

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCY

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GCY. My date of birth is 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. My earliest memory would be when I was about three or four years old and lived at Tillydrone in Aberdeen. I stayed with my mum and step-father. My mother's name is and my step-father's name was. There was a lot of alcohol involved with this relationship. My mother and step-father both drank a lot. Even though my mother and step-father were married I was always known by my mother's surname which was. I have never met my real father. I also have a half-brother called who is three years younger than me. is his father. still uses the surname. I also have two half-sisters from when my mother married again. My half- sisters are and. They both use the surname. They came along much later. I think I was about thirteen when was born.
3. I spent most of my time at my great grandmothers. She stayed close to where my family home was. My mother was always out drinking so I would go to my great grandmothers. She stayed with a man who I thought was my grandad but it turned out he was my great grandmothers partner. His name was but I always called him grandad. He was very good with me. He treated me really well and looked after me.

4. My first school was Donbank Primary School in Tillydrone. I was only there for primary one then the family moved again. My next school was Sunnybank Primary School.
5. At that time there wasn't any social work involvement with the family. This came much later.
6. One day when I was at school a social worker visited me. Her name was Penny Selby. Penny worked in the Albyn office of the social work in Aberdeen. I think someone must have told the social work that I was a bit dishevelled and dirty. I was disruptive and unruly in the class. I was also smashing and breaking windows.
7. I remember Penny started to come to my great grandmother's house to visit. This seemed to be when I was out. I only saw her when I was coming back to the house and she was leaving. Looking back now I think that the social work started to think it was too much for my great grandmother to look after me.
8. I started to go to a family in Tarves at the weekends. This was to give my great grandmother a bit of respite. The family stayed in a big house with a massive garden. I think it was Penny Selby that took me to this family. I can't remember the family's names. I loved going there. I was being fed well and they made sure I was clean. My great grandmother looked after me the best she could. There was always food on the table. She tried her best.
9. I hated Penny the Social Worker. I think that this was because she was the last person I saw before being put into care. Prior to this there had been no real interaction with me. I associated Penny with putting me into care. As an adult now I can see that I was put into care because it was decided that this was best for me.
10. I was eight years old when I first went into care at Urquhart House at Dyce in Aberdeen. I was at my great grandmothers when Penny Selby came and took me away. I just thought we were going out for a jolly, a day out. There was no talk in the car about where I was going or what was happening.

**Urquhart House, Dyce, Aberdeen**

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### Leaving Urquhart House

47. Nearer the end of my time at Urquhart I think my mum came to visit me a couple of times with her new partner, [REDACTED]. I think that was just to introduce me to him.
48. I had been at the home about eight or nine months when I left. I went to stay with my mum and [REDACTED] at Portlethen in Aberdeen.
49. In the house there was myself, my mother and [REDACTED]. Not long after this my step sister [REDACTED] was born. Then later on [REDACTED] arrived. I didn't have any contact with my brother [REDACTED] for about three or four years after I went back home. At first I really resented [REDACTED]. He was trying to tell me what to do and I didn't like this. Looking back now he was just trying to help.
50. I think that my great grandmother died not long after I moved back home. I'm not certain though.
51. I went to Portlethen Primary School before moving on to Mackie Academy. I wasn't in the academy that long before I was expelled from school. I was absconding from school a lot and just being boisterous. I think I was a handful. After being put out of school I was placed into care at Bon Accord Children's Home. This was just for a couple of weeks.

52. During the time I was at Bon Accord my mum and [REDACTED] moved to Bridge of Don. I went back to stay with them. I continued to stay away from school. I would sneak back into my house once my mother and [REDACTED] were out at work.
53. Penny Selby the social worker was still in contact with my family.
54. When I was around thirteen years old I went to a children's panel. My mum, [REDACTED] and Penny were there along with the children's reporter. It was decided I would be going to Coblehaugh Children's Home. I was really angry when I was told this. I had to be calmed down.
55. When I went to Coblehaugh I think that it was Penny Selby that took me there in the car.

