

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCC

Support person present: No

1. My name is GCC. My date of birth is 1951. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My parents' names were and . I have five older brothers and four sisters. I am the youngest child of the family. My brothers' names are , , , and . My sisters are , , and . We lived in a council house in Pollock in Glasgow and I went to St Robert's primary school. My siblings had all moved away from the family home by the time I was a child.
3. One day in primary school I dodged school with two other boys. I was aged around eleven when this happened. The three of us were walking around in Shawlands and a shop window got smashed. The police came and the three of us were taken to Larchgrove Remand Home for reports to be done. This was the first time I'd been in trouble with the police and it was the first time I had been taken into Larchgrove. My older brothers had been in trouble with the police before me and maybe they recognised my name.
4. I was in Larchgrove for possibly one or two weeks only. It was ok and I had no problems with being there. I slept in a dorm room with other boys. I felt bad about not being at home and not living with my mum and dad, but it didn't bother me too much.

My mum and dad came to visit me in Larchgrove and I can't remember any discussion with them about what was going to happen to me.

5. A guy came to see me and asked me if I'd like to go to a new place to live. I don't know who this guy was as no-one explained his role and I can't remember his name. He told me about the Gryffe Children's Home and made it sound like it was a holiday camp. He also told me about an approved school I could go to instead and I was given the choice of both. I agreed to go to Gryffe Children's Home as it sounded the best place.
6. Then I was taken away by myself straight away to a welfare office in Glasgow for processing. I think it was in Martha Street in the city. I don't remember who took me there. I was there for just a few hours and then I was taken to Gryffe. I just had the clothes I was wearing at the time and no other belongings. I never went to any court hearing or appeared in front of any panel. I don't know if my mum and dad were told where I was going or if they had any input into the decision. I don't know what happened to the two boys I was arrested with as they didn't come to Gryffe with me. I think I went to Gryffe sometime in 1962.

Gryffe Children's Home, Bridge of Weir

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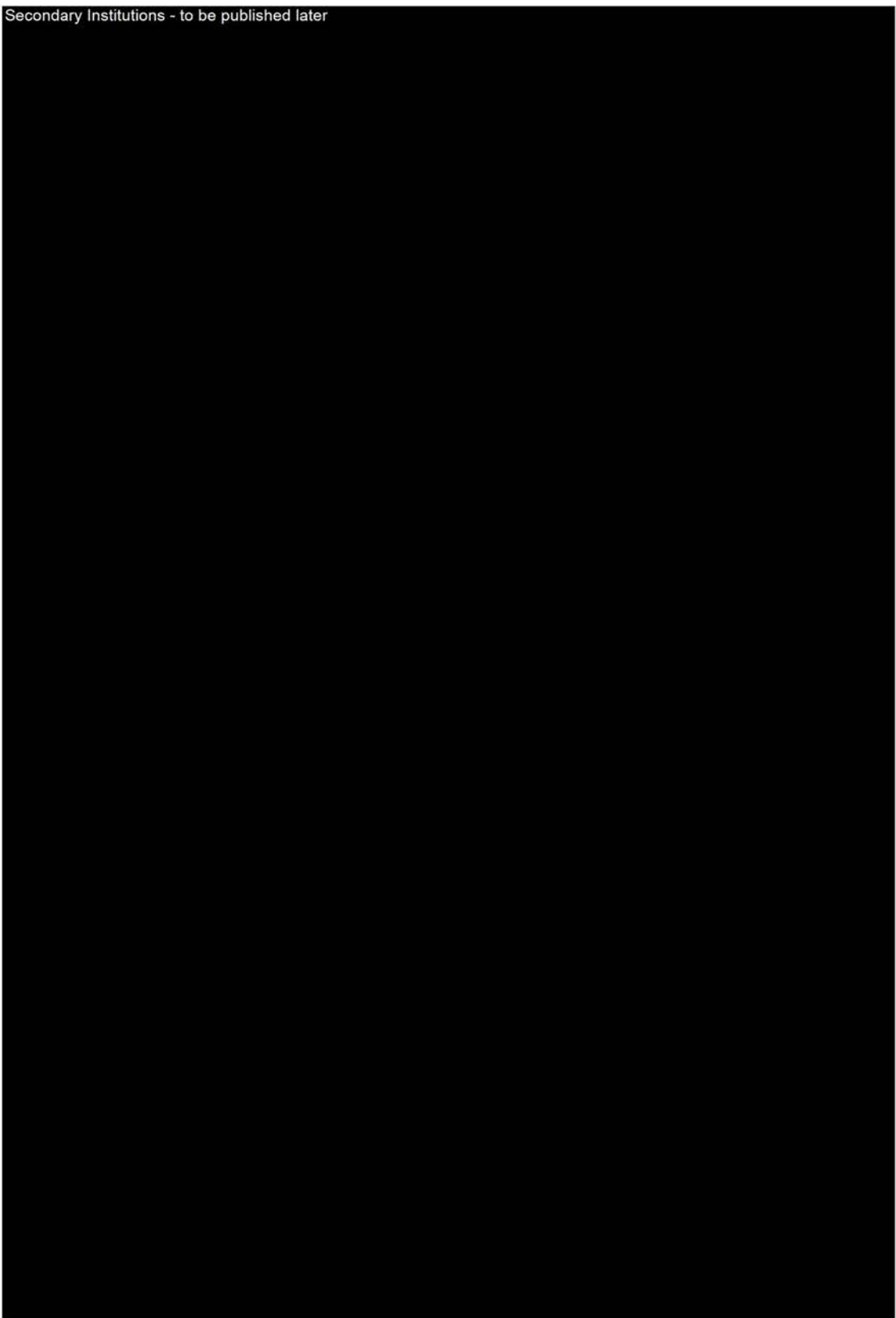
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I was then moved straightaway on to St John Bosco's in Fife and I can't recall who took me. In this time period I didn't see anyone from social work or from a care organisation. I think I went to St John Bosco's sometime in 1964.

