennox Pub. And the wee guy who stayed there. He's dead now. He was a good age and around retirement age. He was a wee shite. He used to slap us about for no reason and call us "You little bastard". He used to hit us with his bunch of keys. We were just being a bit cheeky and answering back. I can't remember his name. This behaviour was going on all the time in there. It happened to me and I saw it happening to other boys. These two staff members must have been ex-army. You could just tell.
39. Some of them were alright. I didn't smoke and ^{IBD} [REDACTED] used to say to go round the back of the building and have a fag to smoke. ^{IBD} [REDACTED] was a member of staff in the gardens. I think the staff were better to me because most of them [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. If they did anything to me and I was to tell my Grandad, he would kill them. They weren't really abusive to the other boys.

40. Some of the older boys would try to bully me, but because of my older cousin I wouldn't take it. My cousin was fourteen or fifteen when I was in there. Bullying amongst the boys was a problem.

Leaving Bellfield

41. The first time I left Bellfield I went back to my granny's. They wanted to see if I'd go back to school. I never went back. I was back to a panel. A social worker came one day to say I was leaving. I asked where I was going and I was told to St Ninian's and I was going to be there until I was sixteen. I didn't know what this was. The rest of my family got put into a place called Smyllum. My younger brother was abused in there. They wouldn't put me with them. I don't know why.
42. The guy who took me in a car to St Ninian's said I wouldn't be seeing my brothers for a long time. My granny used to take my brothers out of Smyllum nearly every weekend. She was an old woman and she tried her best. When I first got out of Bellfield and went back to my granny's I was seeing them every weekend. The last time I went back in Bellfield that was when they were shoving me off to St Ninian's. I wanted to go with my brothers but they weren't having it.
43. Before I left Bellfield on my dad's mother's side, her brother's boy became a priest and [REDACTED]. His surname was [REDACTED]. He's not a priest anymore. He came in and asked what I was doing there.

St Ninians, Falkland, Fife,

44. It was always dark and dingy and cold. It wasn't a nice building at all. It was one massive building. I think there was three floors in it. The dorms were on the middle floor and on the one side. It was built in a square with a courtyard in the centre. The square went on to the main building. The dorms went round and you had the young ones and the older ones to one side. The top floor was the classrooms.

45. The ground floor had a big hallway that was wide and massive. They had big marble fireplaces. At the end of there was three rooms at the bottom. There was a piano under the stair. Through another door into a room and that was the TV room and the gym. You could go down the stairs and that took you to what we called the dungeons. There was a woodwork classroom down there, plus the changing rooms for us playing football. They kept cleaning stuff in one of the dungeons.
46. Then you went round and walked round a corridor to where you sat to eat your breakfast and your dinner. The dining room was there and the kitchen was there and there was a door out to the square. You couldn't get out of the square unless they opened the big massive doors. It must have been for horses and carriages at one point. You went round the corridor again and there was another room but they hardly used that. You went downstairs again and there was a shower block. They hardly used that one. The other showers were up with the dormitories. There wasn't an exit from the dungeons and you had to come back up to the ground floor to get out.
47. In the grounds you walked down a path and across the road and down to the rugby pitches at the other side of the building and a good bit away from it. There was a running track, football pitches and rugby pitches.
48. I don't know who ran St Ninian's, but they were Catholic and it was all Brothers in there. They all lived there in the main building. They wore the Brothers uniform of black robes all the time. I don't remember who was in charge. There was someone called **BHB**, he was the only lay teacher, he came from the village. He was 'brand new' and I always remember him saying to us 'never walk about here on your own. Always have two of you together'. I remember someone called Brother **LMZ** and I remember Brother Malach the music teacher and there was another one who stayed in the dormitories. He was a right arsehole. I can't remember his name. He liked his drink. He was really fit, about six feet and wore glasses. He was always marching everywhere. You were scared to get out of your bed at night when he was about. Every night he would come in drunk and he'd march round all the dormitories. There was

another Brother who had one leg and I remember him. If I saw photographs of the Brothers I would recognise them right away.

