

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GPE

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GPE. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow and brought up in Lennoxton. I initially stayed with my father, mother, my older brother and younger sister.
3. My family life was not great at home as my father was a violent man, whether sober or drunk. It was a regular occurrence for my mother, myself and my younger sister to be beaten by my father. My brother was hit much less, perhaps because he was older. My father never accepted that I was his son and that was just one reason for him hitting me.
4. The police were at our house on many occasions. I can recall one incident after my father had beaten my mother and we all left the house. We were walking about the streets with mum only dressed in her nightie and blood streaming down her face. The police found us and the only thing they did was to take us back to the house and back to my father. They never did anything to help us. This was the typical result of mum phoning them for help. In the end she stopped calling them and had to just take the beatings.

5. At this time I was supposed to be attending Lennoxton Primary. I was often turning up at the school with black eyes and nobody questioned what was happening to me. I was forever skipping school and that gave my dad more reasons to beat me.
6. My teacher at the school was a Mrs Nesbitt but we never got on and I just hated being in her class. Each day I did go to the school I was always getting the belt from her and other teachers. It got so common that even the kids would be asking what I was going to get the belt for that day.
7. Eventually I was expelled from the school after I was involved in fighting with Mrs Nesbitt's son. I was allocated to a secondary school in Kilsyth but I can't remember the name. I rarely went there and was forever running away. The only time I enjoyed being there was when I was in the art class. The teacher, I can't remember their name, said that I had enough talent to pass my art o-level.
8. Because of the abuse by my father it caused my mother to turn to drink and it became such a habit she became an alcoholic. She managed to leave the house and get her own place. Mum wasn't able to look after us and we had to stay living with my father.
9. I was always refusing to go to school and getting into trouble. I was at so many panels it must have reached around the hundred mark. I was also allocated a Probation Officer, Mr McLaughlin. It was decided by the panel that my sister and I were to be placed into care. She was sent to a home in the Paisley area and after a few weeks looked after by my aunt.

Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbartonshire

10. I was about thirteen or fourteen when Mr McLaughlin took me to Cardross in his car. When he took me there he told me I was just going out for the day, but it turned out I was being taken to Cardross. That one day I was told I was to be there for turned into a year. I was one of the longest residents at the home.

Routine at Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbartonshire

First day

11. When I first arrived at Cardross I saw that it was a two storey building. When I went inside I could see that the windows only opened a little way to allow air into the home. There was a bar across the bottom of the window stopping it from opening all the way. I later realised this was to stop people climbing out and running away. The doors in the home were not locked.
12. I met the man ^{SNR} of the place, ^{GPG}. The only other people I can remember at the home were Mr ^{GPF}, member of staff. He was a really heavy built guy and in his forties. There was the PE Teacher, who we nicknamed ^{GPH} after the cartoon character. There was also Rita, who was a member of staff and lived in a house. Rita was a kind person and the only one that was nice to me during my time there. She was so nice that if you ever did anything wrong in front of her you would have felt embarrassed. If she was still alive today I would like to thank her.
13. I was also shown to the house where I first stayed which was called Loch Lomond. There were two other houses, Cameron and another one that I cannot remember the name of.
14. In each of the houses there were four rooms with space for eight boys in each. Myself and the other boys were moved from house to house during our stay at Cardross. There was a lot of movement of people arriving and then leaving to go home, being fostered or adopted and some being transferred to List D homes like Geilsland.

Mornings and bedtime

15. In the mornings I think we were woken about eight thirty and would get washed, dressed, carry out some chores and then down for breakfast about ten o'clock. These

times may have been earlier but I am not sure. I was supposed to be in school but I usually ran out of there.

Mealtimes/Food

16. There was enough food to keep you happy. If you did not like any of the food then you just went hungry. There were no issues of any force feeding and if they had tried it I would just have told them where to go. For the first few days I was there I was not eating. The staff thought I was suffering from anorexia.

Clothing/uniform

17. The only clothes I had were the ones my Probation Officer had gathered from my house. I think they were washed about once a week. There was no school uniform at Cardross.

Leisure time

18. The staff gave each of the children four cigarettes each day, usually handed out in the morning. I think this was supposed to keep us happy. Any free time that I had I was just hiding somewhere on the grounds of Cardross where I would be sniffing glue.

Trips and holidays

19. Sometimes we would be taken out of the home in the minibus and we would go for a drive.
20. There was a German family that came to the home and they took some of us on a holiday to Iona. We would go to Iona for a weekend and it would be a mix of boys and girls from the home. During that weekend we stayed in a youth hostel and the boys slept in separate rooms from the girls.

School

21. The school we were supposed to go to was in the grounds of the home. I think the teachers came from the council, as opposed to them being staff. There was nothing being taught in the school and we just played on the days I was there. I was still having problems reading and writing and they never helped me.
22. The teachers were not bothered what we did so long as there was no fighting. They were just in the job for the money and never showed any care.