#### **Coblehaugh Children's Home, Inverurie**

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### Leaving Coblehaugh

86. I was at Coblehaugh for about eighteen months. Someone from the home told me that I was going to foster parents. I was asked to pick a name that I wanted to be called. For some reason I said I would like to be called <sup>GCY</sup> [REDACTED]. I think this was because <sup>GCY</sup> [REDACTED] was one of my middle names. I don't know why I was asked about a name. There was an advertisement put in the [REDACTED] by the home. It asked if anyone was interested in looking after me as foster parents. There was no discussion with my mother about me being moved to a foster home.
87. After what seemed like months, I am not sure how long it actually was, a couple got in touch. This was [REDACTED] from Ellon. It was a coincidence that [REDACTED] was their name and it was the surname that I was using.
88. I think that I went to stay with them for a day at first. I then started to go for a few separate weekends. After this they decided they would foster me. I wasn't told how long this would be for. I assumed that it would be until I left school.
89. I don't know if there was any vetting done before [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] took me on. It just seemed to me that they had responded to the [REDACTED] advertisement.

Foster Care – [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Ellon

90. [REDACTED] were both in their fifties when I moved in with them. They had two daughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They also had a little boy called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were both older, [REDACTED] was a teacher and [REDACTED] was at university. [REDACTED] was only five.
91. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s house was actually an eight bedroomed [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] in Ellon. [REDACTED] ran the [REDACTED]. She was also a hairdresser. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was a painter and decorator.
92. I had my own room. It was a little room with a single bed. I had my own things from Coblehaugh. [REDACTED] bought me a Walkman and gave me it as a sort of welcome gift.
93. I was able to use my own name at the foster home. I found out that I had just been asked to use a different one so that my mother wouldn't know I was being moved.
94. At first both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were brilliant with me. I would say the novelty wore off with [REDACTED] after a few months. He was still fine just a bit grumpier. [REDACTED] was as nice on the first day I was there as the day that I eventually left.

#### **Routine at the foster home**

95. The house was very busy. There was always lot of people coming and going. It was mostly brickies and painters [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were always very busy with their own work as well. I felt that the house was like an older version of a children's home with the amount of people there.

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

96. The meals were very good. It was like being in Florida or on an all-inclusive holiday. I could have as much as I wanted when I wanted it.



*Leisure time*

97. I had to make a new circle of friends at Ellon. This has never been a problem to me. I could always make friends but I could also drop them just as quickly. I am still like that now.

*Trips and holidays*

98. There was a big family holiday planned for Portugal. I was really looking forward to it but I was still getting into trouble at school. It was things like fighting and being a problem to the school. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] found out that I had been in trouble. They told me that as a punishment I wasn't allowed to go on holiday with them. Social work were informed about this and came and got me from the foster home. I was taken from there and put into Bon Accord Children's Home whilst [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were on holiday. After the holiday the social work took me back to the foster home.
99. I think after this happened it made me more resentful. I wasn't happy that I had missed the holiday. I think that after this it was a gradual downward spiral to me leaving and going back to a home.

*School*

100. I moved to Ellon Academy. I was still absconding a lot and missing school. I just couldn't be bothered going.

*Work*

101. I was never expected to help with any chores around the house.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

102. Birthdays and Christmas's were brilliant. It was like a proper family time. When it was my birthday I was given a cake and presents. I was treated like I was there son. This

was the first time I had really experienced a proper family Christmas. I was given a new bike and Pringle jumpers as presents.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

103. Penny Selby was still involved with me although there wasn't as much contact with the social work as there had been in the children's homes. I am sure that this contact still included her visiting me.

#### *Family contact*

104. When I was in foster care my mother was struggling with alcohol addiction. I never saw her during the time that I was in the foster home at Ellon.

#### *Running away*

105. I never ran away when I was in the foster home.

#### *Discipline*

106. A couple of times I pushed [REDACTED] to the limit. This would be if I came in late when I had school the next day. He could be aggressive towards me but it was never physical. [REDACTED] always intervened to calm things down. [REDACTED] could never punish me. She was far too nice.