49. Upstairs there were dormitories for the boys and small rooms for the Brothers and there was a single room and they wanted to put me in it once and I refused to go in on my own. I said I wasn't sleeping in there on my own. I was told I'd get done in for it. In the corner of the second floor was a room for four and you walked along the corridor to the shower block and toilets. Up there was another dorm room with five or six in it. Then there was a room for another Brother to stay in. I can't remember his name. Then you went down and there were four dormitories on that side. Then you went upstairs and that took you into the chapel.
50. There was quite a few boys in St Ninian's and I couldn't say how many. There was a coach load in it. They used to use a coach when they took you home at weekends. I don't think it was as many as a hundred. The boys ranged from the age of twelve to sixteen.

Routine at St Ninian's

First day

51. I think it was a social worker who took me to St Ninian's. I don't know his name and I never saw him again. St Ninian's didn't look nice. It was dark and dingy looking. I didn't feel great at all. I knew the place wasn't right when I walked in. The first night I got there they put me in a dormitory and one of the boys told me he ran the dormitory. I don't remember his name.
52. I told him I just came from another home and I didn't want to know. He went for me. It was the worst thing he did and I rattled him all over the place. I hate bullies. I told him he could do what he wanted, but to leave me alone. That's when I got friendly with the wee boy from Blackhill. The older boy used to take his fags off him. I wasn't having that.

Mornings and bedtime

53. We were up about 7:30 am and off to get washed and dressed before going down to breakfast. Sometimes if you were talking in bed after lights out, they'd make you sit outside in the corridor at night in the dark and make you sit out there for most of the night.

Bed wetting

54. I started wetting the bed because I was too scared to go to the toilet at night. Whoever was on duty that night would come into the room and try to wake you up to take you. It was always the Brothers. There wasn't a specific night watchman. I'd say "I'm alright, I'm not going anywhere". Sometimes they'd drag you out of bed, by the hair on your head or whatever. Bed wetting was a big problem for me, but when I was away at weekends there was no problem.
55. When I did wet the bed I was embarrassed. There was three or four of us who did it. We had to drag our mattresses out and up the corridor, up a flight of stairs, past the chapel and two flights down a spiral stairs and out into the courtyard. They made you stand in the middle of that courtyard with your mattress and all the boys shouting out the windows at you and calling you 'pissy'. They'd do that all the time. Sometimes they'd make you lie and sleep on the wet mattress. After you'd been in the courtyard you had to drag the mattresses back up the stairs. Two of us would drag each mattress. It was humiliating.
56. What they used to do with the ones who wet the bed, the showers were downstairs on the bottom floor. You got a cold shower and that was it. The Brothers would stand right in front of you.

Mealtimes / Food

57. The cooks came in from the local village. We had breakfast and lunch and tea later on. About 9:30 pm we'd get juice and that was at night before bed. The food was terrible. The breakfast was cornflakes and sour milk. I wouldn't eat it. To this day I don't drink milk. They used to try and force me to eat it. If you didn't eat your food they'd put your face in it. Sometimes you'd get dragged out of the room for not eating something you didn't like. They actually put my face in it once and told me I was eating it. I still refused. It got to the stage I was giving boys money to eat it and stop getting a doing.
58. For dinner we lived on beans. Then they'd pick so many folk out at tea time to go and feed them in their own room. They had a big spread on and the rest of it. The Brothers were eating well when the boys were eating beans.

Washing / bathing

59. We got a shower, like in Bellfield, in one big shower room near the dorms. We were in the shower every day. They stood there and watched you. That main man did that, the one that stayed in the dormitories. He was always there, two of them were always there. They always changed as well. One minute he'd be there and then away and there'd be another guy there and you'd be wondering 'who's this?' There was no privacy and no allowances for the different ages of the boys.
60. They always tried to touch your arse to get you to move and all that when you got a shower. You'd be like, don't do that. I used to attack them for it. I knew I was going to get a hammering anyway, and I wasn't having anything like that. They'd try and cuddle you and all that and I'd tell them to go away. I was abused when I was in England and I knew what was going to happen and it wasn't going to happen to me again.