St John Bosco's Approved School, Aberdour, Fife

47. This was an approved school that was open and not a secure unit. Again this was a large stately house on a hill in its own grounds. There was a main house and separate buildings in front of it where the school was. The main house was for us to sleep in and wash and shower in. We ate in a canteen in a separate building. There was also a gate house for the gardener to live in. There was also a play area outside for recreation, like playing basketball. I can't remember now how I felt about going there.
48. This home was run by a religious order called the Salesian Fathers. It was run by men who were Brothers and priests, as well as two lay brothers. These were men who weren't priests, but dressed and behaved as if they were. The Brothers wore plain black robes with a belt and the priests had a similar robe with a cape over their shoulders that they pulled up over their heads when it was windy as well as wearing a hat.
49. I can only remember two religious Brothers and another man who was called Brother **GTD**. He was actually a civilian staff member, but was called Brother. He was a big, long thin fellow who wore brown bib overalls. He would wear a cassock in the evenings when he'd finished work. He was aged around forty, I don't know where he lived and whether or not he had his own home outside of the school.
50. I think there were three priests. There was a priest in overall charge and I rarely saw him. I can't recall his name. The priest who was **SNR** was called Father **LOE**. The other ones dealt with us on a day to day basis if anything was wrong. I only saw the head priest when I was ready for leaving school at fifteen and he asked to see me as he wanted to know what I would do in the future. There was also Brother **KMK** who was a religious Brother.
51. The main building consisted of three floors. On the ground floor there were offices and a sick bay. On the middle floor there were communal baths and showers as well as

dorm rooms. There was also an attic with dormitories and showers. The religious staff had their own quarters in this building and I can't remember which floor that was.

52. It was all boys at the school and they were similar ages to me. One of the boys I went to primary school with in Pollock was in the school with me at some stage. I'd been with him when a shop window got smashed and it led to me going into Larchgrove the first time. I think I was between twelve and thirteen at this time as I had not long started at secondary school when I was moved to Fife.

Routine at St John Bosco's Approved School

Mornings and bedtimes

53. I can't remember being told where I would sleep when I first came to the school. I was initially in a dormitory in the attic with four or five other boys. I think there were three or four dorms in the attic and I'm not sure how many in the middle floor. I was moved later on to a dormitory in the middle floor. I don't know why we were moved about. We were up at 7:00 am. One of the priests woke us up and everyone got up at the same time. I think they came into the room to shout at us to get up. We had to make our own beds before leaving the dorm to get a wash.
54. I think bedtime was early around 7:00 pm or 8:00 pm and we had some time to read a comic. There was someone in charge of the dorms overnight and when the main lights were switched off there was a red light switched on. I think there was shouting if the boys made too much noise after lights out. I think the staff member on duty had their own room in the attic floor.

Washing and bathing

55. There were communal showers and basins at the end of the hallway in both the middle floor and the attic. I can't remember if there was a set day for having a shower or what they were like. There were no issues with washing and bathing that I can recall.

Clothing

56. The clothes were provided by the school. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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Mealtimes/food

57. I think the food was ok and I can't recall any punishment for not eating our meals. We had three meals a day at school.

School

58. We were educated in the hut within the grounds, rather than going off site to a local school. The priests provided the education. The school was generally ok and I just went on with attending the classes. I think there were three different classes so we weren't all in the same room. The lay Brother GTD taught carpentry. The gardener who lived in the grounds also taught some classes inside. I can't remember which ones. I think he was a married man. I can't remember his name.
59. A priest gave us lessons in maths and English. Education was hard as I'd not had much schooling before it. I think the teaching there was basic and we weren't being prepared for taking any examinations.
60. There was one priest, I can't recall his name, who was small and bald headed, and he hit us with a ruler on the head or on the knuckles with the edge of the ruler. This could be just for getting a sum wrong or reading a word wrong. Every one of the teachers punished us in their own way.

