

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HQA  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is <sup>HQA</sup> [REDACTED] and this is the name I was known by when I was in care. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1967. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Milton, Glasgow. My mother's name is [REDACTED] and my father is called [REDACTED]. I am the youngest child from a family of nine children and in order of age they are, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] then me and I have a younger half-brother called [REDACTED]. My dad worked as a [REDACTED] for the Daily Express in Glasgow and my mum had her own businesses such as clothes shops and cafes.
3. My parents split up when I was aged five and my mum moved to Stevenston and met someone else. My dad got custody of the children. I went between my mum and my dad, and looking back now, I remember if my mum asked me to do anything I'd tell her I wanted to live with my dad and if he asked to do anything I'd tell him I wanted to live with my mum. He moved to Manchester as the Express's printing was moved there from Glasgow.
4. I still went between the two and spent a lot of time with my mum in Glasgow and I ended up going back and forth between Stevenston and Manchester. Also I didn't get on well with my step-dad, [REDACTED] who was living with my mum. I spent several months at a time in the different households and I think six or seven months

was the longest period of time I spent with either parent. I went to two different primary schools, Ardeer in Stevenston and Oswald Road in Manchester and Auchenhavie Secondary in Stevenston and Chorlton High in Manchester. I was put into Garnock Academy for a wee while too. I can see now that it must have had a great effect on my education, but at the time I didn't think about it. I was playing my parents off against each other and struggling for attention. My dad was really strict, but my mum used to give me money and everything I wanted and let me get away with everything. At the time I didn't notice the effect on me of going from one place to another.

5. My dad lived in Manchester with my step mum [REDACTED] and I didn't like her. I had friends in both places, but felt like I had better friends in Stevenston. My dad had bought a house for us to live in after we left Milton and that was on [REDACTED] in Stevenston and when my parents split up the house was kept until I turned sixteen. My dad continued to pay the mortgage on it when he moved to Manchester. My mum moved out of the house and lived somewhere else in Stevenston and my older sister [REDACTED] ran the house my dad had bought. [REDACTED] is around twelve years older than me, so she was in her twenties by that stage. My sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] lived with [REDACTED] and I lived with her a lot of the time too. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were both in care. None of the children lived with my mum or dad full time. I think my mum had not been truthful to her new partner about the number of children she had.
6. I remember my sister coming home from care for weekend home leave. She was in residential care in Stirling at the time. At this time I was spoilt and I used to get new clothes every Wednesday that my mum bought me from the cash and carry when she was buying goods for her own businesses. My sister was saying how great it was in care and she had so many friends and no chores to do like I had to do at my own home. I was jealous as her stories sounded great. I started to play truant from school and not doing what my mum or [REDACTED] told me to do and took advantage of the complicated family situation to get into care. I was about twelve or thirteen years old by this stage.
7. The matter went before a children's panel in Stevenston because I wasn't going to school and the decision was made to put me into care as I was outside of parental

control. My mum was with me at the hearing. I think I was thirteen or fourteen by this stage, but am not certain of that. I was sent initially to a children's unit that I believe was in Harley Place, Saltcoats. I was not there for long and have no recollection of what it was like there. I don't remember mis-behaving when I was in there. I think my social worker at that stage was called Sadie Burns.

### **Calder House Assessment Centre, Blantyre**

8. I think I went to Calder House directly from Harley Place and I think I was aged fourteen by the time I was in this home. It was an assessment centre, I think I was meant to be there for only three weeks, I don't know if that was how long I was there for and it was the longest three weeks ever. I remember two occasions of sitting in the car with my new social worker, Margaret McNally, and not wanting to go inside. She was the person who took me there.
9. My early impressions of the place was that it was strict. I think I felt ok about being there at the start, but I remember my social worker kept me in the car chatting to me and she gave me a cigarette. I don't recall what she said to me at that time, but I remember she always used to say to me that I shouldn't be here. I don't know who ran the home.
10. In terms of the staff I recall a very tanned woman with wrinkly skin who was from South Africa and she smoked roll-ups and I can't remember her name. She was on day staff. There was also a woman called Mrs Glenn who was a teacher. There was also a night-watchman whose name I don't remember.
11. There were both boys and girls at this home. There were two boys units up the stairs and a girls unit was downstairs. There were a lot of children in the home, about thirty I think and they were aged, like me, at fourteen or fifteen. There was maybe six to eight girls sleeping in my dorm room, and there were two dorm rooms for girls. So there may have been sixteen girls at the centre.