Clothing / uniform

61. I got shoes, a pair of jeans, jumpers and T-shirts and that was it. All the boys wore the same stuff. If you went home at the weekend you used your own stuff.

School

62. The teachers were the Brothers apart from BHB who came from the village and there was another hippy looking man who came in to teach us. I don't know if they had teaching qualifications, but probably not.
63. After we'd done our cleaning chores in the morning we were taken to the classrooms. We stopped at lunch time and went back to the classrooms in the afternoon. We'd be in the classrooms till about 2:30 pm or 3:00 pm. Then we had games after that. It was mostly rugby that we played.
64. I was getting it bad in class all the time because I couldn't read or write. When I was in the class I said I couldn't do the work. They used to take the belt out and hit me on the back and over the head. One day, one of the boys actually jumped on top of me to protect me when they were doing it. It was one of the Brothers who was giving me the belt. The boy that tripped him up to stop him doing it, he was getting it on the hand that one, it wasn't just me the Brother was doing it to, he was doing it to all the boys. The Brother disappeared after that. We were getting battered with hands and fits and belts and anything they could get their hands on.
65. In the classroom they made me sit in a corner and they told me I was beyond and they couldn't help me anymore. They'd throw board dusters at me. One time I picked a chair up and threw it at them. I got taken into the gym and I got punched stupid. It was the tall, skinny one with the glasses. He was really bad. He did a few of the boys in. I saw a boy coming out of there and he was black and blue. That was the boy from Blackhill. The things that were happening to me were happening to other boys too.

66. They didn't know how to teach anything. If you couldn't do the work, that was it and you were left. They just put me at the back of the class. I was called a dunce in front of everyone. I had dyslexia and they wouldn't give me any help. Because I couldn't do the work they were hitting me. I was treated like shite. All the teachers were like that, it wasn't just one of them.
67. The only one who tried to help me was BHB. He knew I liked woodwork and I could do it, but I couldn't write anything down or read it. He was always there for me. He stayed in the village. I know he died. I think he was an ex-army man. He knew something was going on there.

Religion

68. On a Sunday you'd be up and they'd force you to go to chapel. You'd be forced to be an altar boy. I wasn't wearing it and I was getting doings for not doing it. All the boys were Catholic and everyone was going to Mass. You were in that chapel every night. They were trying to brainwash you. They wanted you to say prayers and I refused. If you refused to go to Mass you got battered. You were dragged in their chapel to your seat and told not to move. It happened to other boys too.

Work/chores

69. After breakfast we did our chores and cleaning and sweeping. It was in the morning only. The Brother who's in the jail now, when he came he started to do the gardens, building greenhouses and taking boys into the gardens. He was the big, tall hairy guy. As soon as I saw him on the news I recognised him. He was the gardener. I don't remember his name and I don't remember when he was in court.

Trips / Holidays

70. The only trips we got were when we played rugby. We played other schools. I played centre. I got picked for Manchester and I never went. I said I wasn't going there, I was

going home. They phoned my granny to say I was going for trials down in Newcastle. I ran away and got as far as Kincardine Bridge and dragged back.

Leisure time

71. Our routine was the same at weekends, we never did anything different. Mostly boys would get away home at weekends. If you didn't go home at weekends you'd be left to mess about. There was no classes on a Saturday. You still did your cleaning if you were in at weekend.
72. We played football or rugby. There was table tennis there and that was about it. There was a TV. There wasn't any games. There were books.