#### **Leaving foster care**

107. I started to get into trouble with the police for smashing windows. I also stole money from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
108. [REDACTED] had an account with the local bakers. I would go in with my friends and ask for cakes and drinks. I just asked the baker to put it onto [REDACTED]'s account. [REDACTED] only found out about this at the end of the month when she went to settle her account.

I think that by this time I had added a couple of hundred pounds to the account. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] decided that this was enough and contacted the social work.

109. Penny Selby came to the house and had a sort of chat with me in the kitchen. She said that I would be going to Oakbank as things weren't working out with my foster parents. There was no real preparation. I was going and that was that. I just looked on it as another stepping stone. I wouldn't say I was disappointed I was more worried. I had heard about Oakbank through talking with my friends. I knew it was an approved school and that it was a bit wild. There was people at Oakbank from all over, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Inverness. I looked on it as a step up from where I had been before in terms of it being a secure unit.
110. I think that they had exhausted everything else and this was the last resort for me. 'The bad boys' school'. It was Penny who drove me in a car to Oakbank. I think that I just had some of my things in a bag.

#### **Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen**

111. My first impressions of Oakbank was that it was really big. The home was set in its own grounds. I think now that it must have had around ten acres of ground around it. In the grounds there was football parks and playing fields. There was also separate buildings where there was training for painting and decorating, brickwork, mechanics and joinery.
112. Everything was secure at Oakbank. When you went through a door it was locked behind you. You could open a window but it had wire mesh behind it so that you couldn't get out.
113. The main building had massive oak doors. Penny rang the bell and we walked in. Inside everything just seemed massive compared to where I had been before. I was a bit quiet. There wasn't any noise which surprised me. I think everyone must have been at school as I arrived during the day.

114. I remember going into an office with Penny. There was a bit of conversation between her and a male staff member. I don't remember the staff member's name. They spoke for about twenty minutes then Penny left. After this the staff member took me to what I think was a sort of sewing room. I had to change into clothes that were given to me. I had jeans with flares, a mustard coloured sweater and Jesus sandals. These clothes were clearly second hand. I could tell they had been washed. The clothes I was wearing when I arrived were then taken from me.
115. I think I might have been given a quick tour of the home. I was shown my dormitory. The staff member then took me to a big hall. There was snooker and table tennis tables. It was like a games room. I was introduced to a few boys that were there. Once this was done the staff member left. I found this quite intimidating.

#### *Dormitories*

116. The dormitories were upstairs. They were massive rooms. You had your own sleeping area where your bed was. This was partitioned off with screens but you could look over into the next person's area. I had my own little cabinet next to my bed but you couldn't lock it. I think that I was shown my sleeping area at night. It just seemed to be that you followed everyone else and found out what you were to do that way.
117. There were three floors in the main building. The top floor was for the staff if they were sleeping overnight.
118. It was only boys when I arrived. There was around thirty boys aged from nine or ten to sixteen. There was also a girls unit but this came later. We never saw the girls as their unit was separate from the boys.
119. The boys' names that I remember were [REDACTED] from Dundee, [REDACTED] from Aberdeen and [REDACTED] who was also from Aberdeen. There was also [REDACTED] from Inverness. I don't remember his surname.

## *Staff*

120. There was around fifteen staff. They worked different shifts. You would see different people at different times of the day. The staff had houses that were close by to the home. I think that was part of the job that they got a house as well. There was a SNR [REDACTED] who was [REDACTED] of the home. I don't remember his name. SNR [REDACTED] house was [REDACTED]. He lived there with his wife.
121. The staff members that I remember are EJT [REDACTED], LIL [REDACTED], Mr EJV [REDACTED], Mr LIM [REDACTED], Mr EJW [REDACTED], Mr EJP [REDACTED], Ma Christine and the nurse. Mr EJV [REDACTED], who we called EJV [REDACTED], taught us bricklaying. Mr LIM [REDACTED] taught painting and decorating. Mr EJW [REDACTED], who we called EJW [REDACTED], taught us joinery. There was someone who taught mechanics. I only knew him as Dave the mechanic. Ma Christine would show us baking. The female staff members were all nice. They were very tolerant and took an interest in you.
122. The staff were always called Mr or Ma other than the ones we used nicknames for. I just learned this from the other boys. No one told me what I had to call staff members.