## **Routine at Calder House Assessment Centre**

12. I don't remember my first day at Calder House. In terms of daily routine, I don't remember having breakfast and I don't remember the education, but we must have had some and we would have gone to school after breakfast. I think we had school in the afternoon as well as in the morning, but I'm not sure. I don't know what we did for leisure as I can't remember what we did at playtime or in the evenings. I just remember I was always getting punished for something.
13. I remember twin sisters in the centre and they were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were really lovely, quiet and scared and they were from Blantyre.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

14. I do recall that in the mornings we had to make our bed in a certain way and it was inspected by the staff. It was a strict regime, like a borstal. I think bedtime was at 9 o'clock. I can't remember what the bedtime routine was at weekends or if it was any different.
15. The night-watchman came in our dorm at night if he heard us talking and we'd kid on that we were sleeping. [REDACTED] was always scared and she was scared of the night-watchman. She was in the bed across from me. He used to come into the room with his torch and shine it on us and I once saw him whacking her with it. He put the light on at night once and I remember I heard her saying she had meningitis and she said it several times and he needed to turn the light off.

### *Mealtimes / Food*

16. In terms of food, I remember the kitchen and where it was, but don't remember the food.

*Washing / bathing*

17. I don't remember using either baths or showers at the centre.

*Clothing / uniform*

18. I was in the assessment centre for a short time and I can't remember what time of year it was, but I remember being made to wear big black shorts when I was there. They were horrible. I don't remember who supplied the clothes for us to wear.

*Work/chores*

19. With regard to chores, I had to empty the bins once in the kitchen and that was seen as being a good job to do.

*Visits / Inspections*

20. Margaret McNally came to see me and had a one-to-one with her, so I was able to speak to her by myself but I can't remember what was said. I only remember her coming once and she took me out and we were sitting in the street across from the centre and I didn't want to go back in.

*Healthcare*

21. I have no memories of healthcare or dental care at the centre.

*Running away*

22. I ran away once with [REDACTED]. I did this when I was emptying the bins in the kitchen and the door to the outside was open and the other girl must have been near me at the time. I did it because I hated the place and I don't remember it being planned. We were found by the staff on the Whistleberry Road and brought back and all the children

had to sit on the floor in a circle with legs crossed and me and the girl I ran away with had to sit in the middle of the circle and none of us could speak. I think this process was called restriction.

23. I had sat in the circle with other children on another occasion before when a boy did something wrong and he was put in the middle of the circle. There was a lot of peer pressure on us for running away. I was scared of being battered by the other children. The other children used to say it was all our fault and that they couldn't get any treats or privileges.
24. After me and [REDACTED] ran away and were brought back we had to do a three mile run in twenty minutes. I pretended I died from the running, but the staff obviously knew I was pretending. I was bawled at to get up and keep going. Me and [REDACTED] were also told to scrub the gym hall with a toothbrush. We didn't get it done and if you'd done a big bit they were back at you to tell you to do small individual bits.

#### *Bed Wetting*

25. One of the children, [REDACTED], wet the bed and I recall it happening. The sheets were dried and everyone knew about it. Her sheets were pulled off her bed in front of everybody and staff were shouting and bawling at her. She was crying and was scared. I don't know if she was physically punished.