Birthdays and Christmas

73. They let us go home at Christmas. They didn't let us celebrate our birthdays.

Visits / Inspections

74. There was a social worker in St Ninian's and he'd take us whenever we were going to panel hearings. He was always drunk and he was driving a car. He'd be picking you up in Glasgow and bringing you back drunk.
75. I didn't get any visitors when I was in at St Ninian's. My weekends home were stopped because I was covered in bruises and they were saying I was playing rugby at weekend and I couldn't go home. If my granny phoned me they would stand there beside me and listening in to the phone call to make sure I didn't say anything. I knew if I said anything I would get done in.
76. The weekends I didn't get home were the weekends my brothers were there. I wasn't allowed in the house when they were there. I didn't see them when I was in St Ninian's. It was social workers that organised that to make sure I wasn't allowed home that

weekend. All my granny could do was take them one weekend and take me the next one. I had no contact at all with my brothers for four years.

77. When they allowed home visits they dropped us off at Glasgow on the Friday night and I'd get home to Dumbarton from there. Then I had to get the train back to Glasgow to be picked up on a Sunday. If you were late they just left you and I'd go back home to Dumbarton and they'd have to come and get me. They'd send the social worker based in St Ninian's, the one who was always drunk, he'd have to take the train up and come and get me from Glasgow and not from the house.

Healthcare

78. They'd take you out to see a dentist. I didn't have any problems with my teeth. He would have seen boys with their teeth broken from being punched by the Brothers. I used to see boys with black eyes.
79. If anyone had cuts and bruises the staff dealt with it themselves. There wasn't a nurse. I didn't see anyone requiring treatment at hospital. I think one boy had a problem with his appendix.

Running away

80. I ran away a few times from St Ninian's. It was a terrible place. The police would get me. I got taken straight back and got locked up in the separate single bedroom next to my dormitory and that was it. I wasn't allowed out to watch telly. I just got out for food and a shower. I just saw other boys when I sat down for my dinner. My weekends home were stopped. I wasn't allowed to play football. I could be in that locked bedroom for two weeks. Nobody asked me why I'd run away.

Discipline

81. They were all good with the leather belt, every one of them. You'd be on your own when they belted you and not in front of other people. They'd take you into the gym

and you knew what you were in there for and it wasn't to run about. You'd get battered with it. It wasn't just across your hand, it was all over your back and your legs. I got it a few times. I wouldn't bow down to them.

82. They made you do confessions, but they sat on a chair in front of you and not inside a box. It was the same Brother who was teaching us in the classroom. I wasn't telling them anything. I actually got slapped across the face, in a chapel. I landed in the middle of the floor because I wouldn't tell them my confessions. It wasn't a priest, it was one of the Brothers. They weren't allowed to take confession.

Abuse

83. There was one boy who told me he was abused and said to me he'd had enough. I was only in there two weeks at the time. We were sitting at breakfast. He had a roll of barbed wire wrapped round his hand and he ran across all the tables and he jumped on top of the Brother who was abusing him and started punching him. That was the last I saw of that boy. He got taken away. A big van came and took him away and that was it. I don't remember his name. The Brother he was attacking was an old guy. He disappeared as well.
84. In the middle of the night some of the Brothers would be saying 'come into my room'. Because I couldn't read or write they'd tell me I needed some teaching at night. When we were in our dorms they'd come into our room and try and get me to go to their room. I wasn't going to do it. I knew what was going on, I could see it with my own eyes what was happening. I knew boys were getting abused. I could see it, they were going into Brother's rooms at night. You'd ask 'what were they going there for?' and they'd just say 'nothing'.
85. There were boys in there that were abused and I know they were abused. In that dorm I was in there was three boys that always got taken out at night. Those boys came from Greenock. There was a family of them. I think there was three of them. I can't remember their names. I could pick them out of photographs. The oldest one was the

same age as me and there was two younger brothers. There was also one boy from Edinburgh and I'm sure he was getting abused.