Healthcare

23. I did see a dentist once but I think that was just a routine appointment. I did have to see a doctor as I suffered from migraines. I was told that this was a result of having fallen out of my pram as a baby and had spent nearly nine months in hospital. There were also times when I was having a migraine that my mum said she found me hiding in a dark cupboard. I suffered from the migraines until I was about fifteen.

Work

24. The work we were asked to carry out was to keep our room tidy and sometimes we were told to scrub the stairs.

Birthdays and Christmas

25. Any birthdays at the home were never celebrated. Most of the kids in the home would be home for Christmas, but myself and a few others, stayed in the home. Although the staff did not give out any presents I think we did get a turkey for dinner.

Visits/Inspections

26. I don't remember seeing any social workers who were at the home to carry out any inspections or to check up on me.

Sibling contact

27. After my sister was placed into care and when I would ask the staff if they could fix up a visit with her they just kept blocking me. I am not sure why as by that time she was living with my aunt.

Family contact

28. There was one day when I was sitting in the class room when I looked out of the window to see my brother arriving at the school. A short time later he was walking back out, obviously having been refused access to me. I asked the teacher if I could go and see him. He told me that I was not allowed as it was lesson time. I told the PE teacher, **GPH**, he was being unfair as my brother had travelled all the way from Glasgow to see me and it was only ten minutes before there was a break. I then ran out of the class and joined my brother and absconded. When I eventually went back to Cardross I was given a punch by **GPH**.
29. I never had any weekend leave as I had no family that I could stay with. I spent the weekends with some others in a similar situation, at the home.

Personal possessions

30. I never had any personal possessions other than my clothes. Some of the other kids might have things like a stereo, but I had nothing. I was never jealous of them.

Running away

31. I would run out of the home at least four or five days most weeks. I would just go back to Lennoxton and try to see my mum in her new house. Even if I saw her I was not welcome there because of her new partner. Sometimes if I was able to see mum it was not long before they had phoned the police. Sometimes they caught me at the house and other times I was able to get out the door again. I can remember one time

they tried to lock the doors while they waited for the police but I smashed a window and got out that way.

32. There was one occasion when I ran away that I stayed away for about six months. At that time there were four of us who ran away together and we slept outdoors in a tent. Some of the days I was away I was able to get into my dad's house so we could get some food. I think my dad must have followed us as he found out where we were camped. He must have informed the police and we were taken back to the home. The girl that was with us became a good friend and I still have contact with her today. When we were back she was transferred to St Euphrasia's.

Discipline

33. I was getting so many punches I cannot remember what else would be classed as routine discipline. There were many days when I was being punished by being hit by staff. I know there were lots of things being written about me into the daily logs, but I would doubt they entered all the punching they administered.

Bed Wetting

34. I always had a problem with wetting the bed, from a young age in my family house and throughout my time in care. There were some nights I woke and would not be wearing any pyjama bottoms, even on nights I had not wet the bed. I must have been up during the night but I can't remember doing that. I think the staff were also carrying out checks during the night for people who suffered this problem.
35. This went on until I was about sixteen. At the home I had to change the sheets on my bed. The staff never did anything to me like shouting or hitting me. This was different from my own house where my father would hang the sheets out the window so all my friends were aware that I had wet the bed.

36. Mr **GPF** staff member, would call me "piss the bed" at any opportunity he could. He would also encourage some of the other kids in the home to call me names for wetting the bed.

Abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbartonshire

37. **GPH** the PE Teacher, was not the only person who hit me. Mr **GPG**, **SNR** **SNR** would also punch me to the head for doing something wrong in his eyes. Whenever he or any teacher hit me I would tell them to bring it on as I was used to being punched by my father and they could not hurt me like he did. Mr **GPG** would usually pick places like my arms or stomach to hit me as well as the head. They were all places that never showed any bruising visible to anyone else.
38. Along with those two staff there was also Mr **GPF** member of staff. If he thought you did anything wrong then he would also slap you on the side of the head.

Reporting of abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbartonshire

39. There was never anyone that I was aware of that I could report anything to. I did not even recognise it as abuse at that time as it was something I was used to happening from my own house.

Leaving Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbartonshire

40. One day I was told that Mr McLaughlin, my probation officer, was coming to the home as I was being moved to another placement. I asked why I was leaving and the only thing they would tell me was that I could not stay at Cardross forever. I asked if I could go and stay with my mum but was told that was not an option. When Mr McLaughlin arrived I was driven to Redheugh Adolescent Centre in Kilbirnie.