## **Routine at Oakbank**

### *Mornings and bedtime*

123. In the morning I just remember waking up. I don't think there was a specific time or person that got you up. Everyone dressed, went downstairs to the washroom and then to the dining room.
124. I think that bedtime was staggered depending on your age. The younger boys would go first and the oldest boys last. For me as one of the older boys this would have been around nine.

125. All the boys slept in the same dormitory irrespective of your age. At night there was a watchman. We called him 'The Watchie'. He had a chair and a desk at the end of the dormitory. If anyone was talking he would shine his torch on them and tell them to be quiet. This had the effect of keeping you up even if it wasn't you talking. You would always see the torch light and hear him. I don't know the name of the watchman. If he was off one of the other staff would do his job.
126. There was a curtain at the front of your partition. These were pulled over at night by 'The Watchie'.

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

127. The dining room was like a big industrial canteen. There was a barrier that you went round to get to the metal counter where the food was served. There were big shutters at the counter. I didn't have a specific table that I sat at. You had to go and get your own food and cutlery from the counter.
128. For breakfast there was stodgy porridge that I didn't like. There was also toast and cereal.
129. At lunchtime you went back to the dining room. This was normally two or three courses. It could have been something like mince and tatties and a pudding.
130. After school you would have your evening meal. This would be one course and something like fish and chips.
131. I would say that the food was okay. There were no punishments for not eating your meals. It was just taken away. You would be told that you would get nothing else until the next meal time.

#### *Washing/bathing*

132. There wasn't a set night for a shower. You would just be told it was shower time. There was a massive communal shower area on the ground floor. Everyone went in at once. You stripped off in a bit next to the showers then went for your shower. The showers weren't separated into cubicles. There was no privacy. One of the staff would supervise you. There were never any issues. I think that they were just there to make sure there wasn't anyone carrying on or fighting.
133. Once you had your shower and were dried you put on your pyjamas and went back upstairs to the television room. You would watch a bit of television until you were told to go to bed.

*Clothing/uniform*

134. I always wore the clothes that were given to me by the staff. The only change to this was when you went out for the day with family or had a visit. When this happened you were given the clothes you had arrived in to wear. When you came back or after the visit you would change back into the clothes from the home.
135. There were little cubby holes that each boy had. There was a change of clothes in there for you when you put in clothes to be washed. Nothing ever fitted you properly. It was always a size too big.

*Leisure time*

136. There was an indoor swimming pool that had been added to the main building. You were allowed to use it but only if you had been good. Looking back now I can see that the staff used the swimming pool as a tool to make sure you behaved.
137. After you had your meal at night you went to the big room where the table tennis and snooker tables were. This was all secure and you stayed there until you were told it was time for bed.
138. There was a big room where you were taken for a smoke. In the smoke room there was a partition that had all been sectioned off into separate bits where everyone's

smokes were kept. Everyone had their own tin with their name inside it. Even the youngest boys smoked. It wasn't discouraged by the staff. I would say that it was encouraged by the staff. You would go to the smoke room five or six times a day.

#### *Trips and holidays*

139. There were no trips or holidays when I was at Oakbank.

#### *School*

140. Each day after breakfast you were told what you would be doing that day. For the older boys this would be one of the workshops where you were shown bricklaying, painting, mechanics or joinery. I don't think that you had a choice. You were just told where to go that particular morning. The younger boys would go to school.
141. I would also go to school for lessons if I wasn't at one of the workshops. I never learned anything. The education was none existent. If you misbehaved in the class you would be taken out and segregated from the other boys. This involved being manhandled by two of the staff. You were never asked to leave. After being taken out of the class you were taken to the smoke room and locked in. There was a bench in the room and a window that was high up on the wall. You never knew how long you were going to be in the room. It could be half an hour or it could be four hours. This happened to me quite a few times.
142. In the afternoons you might play sports. You never knew in advance what you would be doing. You were just told.

