

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HMA

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is HMA but I'm known as HMA My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum was or and my dad was They were married and had four children. The eldest is my brother, who's 57, then there's me, then my sister or who's 53 and then my adopted sister who's about 52. My mother was pregnant with when my father died so they adopted her.
3. The family stayed in Airdrie and I lived with them until I was two, which is when I went into care at Arranview. I don't have any memories of home life in Airdrie, I was very young and my earliest memories are really from my time in care.
4. My mum and brother both told me after I got out of Arranview that the reason we went into care was because my dad had died. He had been ill and in hospital, he had bad kidneys' as he was a drinker and when he died my mum had a nervous breakdown right there and then.
5. The powers that be then grabbed the three of us, and myself and whisked us into Arranview. Looking back, the way that was done was one of the worst things that could have been done about this whole thing. The fact we were put in a home which was literally no distance at all from where my gran stayed and was close

to all my family. My sister [REDACTED] didn't go to Arranview she stayed with my Auntie [REDACTED]

6. I don't know what was done or discussed about family caring for us, my mum never said anything about that. My mum herself was actually in care as a child, she was in Smyllum, and she's told me stories about that over the years.
7. I'm not sure how old she was or how long she was there but she was definitely in there along with her brother. She was in longer than him. She has told me that the nuns at Smyllum would hit them with sticks, and that happened to her. She also said one of the nuns once threw a doll at a child and they would also throw apples at children. I remember her saying the nuns were very strict and that it was like a regime and the children just couldn't do anything.

Arranview Children's Home, Airdrie

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Arranview

74. I came out of Arranview when I was seven. I do have a memory of someone telling me I was going to be going back to my mums. I don't remember who that was but I was excited about it, I do remember that.

75. I did have some home visits first, to check the house was suitable. I spent weekends at the family home every couple of weeks and I was taken there and back by my social worker. I would go there on a Friday afternoon and return to Arranview on a Sunday evening. Secondary Institutions - to be published later Two weeks later I would have to do it all again.

76. The home visits were good and I remember mum took us out to the park and it was in the countryside so they were great. I remember going to a place called 'The Tunnel' on a beautiful summers day and we had a walk up this path where there was bluebells and a wee burn it was just like a children's story. That's a great memory for me.

77. I went home for good with [redacted] eventually and that day was probably the best day of my life, Secondary Institutions - to be published later My brother [redacted] came home later as he had shingles and couldn't travel home with us when we left. I remember the three of us got a wee red diary when we left. I don't know who gave us it, but it

was someone at the home. It sat at the side of my bed for years after that and never got filled in.

Life at home after Arranview

78. [REDACTED] and I went back to the family home at [REDACTED] in Douglas. It was a bottom terraced house. I remember the initial phase was good, we had our first Christmas at home, we got presents and we all had a great Christmas. I remember getting football boots and a football.
79. Sadly it didn't last though, because our stepdad, [REDACTED], his name was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was just a child in a man's body. He just couldn't cope when my mum died and he ended up getting sectioned and put into a mental health hospital. I can't blame him for his own mental capabilities but as he got older it all got too much for him.
80. When we were growing up in the house, after we got home from Arranview he was the man of the house and he wasn't over physical but mentally he really was unbelievable. After the first couple of months he would threaten us with going back to stay at Arranview.
81. We three kids, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself, all shared a bed and [REDACTED] was a chronic bedwetter so that wasn't ideal. [REDACTED] sometimes wet the bed, but denied it, and then [REDACTED] would just hit us all, his logic being that he was still getting the one that did it. He hit us with a big army webbed belt and it looked bad but it didn't hurt when he hit us with it. We all got hit with that and threatened to go back to the home.
82. The thing is, I did love him, he wasn't my biological father but that didn't concern me. I still called him dad and even though he hit us and beat us and threatened us, I loved him in the end.
83. [REDACTED] just didn't have a clue about things, he had a strange mentality. He would paint swastikas on his arms and he wasn't a member of the National Front or anything

like that, he just did not have any comprehension of what that was about. His idea of the war was what you saw in war films, that was it.

