

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GTO

Support person present: No

1. My name is GTO My date of birth is the 1976. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Aberdeen and came from a large family. My brother's names were and , who were twins, and My sisters were called LWB and . I was the youngest and LWB was the oldest.
3. I was brought up in the Torry area of Aberdeen. My parents were called and I was brought up by my older brothers and sisters.
4. I have no memory of when the social work department became involved with my family, but I recall that the social worker was called Joan Hutton. She was involved with the whole family.
5. I was eight years old when I was put into care. I was living in Torry with my parents. I think that all my siblings apart from were in care at some time. I was attending Tullos Primary School, but I did not go all the time. I was hyper as a child, and I regularly got into trouble. I remember being caught pinching a milk float once and giving everyone free milk. I was actually driving the milk float.

6. My father was a drinker, and my mother didn't really look after me as she was having such a hard time with my father and his drinking. I was doing stupid things and was mixing with older boys who were stealing motor bikes and mopeds. I was not getting any parental guidance.
7. All I recall was that I was taken to Burger King in Aberdeen town centre along with my mother and my sister LWB. I didn't realise what was happening and from there I was taken in front of a Children's Panel in Albyn Place in Aberdeen. I am not sure who was with me but the next thing I knew was I was put into care. I went straight from the Children's Panel to Kincourth Children's Home.

Care at Kincourth Children's Home, Fauldsgate, Aberdeen

8. I have very little memory of my time at Kincourth as I was so young. I am sure that I went to Kincourth when I was about eight and was there for about two years.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Leaving Kincourth Children's Home.

24. After a period of time which I think was about two years I was moved to Oakbank List D School in Aberdeen. I suspect that this was again a decision of the Children's Panel. I had no say in where I was going. I think that I was to stay at Oakbank for several years, but I can't be sure. It was certainly a longer stay than at Kincourth.

Oakbank List D School, Aberdeen

Memories of Oakbank

25. I liked Oakbank School. They used to take you out on field trips and for runs in the minibus. I can remember going to a place where we ended up canoeing and living in a tent overnight. There was a lot of good things at Oakbank. During the time I spent at Oakbank I also spent time at home but always ended up going back to Oakbank.
26. I was one of the youngest boys at Oakbank but I was always misbehaving by running away and playing with motor bikes. I seem to remember that there were girls who had their own rooms and they had their own area. We did mix with the girls but at night time they lived in their own area and were separate from the boys.
27. All the boys slept in a dormitory in the main Oakbank building. I recall that if you ran away from Oakbank you would be placed in a locked room next to the television

room. I do recall that if you were well behaved they would let you sit up late and watch television. I think we were locked in at night.

28. If you behaved while you were at Oakbank you would get privileges like extra pocket money or being allowed home at the weekends. SNR at Oakbank was called Mr ZHMY and he always announced to everyone what grade they had achieved. Level 1 was the lowest and I think Level 6 was the highest. Getting to the highest level meant you got more pocket money, and you would also be allowed home at weekends.
29. I was always getting mixed messages about the level I was at in the school. I would misbehave by running away and would be on level 1 for most of the time, but they would let me go home at weekends. I felt that the more I played up the more privileges I received.

Education at Oakbank

30. You had to go to classes in Oakbank although I didn't participate much with the classes which covered educational subjects. The teachers knew this and let you do other things. I would play the computer or play games.
31. If you kept your head down you would be moved to Oakhill House which was part of Oakbank. It was a house that sat on its own and you had much more freedom when you were there. There were much fewer boys there and that's where the girls were as well.
32. I always wanted to be a mechanic and I was able to learn mechanics when I was at Oakbank. You could even work in the garden. I remember that there were different names for the houses you lived in at Oakbank. I was in "Oakhill". I also recall two of the other houses were called Rosemount and Ashgrove.
33. We did joinery and I made a table for my sister LWB. I enjoyed working with the teaching staff and being taught joinery and mechanics which interested me. There

was a mixture of boys from all over Scotland. There were also some pupils who were not resident at Oakbank but would come in every day to attend the school classes.