Religion

61. There was mass said first thing every day in a short service and before we went to school. There was a longer service on a Sunday. As well as the boys, people from the

village came to the service. The church was in an outside building. I'm not sure if we had breakfast before or after going to mass.

62. I was picked along with another boy to serve as an altar boy. Father **LOE** had taken a shine to me for some reason.

Chores/work

63. We had to either wash a car or we sawed up logs for the priest who had a small house in the grounds. We'd get points or stars for doing chores and these were shown on a chart on the wall that was for everyone to see. The chores were done on a Saturday.

Leisure

64. There was a games room set up in one of the outside buildings. We played out in the yard and there were roller skates to play with and there was volley ball in the yard. There was a football park away from the building. A priest supervised what was going on. There was no TV in the school, but we may have watched a film sometimes on a projector screen.
65. There was a dance troupe at the school and the boys wore kilts. I remember Brother **GTD** deliberately putting his hand on boys in the area where he said the sporrán would go. There was no need for him to touch the boys in that way.

Trips/holidays

66. I remember we had a day out to the Forth Road Bridge when it was opened to pedestrians and we went once to the cinema in Edinburgh to see the Mary Poppins film. We went on a camping holiday in Perthshire using tents. We were there to help build an adventure playground and I remember constructing a rope bridge for children to play on.

Christmas/birthdays

67. Birthdays were not celebrated in the school. I can't recall anyone getting a cake. Christmas was a big thing, but only in a religious context. There were no presents for the boys. I never went back to my family for a break and I don't think anyone else did.

Medical care

68. I can't remember if there was a medical person on site at the school. I got my appendix taken out when I was at the school. I was initially in the sick room on the ground floor and the doctor came and then I went to hospital in Dunfermline to have an operation and was in there for two weeks. I think I was aged thirteen at the time. It was the only time I saw a doctor at the school.

Visits

69. My brother [REDACTED] and his wife and my dad came to visit once and that was on sports day. It was the only visit I remember. I don't recall any social work visits. There were no reviews of my placement. I am not aware of any independent inspections taking place. One of the boys who smashed a window with me in Glasgow was also in St John Bosco's. His sister and her friend came to visit him and they took me out for the day with him.

Running away

70. I didn't try to run away from the school.

Bed wetting

71. There were boys that wet the bed, but I can't remember if boys were ridiculed for it. I don't remember any physical punishments. I don't think there was as many boys who wet the bed as in the first home.

Discipline

72. If boys were found to be fighting they'd get skelped with the back of someone's hand on the spot or the belt would be used to whack you on the backside or legs. I got the belt a few times. I am not aware of any punishments being recorded in a book or log.

Abuse

73. The Brothers had belts on them like trouser belts and not the normal school belt. They used the belts to hit us on the backs of the legs or the backside. We wore short trousers so we were being hit on bare skin and it was painful. It happened to me. The priests were frequently shouting or bawling at someone or other.
74. After lights out, when just the red light was on and everyone else should be asleep, Brother **GTD** came into the room and started touching me. I was in bed, with his hands in a sexually intimate manner under the bedclothes. I don't recall him speaking to me. This started after I'd been at the school for a few days and it happened three or four times over a couple of weeks. I knew what was going on **Secondary Institutions - to be pu**
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75. Then on one occasion, not at bedtime, Brother **GTD** caught me by the back of the ear and was pulling it. I reacted violently and tried to kick and punch him. He didn't bother me after that. I assume he moved on to someone else. I was punished for kicking and punching him although I'm not sure now what that punishment was, it was probably being hit with the belt. No other boy told me it had happened to him.
76. I was aware that some boys were woken up and taken out of the dorm room at night. I was woken up by the noise of them being woken up by someone who came into the room and them leaving the room. The red light bulb was switched on. I assumed at the time that it was something to do with bed wetting. I didn't see them coming back. I think it happened most nights. When I was up in the attic I remember seeing the same boy being taken. I can't remember his name. That sort of thing didn't happen to me.

77. Father **LOE** had a pick-up truck and when I was working with him on a chore outdoors he'd get me to sit on his knee when he was driving. He was clearly aroused by this. He didn't say anything about it. As far as I know I was the only boy he took in the pick-up truck.
78. Father **LOE** also liked to clean out my ears at night with a cotton wool bud and he'd stand right behind me and pressing against me. I don't know his reason for doing it. I was the only boy he did that to that I saw. I think I was aged thirteen or fourteen.

Reporting of abuse at St John Bosco's

79. I never told anyone what was happening at the school. If Brother **GTD** had gone any further I might have tried to report him, **Secondary Institutions - to be published later**
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I can't have been the only boy these things were happening to at the school.