86. I was getting mentally abused in there all the time. In class they didn't want to know about me. Once, BHB, tried to help me, and he even said "Just do what they tell you to do and you'll get through here".
87. There was a lot of bullying going on by the older ones. They'd tell the younger ones to bring in fags for them or they'd get done in. I wasn't going to do it, but they always did it. There was one wee boy from Blackhill. He was younger than me. I looked after him because he reminded me of my younger brother. His granny came up and she brought stuff for me as I never got any visitors.
88. It wasn't a nice place at all. They didn't want to know you. They used to tell me I was going to end up in the jail and I was just a waste of space. I don't know what I'd done wrong to get that.
89. There was one boy in there I knew was getting physically abused. It was near to the end of my time when they were telling me what date I was due to get out. I had to go to a panel and when I walked in the boy was there. He'd disappeared from St Ninian's. They dragged me out of the room before I could talk to the boy. They told me he was nothing to do with me. He must have stayed somewhere near Dumbarton. They didn't want me talking to him. I didn't know his name. I remember we were playing rugby and he wasn't well, then he came running down to the pitch screaming and saying 'he'd put his hand down my trousers'. Everybody on the pitch would have seen him and heard him. Then that boy vanished. Next time I saw him was at the panel.
90. There was a boy from Edinburgh and he told me they were trying it on with him. I told him 'just don't let them' and he said there was nobody he could tell about it.

Reporting abuse at St Ninian's

91. Even when I got home at the weekends I told my granny about St Ninian's and she was very religious, her and my grandad, and she said it would never happen and they wouldn't do anything like that in there. I told her it was happening. I said to her I wanted to see a social worker.
92. When I was in care, other than my granny I didn't tell anyone about St Ninian's and what was going on in there. I didn't run away from there for no reason. She didn't believe me. My grandad sat me down and told me the best thing for me was to get my head down and get on with it. I told him I couldn't stay in there any longer.

Leaving St Ninians

93. I went to a panel. I hadn't been to any panel hearings in the years I was in St Ninian's. They knew I was ready to get out. The male social worker based in St Ninian's took me along with a woman. She went into the hearing I don't know who she was and I hadn't seen her before. My granny was there.. When we walked out along the High Street after the hearings the male social worker came out of a local bar. Then we headed back to St Ninian's.
94. Not long before the panel I'd come out for a weekend and I'd seen my uncle and he suggested I went to work with him and he told my granny he had a job for me when I came out. I was meant to go to England for rugby trials and I said I wasn't going to as I was going home. I came home about a month before I was due to get out and I did a runner and I decided I wasn't going back.
95. They couldn't get me as I was hiding on the boat. I appeared at the house. It was the first time I saw that local authority social worker since the day they put me in and he was there. Eventually I went inside the house and two police were there. They said I was going back and I only had a month or two to go. I refused, and they said I'd go to Bellfield for the night first before going to St Ninian's.

96. When they drove me there I got out of the car door and made a run for it. After that the social worker went down to the boatyard to see if there really was a job for me. I started working there straight away and that was me out of the care system. There was no punishment for not going back, but I never went back to St Ninian's and if I had, there would have been punishment. I left all my clothes there. I felt great about being out.
97. I thought I'd be able to see my brothers and that was a no-no. I didn't see them until they came out of their home another year or two later. When [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came to the house to visit I had to go and stay with my auntie. The social work said I was a risk to them and a bad influence.

Life after being in care

98. After leaving St Ninian's I got a job at the family boatyard. I didn't have a good life at all. I had a lot going on in my head. I couldn't see my brothers. I didn't see them until they came out of the home they were in and started working with me. My uncle ran the boatyard and he made sure we had jobs when we came out. The money he paid me, and the money my dad left me I got when I was eighteen, I used it to buy a house. Then I went to the social work department and it was just my youngest brother who was left in there and he was getting abused. I told them how much money I earned and I had a house and wanted to take my brother [REDACTED] out of care. They said no and I couldn't see him until he was sixteen. My brother [REDACTED] got fostered out to people in Lanark.
99. My main occupation through my life was with and on boats and I did engineering. I stayed working with my uncle until I was twenty-one. Then I went into the garage side. I had my own flat by then. I was putting money away. I bought myself a boat. All I did was boats.