84. He couldn't deal with money and never worked properly, he would just do casual garden jobs and things like that. He was such a loser but mum liked the attention he gave her. My mum had a lot of depression and she couldn't think rationally so it was difficult for her to look after us. Sometimes she would just go and lie in her bed for a few hours or she wouldn't go out to buy food so we would all go hungry. Don't get me wrong she loved us all but she couldn't look after us, she just wasn't like that and she had her mental health problems.
85. The social work did visit the family home a couple of times but there was never any offer of after care at all. He did get me all excited about the Queens Park football trial but that was rubbish and as a seven or eight year old kid that was a disappointment.
86. I was never at school after returning home. I think I was meant to be attending Lanark Grammar. I was playing truant and I got involved in glue sniffing, shoplifting and things. I did attend about three Children's Panels when I was at Lanark Grammar, they were actually all at the school. I remember my mum, maybe a social worker and a panel of people were at them. That included my old primary school headmaster Mr Proudfoot, he was on those kind of boards.
87. My future was discussed by all these people and I was there but I couldn't tell them anything. Nothing I said mattered and I just felt numb. I didn't trust people and I didn't believe anyone because there had been so many lies in the past. By the time the panels came around and they were discussing my future I didn't care. They would tell me what they were going to do and that was about it.
88. A decision was eventually made at the last panel I attended. That was when I was fifteen and I was told that I had to go to an approved school. That school was Springboig St. John's in Shettleston, Glasgow but before I went there I was sent to Calder House Assessment Centre. I had to go in there for an assessment before I could go on to St. John's. I would have been around fifteen at this time.

Calder House Assessment Centre, Blantyre

General

89. I think the social work took me to Calder House the same day as the panel I had attended. I was there for about three or four weeks before going on to stay at St. John's and it was a horrible place.
90. I don't have many memories from Calder House, I think it was in Blantyre but I wasn't there for very long. I remember we weren't allowed to smoke and I remember going to classes, which was boring.
91. I also remember two or three staff coming up to me one day and saying that so far they had been approaching me with kid gloves. It was to do with the interaction between me and other kids, I think I'd been arguing or fighting with another kid. Well they said that if anything, like that happened again I wouldn't know what was coming, but it would come. I didn't understand that and it kind of put me off the place. I don't know who the staff were that said that to me.
92. The next thing I remember I was trying to run away with an older guy who had come in. He got away but I fell and hurt my leg when I was climbing over the fence. I was caught and brought back in where I was made to sit in a room and face the wall. That was my punishment.
93. That's about all I remember from Calder House, the time flew by as I wasn't there for very long. There wasn't any physical abuse at Calder House. The staff did know our family as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had both been there as well. I actually visited [REDACTED] there once when she was in there.
94. I know I wanted to go to St. John's, I had asked for it, as I had been told it would be good. I was Catholic and a Celtic fan, which was two good things to be as there wasn't

anything else in there. I felt as if I belonged a wee bit more in there, so that became the best thing for me.

Springboig St. John's School, Shettleston, Glasgow

General

95. I remember that when I first went in to St. John's I had a new snorkel jacket that my mum had bought me and I wore stay-press trousers and a pair of Bay City Roller brogues. I remember I took the tartan off the sides to make them look normal.
96. The building itself was like an 'H' with the workshops at the top and the big red building at the bottom. In the middle was the yard. There was toilets down the bottom and they were a kind of add on. We all used to go up the back of the toilets to smoke fags.
97. We had work clothes, it was an old army jacket, army jumper and trousers that were all patched. If you tried to run away you stood out like a sore thumb. Then we had our night dress, which was a checked shirt and things like that. That was the clothes we would wear to go out at night.
98. There was three houses at St. John's, named after saints, they were St. Columbus, Melrose and Ogilvie which I was in. We had leisure activities, there was full size snooker tables and pool tables so that was good.
99. When we first went in we weren't allowed home at all, so for about six weeks or two months, we just didn't get out. They would watch your behaviour though and if it was good they would then let you go home for one weekend in three. If you continued behaving you would then get two weekends in three and then three in three, that's how they worked it. I think that was a good thing.
100. I did get to three out of three but going back home to Douglas wasn't always great as there was a lot of trouble going on between my family and a local man. I ended up

being wrongly accused of an assault and I was arrested by the police and taken back to the home. I lost all my privileges for that and I'd done nothing.