#### *Discipline*

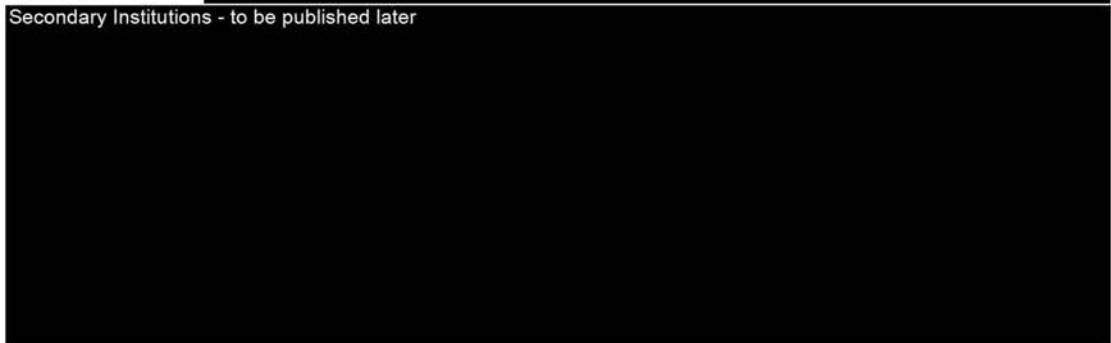
26. The discipline was really strict and there was a fearful atmosphere. Children would get put in what were called restrictions, and that was a punishment. If someone did something wrong then everyone got punished. The children all sat crossed legged in a circle and surrounding the child or children in trouble.
27. One time, Mrs Glenn said I threw a chair in her classroom. I was put in the cell. It had a glass window with bars on it and someone must have tried to get out by breaking the glass as the window was broken. There was [REDACTED] and

I cut myself with it. I'd never self-harmed before because I felt so low. I don't know how long I was in this cell for, but it felt like forever. Other children were put in the cell at different times.

**Dalrymple Place, Mill Road, Irvine**

28. I think I then spent a few months in a small children's home at Dalrymple Place at Mill Road in Irvine. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later




**Redheugh Adolescent Unit, Kilbirnie**

29. I don't know how old I was when I was in this unit, but I was told I was going to be enrolled in Garnock Academy and I can recall being told to go to sign on and that suggests I was coming up to being sixteen. I don't remember being in the care system for so many years.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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### **Leaving Redheugh Adolescent Unit**

59. I left residential care because I was turning sixteen. I don't remember leaving Redheugh or packing my stuff and what the process involved. There was no preparation for me leaving care. I don't remember my social worker being involved when I left the home and she wasn't involved with me after I left. When I left I went to live with my sister [REDACTED] who was in the former family home in Stevenston.

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

60. I think I must have been under sixteen when I left. The house was to be a family home until I turned sixteen and it was sold after I left care. I then moved to Liverpool with [REDACTED] as that is where her husband is from. I was there for several years. I visited family in Scotland at the weekend. Then I moved back and lived in Stevenston again. I got married and had a family of three children. I worked initially for several years in promotions and this meant I travelled to various cities in the UK for work to promote new products of various varieties. I feel I have a good work ethic and have always worked hard.
61. Then I decided I wanted to achieve more and I came across a man that I spoke to on the train who worked in the [REDACTED] Secure Unit and I knew that was what I wanted to do. I went back to college in Kilwinning to study for a National Certificate in social care. My ambition for a long time was to work at somewhere like [REDACTED], but didn't believe I would achieve this. Then I went on to study for a Higher National Certificate at Langside college and worked at a residential school at the same time as I had hoped to do. I worked there for many years. I continue to work with young people now.

## **Impact**

62. I think being in care must have had an impact on me, but I find it hard to say what that is. I think I've been very good at shutting things out. I don't let it define me. I don't talk about being in care. I'm embarrassed that I ended up in care and I don't discuss it with my mum as it must be shameful for her. I feel it was my fault it happened and not hers. It's hard to say whether it has had an impact on my relationships with my siblings. We are very different personalities and I don't see much of them and I have never thought before that being separated as children could have caused that.
63. I've never sought counselling about my experiences in care. I don't have a great opinion of the value of counselling.

## **Reporting of Abuse**

64. I've never reported any abuse to anyone in an official capacity that I witnessed or experienced in care when I was a child.

## **Records**

65. I've not tried to recover any of my records of my time in care. I just feel I don't want to relive it as I feel so embarrassed that it happened to me.

## **Hopes for the Inquiry**

66. I hope that some of the people working with children will not be working with them in future as many of them are not suitable. They've had years of working in these jobs and being paid for it but have abused kid.

**Other information**

67. 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.

HQA  
Sign   
Dated *2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020* .....  
HQA HQA