Leisure time

34. There was a swimming pool at Oakbank, and I can recall being taught by the PE teacher how to swim. They had gymnasium as well where we played football or netball and we also did some trampolining.

Weekend leave/holidays/birthdays

35. You would be allowed to go home at weekends if you reached a certain level and earned the right by behaving. You would also go home during the normal school holidays although there were some of the boys and girls that didn't go home for different reasons.
36. I seem to recall being there at Christmas time and going into the dining room and eating as much food as I wanted for Christmas dinner. I suspect that I was there for at least one Christmas. I don't ever recall having any celebrations for my birthday.

Healthcare

37. I do recall swinging on a football goalpost and the goal collapsed and I was hit in the face and broke my nose. I had to go to the hospital for that and I had to get the bone pushed back in and I got stitches as well.
38. I do recall that the staff used violence against you at Oakbank. They would shout and swear and try to intimidate you. There was one pupil who had his leg broken by a member of staff. I don't know what happened to the boy but he ended up in a stookie all the way up his leg. I think the boy made a complaint, and the member of staff was sacked. I do know staff were definitely sacked at Oakbank for hitting children I'm just not sure if that one was. I think that the boy's name was [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I do not know the name of the member of staff.

39. My relationship with the staff was okay I think. My real problem was that I was running away and getting into trouble with my mates back in Torry. I just kept wondering why I was in care in the first place.
40. I was aware while I was at Oakbank that my sister [LWB] had started legal proceedings to get parental guardianship rights to have me at her home.

Abuse at Oakbank

41. I was regularly hit by members of staff all about my body. They would shout and swear at you and intimidate you. They would slap you or hit you with the back of the hand or a slap or clout to the ear.
42. I do remember an incident at Oakbank when one of the teachers whose name I can't recall but he had red hair, and a beard lost the plot and assaulted one of the boys. They were on an excursion in the minibus and one of the boys jumped into the driver's seat in the minibus and drove off in it. The boy either crashed it or put it on its side, something happened anyway and the boy whose name I can't recall got a doing from the teacher. I remember that teacher was sacked for that, for lifting his hands to a pupil.

Sexual abuse by [LIL]

43. [LIL] was a care worker at Oakbank. He was in his 30's when I was there. He was tall with a local accent. He had short brown hair with a moustache. He was able to take us out on trips without any of the other staff questioning him on where we were going.
44. [LIL] sexually abused me. He also abused another pupil called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] It was well known amongst the boys that [REDACTED] was his pet. [REDACTED] would wash [LIL] car and he would go out on trips with him. He was

treated a lot differently than the other boys. He was spoiled by Mr LIL and got gifts from him. I recall on one occasion [REDACTED] stole Mr LIL car which was a white Ford Sierra and I think that he pranged it.

45. I was groomed by Mr LIL He would give me money for sweets. He had the run of Oakbank, and he sexually assaulted me there and also on the occasions he took me out in his car. I find this very hard to talk about, [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

46. It was because of the sexual abuse that I was running away. LIL had the keys to the place and there were other boys being taken out of their beds at all times of the night. He could go anywhere in Oakbank because he had these keys. I couldn't stay at Oakbank because of LIL

Leaving Oakbank Children's Home

47. While I was at Oakbank I was running away all the time. I recall on one occasion being put into a locked room to stop me from running away. I managed to smash the window and a mate of mine came with a ladder and helped me to abscond using the ladder. I was in my pyjamas when I ran away.

48. The Children's Panel took a different view of my absconding and came to the conclusion that I needed to be in a more secure place where I could not run away. I had also got into trouble with the law and had a number of outstanding petty offences to answer for.