#### *Healthcare*

143. If there was anything wrong with you the nurse would see you. The only illness that I had was the chicken pox. I never saw a doctor or a dentist at Oakbank.

#### *Work*



144. There was separate staff who came in to do the cleaning.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

145. I don't remember Christmas's being celebrated at Oakbank. There were no decorations. Most of the boys went home for Christmas unless you were on a six week ban from home visits. I don't remember if I was on a ban the Christmas that I was there or if I went home.

146. My birthday wasn't celebrated. I never received a card or a present.

*Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention*

147. Mr <sup>EJP</sup> would speak to me on a regular basis. He would ask me if there was anything bothering me or if I wanted to speak to him. I was fifteen and never really engaged with him. I think that this was because he was so old.

148. I would have regular twelve week reviews. I always felt that I was being spoken down to. Penny was at these meetings but nothing ever happened after it other than being told I was losing my weekend leave for doing something wrong.

*Family contact*

149. At the weekends you would be allowed home for the weekend. This depended on your family situation and if there was somewhere for you to go. I didn't go home a lot at the weekends. It was maybe just a few times that I did do this. I would go to my mum and step dad's near Aberdeen. I would regularly abscond when I was on weekend leave.

150. If you didn't go back to the home after the weekend you would be punished. This would be the loss of your weekend leave for the next six weeks.

151. Most of my home visits or visits from my mum depended on my step dad, [REDACTED], being home. He worked off shore. If he was home then he would drive to the home and pick me up. It was the same with visits. If [REDACTED] was home he would bring my mum.
152. If I was to have a visit from my mum I would normally be told the day before. I think there was normally a set time for visits.

#### *Running away*

153. If I had run away at the weekend on a visit home it would be one of the staff or the police who would find me and take me back. The police would ask why I had ran away. I never really gave any explanation for this. It was just something that I did.
154. There were a lot of the boys who ran away. It was normally when you were doing outdoor sports that this happened. I ran away quite a few times when I was outside playing sports. If I was playing football and I saw an opportunity I would go through the hedge and be off. Sometimes this would just be for an hour other times it might be three days. It usually depended on how quick the staff realised you were away.
155. If I had ran away from the home the staff would come and look for you. I think that as you were a child in care the staff must have told the police as well if you had run away.

#### *Discipline*

156. If any of the boys were fighting [REDACTED] EJT would lie on top of them until they calmed down. It was almost like he was smothering them until they stopped. He was a big guy. I saw this happening to a few of the boys at different times in the playroom including myself.
157. If you had done something wrong then you might have your privileges taken away. This would depend on what it was you had done.

## Abuse at Oakbank

158. If you had been getting into trouble then the staff could be quite physical with you. It wasn't just things like a little slap. It would be punches. This could be for not doing what you were told or fighting with one of the other boys. The staff were quite fly about doing this. I was obviously quicker than them. If I thought I was going to be hit I would make sure I got out of their road and reach. The next day without warning the same staff member would give me a punch and then say that it was for what happened yesterday.
159. Other times would be getting an elbow in the ribs or a punch in the head or back of the knee. The staff members that I remember doing this to me were EJT and LIL LIL. I also saw them doing the same thing to some of the other boys. EJT was the worst. He was prolific. He was just a big bully. LIL was aggressive but not as violent as EJT.
160. I would sometimes have bruises after being hit. Nobody really noticed this because you were always playing football and rugby. You would have bruises from playing these sports. I just accepted being hit as it just seemed to be normal and part of being at the home. I know now that this is physical violence and shouldn't have happened.
161. I could be hit maybe two or three times a day. Other times it might be three days or more without being hit. It was just random. You never knew when it was going to happen or where.
162. EJT and LIL would also pretend to be playing with you but it was really rough. They would hurt you and you would be screaming but they just called you a 'Jessie'.
163. EJT was just a staff member and LIL was the PE teacher. I think that they might both be dead now. They were both aged around fifty when I was in Oakbank.