Redheugh Adolescent Centre, Kilbirnie

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Redheugh Adolescent Centre, Kilbirnie

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after being in care

70. When I left the care system I moved in with my mum and her new German husband. That did not last long as he did not like me. I was kicked out of the house and ended up on the street and homeless. I ended up mixing with people who persuaded me to join them in taking drugs and ended being addicted to heroin. I did not know that I could have contacted Redheugh who would probably have given me some help.
71. I lived on the street for about the next seven years. I was mixing with all sorts of people on the streets. I even got paid for helping the street prostitutes. I would be asked to keep a note of the registration of any cars they went away in. If they were not back within a certain period I would contact the police. This was around a time when some of those girls were being attacked and others killed.
72. As a result of my drug addiction I ended up in many prisons in Scotland and England. They included Barlinnie, Strangeways and Peterhead along with others. During this period the unemployment people classed me as a transient and I would sign on at many different offices. I ended up living on the streets in London before heading back to Scotland.
73. I was then given some help from the Simon Community who helped people living on the streets. Each day they would provide us with sandwiches. There was a girl who was working with them who spoke to me a lot. One day she told me she was going home to Northern Ireland and asked if I wanted to come with her. She helped me get a flat in Portrush. She moved on and was still helping people throughout the world including Africa.

74. I was then in contact with a doctor and he got me on a rehabilitation programme where I was prescribed Methadone to help me get off heroin. I was on 90 ml and after a short time I felt I was strong enough that I wanted to get off that as well. Each month the doctor reduced the prescription by 10 ml. It was around this time that I was getting myself in order and not getting into any more trouble with the police. Other than one lapse about a year ago it is a long time since I have been in trouble.
75. I was also given some help by Triangle Housing and a woman called Lorna. She helped with me getting different houses, even after I was no longer on their books.
76. I was living in Ireland when my mum passed away. I was not told the news until about four days after her funeral. The excuse they gave me was they did not have an address or contact number for me. I managed to make my way over and placed some flowers on her grave.
77. My dad died about ten years after my mother. I did attend his funeral, but that was only after being pressured by my auntie to go. When I was at the service they made mention of his new family but there was no mention of me, my brother or my sister.
78. I do have my own children over here in Northern Ireland but although I no longer live with their mother I still see her. My friend Joanne who is with me is a good friend and she knows a lot about my life. She has been a big help in keeping me out of any trouble.
79. I have not told my son and daughter about any of the abuse I suffered. I have never punished them in the way I was as a child. My daughter lives in Belfast and is doing really well for herself. My son is a qualified chef and hopefully soon he will be getting a long term job doing that.
80. I did go back to Cardross to see what it was like now. When I arrived there I saw that it had been knocked down and been replaced with new houses.

Impact

81. Whenever someone is near me and they move too quickly I still flinch, fearing it will be like I was in Cardross, and get punched.
82. The memories of the abuse that I suffered do keep me up at night sometimes. I can also remember seeing a man giving his child a row in a restaurant. That incident took me right back to the abuse I had from my dad, as the man concerned had a similar appearance to him.
83. I have spoken to my aunt later in my life about my time in care. She told me she always had some regrets that she looked after my sister but did not have enough room to take me as well. Since I left care I have not had any relationship with my brother or sister.
84. I do think that my time in Cardross affected any relationship I had with my siblings. Beforehand I had a relationship, although it had some problems they were always there, but after the social work were involved there was nothing. Even if I send a Christmas card it would be sent back asking not to get in touch.
85. My education from my home life and during my time in care was non-existent and in reality I think I only spent about two weeks in total in school. I did win a medal for football when I was at school and showed it to my father. His response was I probably stole it. That hurt so much I just threw it away. It was my gran that taught me how to read and write. I want to go back to College and to try to improve my education. I have always had ambitions to be involved in astrophysics, but always feel my writing will always let me down.
86. I did get some treatment for drug addiction in Ballymena but I have never had any counselling for my life with my family or my life in care. It has never been offered and it as not something I had thought of.

87. Nowadays I meet a lot of new people and try to get on with them. I will always go out of my way to give any help within my power.
88. The end of my story is turning out good and that is what is most important.

Reporting of Abuse

89. In all my time as I was growing up in my family home whenever the police were called by my mum seeking help, their way of helping us was to return us to my father where we were beaten more. I did not know throughout my time in care that I could tell the police about the beatings. The only issue is that even if I was aware, I am not sure I would have reported it, as I would have been aware it could have caused me more trouble and possibly more beatings.
90. There was one weekend when I was home from Cardross and my grandfather saw that I had a black eye. He reported this to the police but nothing ever happened. Cardross were spoken to but they just claimed that I had been fighting with other boys.

Records


91. I did try to get hold of my records from my time in care. The woman I spoke to on the phone said it would be too difficult and I have never pursued it since.

Lessons to be learned

92. I think we should make sure that staff are better trained to look after children. They must have empathy for the young people they are looking after. They should also take time to find out all the background for the children ending up in care.

Other information

93. I hope people can come to the Inquiry and get all the bad thoughts out of their head. Hopefully by coming forward it will encourage others to do the same and they might get some relief from it.
94. 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 3 AUG 2022