101. St. John's was all boys, it was very structured, and it was strict routine but it was good. We got up in the morning had breakfast, did chores like helping in the kitchens, cleaning up and Hoovering, then we all went to the big hall where we had an assembly and the headmaster, Mr Gordon. He would tell us what was happening that day and if anyone had been in trouble he would mention things to do with that, but it wasn't ever anything embarrassing, he didn't humiliate anyone. After that we went to our workshops.
102. At St. John's we attended workshops in different skills, there was engineering, joinery, gardening, canoeing and things like that. I did learn a lot and the staff were very good. I also remember Old Doc, that's what we called him, who took the engineering workshop which I was in and he was a great guy. Other members of staff I remember were Mary Friel who was lovely, she was a social worker and Mr Patterson, who was into canoeing, he was a good guy as well.
103. There was an old gardener guy there as well who was great. He had me in tears when he retired because we all lined up to say cheerio and he grabbed me by the hair and told me to watch myself. That was emotional for me and I was trying not to cry in front of all the other guys.
104. The main punishment at St. John's was the loss of privileges. I was scared most of the time when I was in St. John's and that was why I ran away with another boy, [REDACTED]. We were asked why we were running away by Mr Tiffany. He was a really nice man, we called him 'lightbulb' because of the shape of his head, and he was a bit of a drinker but was a really nice man. He asked why I was running away and where I thought I was going to go. He was really caring and was trying to help us, because he was a decent human being.

105. St. John's was actually good for me I started to get a bit of self-worth in there and I made some good friends. Sadly most of them are now dead. It also helped me get a job and learn how to manage my money.

Abuse at Springboig St. John's School

106. There was a lot of violence at St. John's and I did end up getting involved in that. There was a lot of kids from all over Glasgow and kids from Perth. There was three big bullies, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were three of the bigger older boys and they just bullied everybody.
107. I got a hard time from them for the clothes I was wearing when I first went in. I had fights with them over cigarettes and they would slag me off as they could see it was upsetting me. They would just tread on younger more vulnerable kids.
108. I remember one weekend when Old Doc and Mary Friel were on duty, one of the boys, [REDACTED] who was mental, sorted out those three bullies. Some of the lads came back from their weekend away at home on the Sunday night and we were all up in the tele room. [REDACTED] took a pool cue and set about [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], shouting at them that if they wanted to bully someone they should bully him. It was fascinating watching it, as part of me was glad they were getting it but part of me was also sickened by it.
109. Old Doc came running in and stopped it all and then it all came out about the bullying and why [REDACTED] had done what he done, and all the bullying more or less stopped after that.
110. Another bully was a guy called [REDACTED]. One day when we'd been at Kirkintilloch swimming baths I jumped into the front seat of the bus and he shouted that he wanted the front seat, and he grabbed me by the hair. I lost it and told him I was going to knock him out, when we got out the bus. That kind of deflated him, which I picked up on and it got my confidence up. He was older than me but ended up backing out and that was noticed by other boys, so things weren't so bad for me after that.

111. I suppose you just felt your way through at St. John's and picked your battles, staying clear from the ones you knew you couldn't win. That's more or less how I would generalise my time there.

Reporting of abuse at Springboig St. John's School

112. There were a lot of nice staff and social workers at St. John's, I did think that most of them were alright. I remember Mr Scanlon, he was a social worker and was a good guy. He saw what was happening to me over the first few weeks and he came up to me and told me there was two things I could do. I could retaliate and set about the guys who were bullying me or I could start laughing at them.
113. Well the next time they started on me I did start laughing at them and within one day it had stopped. They had lost their power, which I didn't rationalise back then but I see that now. I became nothing to them and they went off and found somebody else.

Leaving Springboig St. John's School

114. I was at St. John's for about eighteen months to two years. I did have two or three reviews of my time in care there, at Children's Panels. It was the school that would recommend that you be released and by the time that happened to me I was a house leader and I was working doing work for community industries on behalf of the government job scheme.
115. One of the biggest mistakes I made there was when I was leaving. They offered me to stay in Glasgow or go home to Douglas and I went back to Douglas. That ended up being my biggest regret because when I went back there I just fell back into all that other stuff.