Leaving St John Bosco's

80. I was due to leave school in 1965 and I went to see the priest in charge in his office for the first time. I was sent home by train to live with my mum and dad in Glasgow. I had no more than one week's notice that I was leaving the school to go back to my parents.

Life after being in care

81. I went back to live with my parents and went back to secondary school at St John Bellarmine for just a few months. I was aged fifteen when I left school. I then had a few temporary jobs and tried a number of trades like plumber and butchers. Sometimes I lasted four or five months in a job and sometimes only a few days. I was getting into bother with the police. I was sixteen and then went through an adult court

and was sent to a detention centre at Longriggend for a few months. I was released from there and then sent to a Borstal. It was an open place and I was working with members of the public in a jute mill.

82. After that I spent six months in a Young Offenders Centre. Reports were done for court on my background and that was in regard to what other offences I'd committed. No-one asked me about what happened to me in the care system. I never got probation as part of my sentence, I just got given detention.
83. I got married at nineteen and I was in prison for the first year I was married. When I came out my wife's father got me a job with the council doing various things including tree work. That changed my outlook. I settled down and didn't get in trouble again and ended up working with the council for thirty-seven years. I am now retired. I stayed living with my wife in the same area and we have three children and six grandchildren. I'm aware that one of the boys from St John Bosco's went on to be a big-time criminal and others never changed their outlook.

Impact

84. I've just got on with life the best I can. I never trusted people and especially any priests with my own children. I knew they couldn't be trusted. If my kids were away at a camp I was very worried and my wife thought I was being over protective. I didn't tell her what had happened to me at the time. I didn't tell her about the abuse until around eighteen months ago after the police contacted me.
85. At St John Bosco's I thought there was no point in reporting anything. They wouldn't have believed me and branded me a liar. If it had carried on I don't know where it would have gone, but it stopped for me. I never heard of any abuse involving others in St John Bosco's.
86. For a long time it affected my relationship with my mum and dad and I didn't see them when I was away in the home, the school or Borstal and prison. I was suspicious of

men and their intentions towards me for a long time. In prison or borstal you don't speak to anyone about sexual abuse because of the judgement it would bring. I was too ashamed to tell anyone. No-one would have believed me and it would have made me vulnerable to abuse from other inmates.

87. I've never told my children about these things and just started to talk to my wife after the police got in touch. I think about what happened to me a lot, and sometimes I see reports in the news or on TV about abuse by priests or overhear conversations and it hits home that it happened to me.

Reporting of Abuse

88. The police approached me out of the blue in 2018 to ask me about events in St John Bosco's. They had access to a ledger with the names of hundreds of boys who had attended the school and were trying to locate as many as they could. The police showed me a photograph of three priests from the school and I was able to identify both Brother ^{GTD} and Father ^{LOE}
89. The first time they came, the police were from Dalmarnock and the officer I spoke to was called DC Kenny Mclean. The second time they came it was on behalf of police based in Inverness and I spoke to an officer called DC Susan Walker. They asked similar questions each time. The police showed me a photograph of children in the school and we were all wearing the same clothes, a jacket, Fair Isle jumper and short trousers. I must have been given the clothes.
90. I forgot about the abuse until the police contacted me. I had thought I couldn't do anything about abuse as it happened so long ago. A short time after I saw the police I saw the TV advert for the Inquiry and I realised there was something else I could do to report the abuse.

Records

91. I have not tried to access any of my records.

Lessons to be Learned

92. I hope abuse like this doesn't go on in children's homes now. These homes need to be held to account for what happened there. What these people got away with was hidden for too long. I hope the Inquiry can stop this abuse happening behind closed doors in future.

93. I'm aware that two of my own brothers were abused when they were in care themselves in approved schools. My sister told me about it recently as they never told me. I never told my brothers and sisters about the abuse I suffered.

94. I didn't see any other abuse going on in St John's, but looking back now it must have been happening to other boys. I'd like to see the men who did this being held to account for what they did. They had no one above them to answer to. I hope the homes and schools I was in are now inspected. I also think children now are a lot wiser than I was and they know more and they are aware of who is in charge of them. When I went into the Gryffe Children's Home I was still in primary school and knew very little about life and the outside world.


Other information

95. I have instructed a firm of solicitors with regard to a personal injury claim against Glasgow City Council. I'm aware through that contact that someone else has complained about abuse at St John Bosco's. When I spoke to the police both times they were focussed on events at John Bosco's

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96. I have not tried to seek counselling with regard to what happened to me in care. Once I left the care system I went to borstal and prison and then got married and moved on to a working life and left the abuse behind me. My lawyer suggested seeing a psychiatrist, but I don't see what they would ask me and what that would do for me.
97. 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.

GCC
Signed 
Dated 14 / 2020