49. My social worker Joan Hutton was still involved with me although I didn't see her very often. I appeared before a juvenile court and was given a "section 216" which I understood meant that I was to be detained at Rossie Farm List D School for a period of two years. It was like a prison sentence.

Reporting of abuse at Oakbank

50. I had no one to tell about what was happening to me at Oakbank. I was running away so that I would not be sexually abused by LIL [REDACTED] I tried to tell my mother about what was happening, but she told me to stop telling lies or I would be in worse trouble. My own mother wouldn't believe me and that was very hard to take. I couldn't tell any other adults as I didn't trust them. That was it for me I wasn't going to tell anyone else if my own mother didn't believe me.

Rossie Farm, List D School, Montrose

51. I can't remember how I got to Rossie Farm, and I don't recall meeting anyone in authority when I got there apart from the staff. They were dressed in civilian clothes, but they all had a set of keys on a chain attached to their belts. All the doors were locked and when you walked through the school the staff had to open the doors and then lock them behind them. Most of the staff lived in houses very close to Rossie. I think those houses were owned by Rossie.
52. When I arrived, I do recall that there were four separate units. I can only remember three of them, Dalhousie Unit, Tay Unit and Lunan Unit. I was placed into Tay Unit where I met a care worker called Ronnie Fearn who was very good to me, and I found him to be a very pleasant man. I also remember a maths teacher called Mr Jones who was also very nice to me.
53. There was no way you could have absconded during the day as the grounds were surrounded by a large fence which you couldn't climb. There was no way to break out of Rossie Farm.
54. There was a locked room on the lower level where you would be put to calm down if you had "kicked off". There was a bolt on the door, and you would be bolted in until the staff felt that you had completely calmed down. You would be in this room until such time as the staff deemed it safe to let you out. It was mainly for your own good,

but I didn't appreciate that at the time. I was in that room at least a couple of times and sometimes it could be for quite a few hours.

55. There were a lot of boys and girls at Rossie. The boys were kept away from the girls. The boys came from all over Scotland. I recall some from Dundee, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. I did make some friends amongst the boys. I think that the boys were there until they were either sixteen or eighteen, but I can't be sure.

System of trust at Rossie Farm

56. I was told when I arrived that there was a system called the gym, swim and walk. What this meant was there were three stages to earn trust with your keyworker at Rossie. Until you earned your gym award you were not allowed out at any time.
57. If you stuck in and attended all your classes and generally behaved, you got to go swimming. It meant that you could go out to the swimming pool which meant going out the front doors to the pool which was nearby. When you first graduated to the swim stage you were only allowed to wear your trunks and a towel along with your slippers. You were also held by a member of staff who took hold of your arm to ensure you couldn't run off. There was nowhere to run to anyway. I only got to the swimming stage once or twice, no more than that.
58. As part of building trust, you would eventually be allowed to go on walks in the grounds of Rossie in the company of your keyworker. This led to being allowed home at weekends as the trust was built between you and the staff.
59. When I was allowed to go home to my sister LWB I would either be driven there in a car or I'd get the train and then I'd be collected in a car at the end of the weekend. I never wanted to go back, so I would not turn up for the pre-arranged time to go home. This meant that I went back to the beginning of the trust table. I realised that it was not worthwhile failing to return because the police eventually caught you and took you back and you would be back to square one with no home leave allowed.

Leisure facilities

60. There was only one television in Tay Unit where I was staying. I had my own room as did most of the boys. You were given a radio to listen to. The best-behaved boys would get a chance to have that television in their room for a day.

Schooling

61. I had to attend school at Rossie although I had seriously missed out on my education. I actually enjoyed some classes like the maths class. The maths teacher Mr Jones allowed us to play on the computer. His wife was Mrs Jones and she taught English. She was also very nice.
62. I was always being asked what I would hope to achieve, and I always told the teaching staff that I wanted to be a mechanic. There was a guy that was a farmer who taught you all things mechanical. I didn't get that opportunity as I wasn't well behaved.