Life after being in care

116. I had a lot of issues with my brother [REDACTED] when I got back home aged seventeen. He had been ahead of me at Calder House and at St. John's but he had then gone to borstal and to prison and he was violent.
117. We didn't get on, we fought and on one occasion when we were fighting he choked me quite badly. I idolised him so that had a big effect on me, and on him as he apologises for it even to this day. It was just a reflection of how destructive we all were towards each other.
118. I decided to leave the family home after that incident with my brother. I went to stay with my uncle after that for about six months. I then ended up having a big fight with my cousin when I was there and I had to go back to stay with my mum in Douglas.
119. It was strange when I went back to Douglas, I felt a real darkness come over me and my behaviour started to change. It was as if it all got to the zenith and everything just kicked in. I started to get into trouble with the police and I started drinking and fighting, getting involved in petty crime.
120. In 1988, when I was 22 I was involved in an incident and I ended up getting remanded in Barlinnie for 10 weeks. Those were hard times for me as I hadn't actually done anything. I pled not guilty and always contested my innocence. In the end a girl who was going to give evidence for me, didn't turn up at court and I ended up getting sent to Low Moss open prison to complete that sentence as I was told by my lawyer to just plead guilty. I just kept myself to myself when I was in prison and read loads of books.
121. I went back to my mums in Douglas after my time in prison and things weren't great so when my mate got a job in London I decided to go with him. I knew when I left that I wasn't ever going back to Douglas.
122. When I landed in London I swore to myself that I was having a new start, as nobody knew me down there. I got myself a job cleaning at the airport in London and for three or four months things were looking good.

123. Then I went to a party one night and started on the drink. For the next two years, from 1989 and 1991 my life became mayhem with the alcohol, just beer, but I just kept getting drunk on it. I didn't know how to do things, I became depressed and I didn't know how to deal with that. Those were very difficult times and I ended up going to the doctors about my depression. I went on to see a psychiatrist and I was then admitted to a Rehabilitation Centre where I received psychiatric therapy.
124. I spent seven years off the drink after that but it did all start again later after my mother died. I didn't have any serious relationships for many years, none at all in London until I met a Scottish girl when I was in London. We got involved and I moved in with her in 1996. I had a job with P&O in Greenford during that relationship and I bought myself a flat.
125. My mother became unwell with throat cancer 1999 and she died in 2000. That was a difficult time for me and that's when I started on the drink again. That was when I met [REDACTED] and we've been in a relationship since then. I have been on and off the drink since my mum died but I have been off it now for five years.
126. I ended up leaving P&O and I did have jobs on and off after that including agency work. That was all in between alcohol dependency and mental health depression.

Impact

127. My brother and sister both played a part in my early life and during our time in care. My brother can speak up for himself but he's told me he doesn't want involved, he's older than me and is more aware. He's also told me that the people he met when he was in care were very nice, so his memories and experiences differ from mine.
128. My sister died in 2011 following severe mental health issues. She was only 43 and that was a difficult sad time for me as I just got the call one day saying she had gone and I had to go and identify her. I'll never forget that day.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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134. My mental health has had a massive impact on me. I have been diagnosed as having Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), I am bi-polar and I suffer from depression. I have these flashbacks as well, where I just see things happening. I have been taking medication for depression for about thirty years now and additional medication, all for

my mental health for about twenty years. I currently take 9 different tablets every day and my doctor tells me I will probably be on this kind of medication for the rest of my life.

135. Those drugs themselves have side effects, I see things happening, I don't process things clearly, I can't sleep or have nightmares when I do and I can go back to my childhood in my head. This is all as a result of what happened to me in my childhood.

136. I've not had many relationships and I have been involved in crime. Secondary Institutions - to b

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

137. I feel my education suffered and I would like to see how far I might have gone with an education. Obviously I'll never know that as I never had an opportunity. I can't sit down and start something and then finish it. I've tried to learn music theory and I've learnt about sharps and flats but it doesn't cohere into anything I can't sit down and work out a tune using a scale or anything like that.