164. I never told anyone about being hit by LIL [REDACTED] and EJT [REDACTED]. The other staff members would see it happening but there was never anything done about it.

### **Leaving Oakbank**

165. I left Oakbank in [REDACTED] 1985. It was just after my sixteenth birthday. There was no real preparation for leaving. Penny and my mum were involved. I think there was a couple of meetings and it was decided that once I left I would be going to my mums. To me it was just like a lot of adults talking. Nobody asked me anything.
166. I wasn't prepared for adult life when I left Oakbank. After I left I never saw Penny Selby again or had any contact with her.

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

167. When I moved into my mum's I managed to get a job with a food packaging company. I think that because I hadn't been with my mum so long things started to rub together between us. After about four months I moved out. I started to sofa surf staying with different friends. During this time I was getting myself into trouble and ended up in jail a couple of times.
168. After about eighteen months I realised that I had to get myself sorted. Around this time there was a lot of drugs problems starting with people using heroin. I never touched it. All the people that I knew from that time are now dead due to using drugs. I eventually met my wife and we have two children.

169. I did a number of manual labouring jobs before ending up working in the oil industry. I worked there for about nineteen years before getting a work related injury. This meant that I had to stop doing the job I had. I now do part time work in a warehouse.
170. I think that some of what I learnt at Oakbank in the workshops helped me when I started working. I also used a lot of what I learned in houses that I have lived in and renovated.
171. I had sporadic contact with my brother and step sisters immediately after I left care. I now just keep in touch with my brother.
172. Despite how my mother was with me when I was a boy I still keep in touch with her. She still lives with my step-father. My step-father has had a big influence on me. He has given me a lot of good advice that has helped me as an adult.

### **Impact**

173. I think that the way I parent now has been impacted on from my time in care. I look on things differently from how my wife does. I tend to think that if a decision needs made then I compare it with my time in care instead of looking at it for what it is.
174. After I left care I had trust issues. I had constantly been let down whilst I was in care so didn't trust people easily after I left Oakbank. I don't suffer fools gladly. An example of this was after I hurt my back. A long term friend was in the area where I stayed but didn't even bother to come and visit me. When I found this out I just dropped him. I just thought that if he couldn't come to see me for a coffee then why would I want to know him.

175. If I am doing something I like to do it on my own. That way no one can let me down. It is my responsibility.
176. When I am watching documentaries or dramas on the television about children in care it triggers things for me. I can sometimes get a bit teary when I think about what is on the programme and what happened to me in care.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

177. I have never reported what happened to me in care to the police or anyone else.

### **Records**

178. I obtained my records from Inverurie social work department. I have read all of my records. Some of what was recorded I remembered. I don't remember there being much recorded about any discipline that I received. There was quite a lot about my mother and how her drinking affected how she looked after my brother.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

179. I should have been better prepared for leaving care. There should have been some sort of supported accommodation for me to stay in and a transitional period for me to adjust. To be basically thrown out and just get on with it was a big shock.
180. When children leave care they should have an allowance to live on until they get a job. There should be an effort to find them a job and support them for the first bit of time they are away from care. This would have helped me. I felt that I was just allowed to find my own way instead of having any support.
181. I believe that there should be less children in individual children's homes and more staff. This would allow more interaction between the staff and the children. There has



to be reason for children's problems. There should be help for them to try and find out what issues they have and how to deal with them.

*Hopes for the Inquiry*

182. I think that there needs to be more transparency in homes. There should be things in place to make sure that this happens. Policies and procedures need to be in place that have to be adhered to. The child should be the most important person when they are in care.
183. The reason that I came forward to the Inquiry was to help children who are in care now and make sure that they don't experience what I did when I was in care.

**Other information**

184. I have never thought about taking out civil action against the local authorities who put me into care.
185. I haven't had any counselling about how my time in care has affected me. I have always dealt with things myself or spoken to my wife.
186. 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..... 6/12/19 .....