100. I did have some contact with my mum later on and I did start talking to her. When I separated from my partner later on my mum took care of my boy and brought him up. She did what she'd done to me and put him out on the street and he was a boy. He nearly got taken into a home.
101. I used to disappear and I tried to kill myself a few times. There was still a lot going on in my head. I always ran away from it. I was drinking a lot. I would disappear and the family wouldn't see me for weeks. I didn't want them to go through what I went through. I went off the rails and I was sleeping on the streets. My oldest daughter [REDACTED] found me down in Bradford in a mental hospital. I didn't know what day it was.

Impact

102. The mental abuse because I couldn't read or write was the worst. That has always stuck with me. I would walk out of places as an adult because it was getting to me all the time. I never got help for it at all. When I went to the GP and told him I was depressed about not being able read or write and all he did was give me tablets.
103. It's affected my employment in a big way. If I had the knowledge of reading and writing I'd probably have my own garage and I could have done a lot more with it. I got a pilot's ticket for driving the ferries because the company I worked for gave me extra help and got someone to read out the information to me and I was to give him the answers to the test orally. I could navigate on the water using the GPS and a plotter like in a car rather than the map. I was getting 100% in the tests.
104. My ability to form relationships has been affected. I think with not being able to read and write that other people are going think I'm an idiot. Some people would take the piss and I'd get angry. I used to turn to drink. That messed up my relationship with [REDACTED]'s mother through drink. I always got on alright with my brothers and I wanted to be there for them as I wasn't there when we were in care. I was doing too much for them, but I just had to do it.

105. Seeing what can happen to kids in care made me closer to my own children as I didn't want it happening to them. I was very protective of them and I always wanted to know where they were and who they were with. It wasn't just them. It was the same with my nephews as well. My nephew [REDACTED] was rejected by his mum because he's black. I went to England and brought him to Scotland as she wanted him to be adopted. I wasn't going to let it happen.
106. Every time something went wrong in the family, they all wanted me to come and help out and get involved and sort it out. It started to get to me. One day I decided I'd had enough. Nobody knew where I was and I was away for over a year and I was sleeping on the streets. Then my daughter [REDACTED] found me in Bradford. When I was in the homeless unit in Bradford I had a counsellor there called Natalie O'Reilly who worked for the council and she got me a flat. After that I came back to live in Scotland.
107. I've ended up getting treatment a few times in Gartnavel hospital in Glasgow. I was always on anti-depressants, but I tried to hide it. I received counselling once, a long time ago. That was because of my thoughts about suicide. Life was too much and other people's expectation of me was too much and but I couldn't help them with everything. My trust in people was difficult. My doctor asked me recently if I wanted counselling support.
108. There has been a big impact on my religious beliefs. [REDACTED] was very lucky to get me to walk her down the aisle when she got married recently. I've always said if anything happens to me, never ever put me in a chapel. She knows I mean that. Priests used to come to my gran's house and told me I was christened a Catholic. I told him at the end of the day, I was forced to be christened when I was only a toddler and it was just a piece of paper and it was a lot of shite.

Reporting of Abuse

109. I've never made any reports to the police of abuse after leaving care. They approached in 2022 and came to my house to interview and took a statement. They treated me

really well and were nice to me. I've seen them once, but they said they would come back to see me. That interview was about Bellfield and St Ninian's.

Records

110. I got a copy of my social work records and showed them to my daughter and the people who wrote the notes had mixed up my date of birth with my brother [REDACTED] and our records were mixed up. I got the records after my brother [REDACTED]'s wife sent away for them on line and got them posted out to me. A lot of details were blanked out and only a few sentences were left.
111. The lawyer I've instructed in a civil case has requested a copy of my social work records and he has told me a lot of information is missing and there are mix-ups in them. He also has my medical records. He thought it would take him two months to get through them all.

Lessons to be Learned

112. The homes for children in care need to be monitored more and watch what's going on. They're just putting kids in them and just leaving them. They don't know who's looking after who.

Hopes for the inquiry

113. I hope the inquiry can put a stop to it all. Somebody's got to do something about it. It has been going on for years and its being going on in Ireland and it's all down to the Catholic Church.

Other information

114. 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 6, 4, 22.....