138. I feel I'm always trying to prove myself and I don't have a real belief in my own ability. I can play the harmonica and guitar but I have no real belief that I can actually play them. I can enjoy doing things but I get obsessed trying to do them and then don't stick them out. It's like I have or have developed an OCD type behaviour.

139. I also find I don't trust people telling me what's good for me. I get so confused about what's good and what's bad that I just don't trust anyone. In the end I seem to exhaust myself and I think that prevents me seeing things through.

Treatment/support

140. I have actively been going to psychiatrists for a long time now. I've no faith in them to be honest, they just seem to take so long to do anything. I'm seeing one just now and I've been told that speaking about my time in care will be good for me. I am seeing a good doctor just now. Before the pandemic he would phone me up every couple of

weeks and ask if I was alright. I do feel things still need to be looked at, as I want to stop it all.

141. I can tell you now that I've got more out of speaking to you today than I've ever had speaking to any psychiatrist. I feel they pick on different aspects of it, like depression, but I believe it's so much more than depression. I have been given anti-depressants and they lifted my mood a wee bit but I'm always thinking is it me that's making me happy or is it the drug that's making me happy.

Reporting of Abuse

142. I have only been to the police once, that was at Felton Police Station in London and was a while ago, before the Jimmy Savile thing. I gave them a statement and got a crime reference number. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
143. Earlier this year I was spoken to by Police Scotland and I then arranged to provide a statement to the police at a police station in Twickenham. When I met them the first thing I was asked was if I had ever been in bother with the police. I don't understand why I was asked that. I didn't see any need for the police to research me or make it that obvious to me and it's important to me for you to know that there is nothing sinister in my past. I've had fights and stuff like that but that's as far as it goes.
144. I did give the police a statement, more or less everything I've told you, and it was all written down but when I left I got this feeling that the police were probably thinking it wasn't that serious. I couldn't tell them about the impact it all had on the last fifty five years of my life, and they probably wouldn't want to hear that or understand it.
145. That's all the reporting I've done and I did get a call back from the police in Scotland but all they could tell me was that they couldn't take any further action as they couldn't get access to any records from Arranview. That seems to be the end of anything the police can do.

Records

146. I once contacted Airdrie Council and asked about records but they brushed me off. Other than that I have never applied for any records. I would be interested in knowing if there were any though.

Lessons to be Learned

147. I mentioned that one of the worst things about all of this was [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself being taken straight into Arran View with no family involvement. I don't believe there was any approach to family by the authorities and I don't think any family offered to take care of us but that was the first distinction. All my family had normal family lives and we were going to this home. I'm not saying that things would have been better anywhere else but I do think that was ridiculous.
148. I wouldn't like to think it would happen now, but we were put in a place where we were going to school and seeing cousins and friends who were telling us what they had been doing at home every night then going back to their own houses, whereas we were going back to this big place with the green door.
149. People in charge of children need to be vetted. Where they put kids is important. There needs to be structure to it and they need to try and educate them. They need to know it isn't their fault, because it isn't and them knowing that is really important. They can't control who their parents are.
150. I think there needs to be independent reviews with children in care. Independent people coming in and speaking with the kids. The kids need to have those kinds of people to speak to and to know what they are telling them is being treated with confidence and will be taken seriously and acted upon. People who would act accordingly if they thought anything sinister might be going on.
151. The people that are involved in caring for children should have a love of caring for children, have been involved in the care of children and have a track record of treating

children in the correct way. It shouldn't necessarily be based on any political involvement. It definitely needs the right people doing the job, and those people need to be trained correctly.

152. There also needs to be proper links between areas or departments or offices and a whole database for children and elderly people who are in care. If I'd had people who were trained but were also genuinely interested in caring for children I might have done a lot better.

Hopes for the Inquiry

153. Everything's to do with money. I don't believe in any politicians, I believe they're all talking shite. You read about people skimming off the top in politics and then you hear about a lot of them being protected, so it's no wonder people have no faith or belief in anyone involved in all that. The thing is it's people like that, that would be involved in making the decisions for the future with everything we're talking about here today.

154. I think when people get into government or politics they genuinely want to do something good but the higher up the chain they go the more detached they become from the real world.

Other information

155. 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..... 7 / 12 / 21