Forth House at Rossie Farm List D School

63. Forth House was attached to Rossie Farm it was located outside the main campus. It was where boys were sent when they were nearing their time of release and had earned the trust to go there. It was not a locked building, and you could walk out of you wanted. It was the place that I set my sights on going to.
64. When you were in Forth House you were being prepared to leave Rossie Farm and cope in the outside world. You would be educated about how to deal with money and some other domestic chores. Forth House was the last stage to getting home. Nothing was locked and there was total trust. I was only in there for a couple of months.

Abuse at Rossie Farm List D School

65. There were occasions when the staff laid hands on you, but I would back off as they would, and I was not going to stand for what had happened to me in the other homes so there was a mutual understanding and although I was subjected to some physical abuse it was not very often.

Leaving Rossie List D School

66. I was sixteen and my sister [LWB] had succeeded in getting legal guardianship for me. I went to stay with [LWB] and about this time the Section 216 expired. I remember being at a Children's Panel and being told I could go and stay with her. I just remember that I didn't believe a word they were saying. My head had been filled with so much garbage. It was a tough regime at Rossie, but it was not as bad as [Secondary Institution] Oakbank.

Life after being in care

67. I went to stay with my sister and unfortunately became addicted to methadone. It made me feel good and I could blank everything out from my childhood. I became invincible when I was on methadone. I then went on to abuse heroin which gave me an even bigger hit.
68. When I was eighteen, I went to Polmont Young Offenders. I was in the "Alley Calley" Hall where you were kept until you had your interview with the Governor and were assigned a category. I had got a six-month sentence at the court, so I was assessed as a Category C prisoner. It was my first conviction. I then went on to Glenochil.
69. Over the next few years, I continued to take drugs and spent some time in prison due to the petty crime I was involved in. It was mainly to do with car and motorcycle thefts. I had a very bad motorcycle accident in 1998 or 1999 and have been

physically disabled ever since. I was very seriously injured in the accident, I broke my collar bone, I had a knee replaced and broke bones in my leg, I was in hospital for about two months after that.

70. On [REDACTED] 2008 my daughter [REDACTED] was born, and I was present at the birth. I had a partner [REDACTED], but I no longer see her. I do not see my daughter. I know that there was an issue with [REDACTED] stepfather, [REDACTED], who was [REDACTED] and I did not want him around my daughter. Prior to [REDACTED] stepfather's [REDACTED] he had gone to court and been awarded guardian of [REDACTED]. I am trying to get this reversed through the courts.

Impact

71. When I was a wee boy, I was very happy and easy to get on with. When I was put into the care system everything changed including me. I was no longer a happy and carefree child.
72. My sister has reminded me of a meeting that was held in Woodhill House in Aberdeen when the senior social work person at the meeting told me that the care system had failed me and had let me down. I think Joan Hutton was at that meeting. I can't recall when that meeting took place, but I think it was after I left Oakbank and before I went to Rossie Farm. I think that the meeting is mentioned in my records.
73. After being in care I have no trust with people in authority. I cannot open up to anybody. I have difficulty sleeping and often have flashbacks and nightmares about my time in care. I have seen my doctor about that and he has given me diazepam to help with anxiety and depression. I feel that the medication I've been put on is helping me.
74. I feel very angry about what happened to me. Without the drugs everything comes back to me, and I have felt suicidal many a time. I nearly overdosed [REDACTED] on one occasion.

75. I didn't really get any help or advice about my heroin addiction or my mental state of mind. Even though I finished up in hospital I didn't receive any help mainly because I didn't trust the people who were looking after me. I've been through hell and I find that I just can't open up and talk about my childhood, I just can't speak to some people. I suffer from Fibromyalgia which causes widespread pain and extreme tiredness. There are days when I can't get out of bed. I think that's linked to the motorcycle accident I had. I have also been diagnosed with PTSD, I think that was by my doctor.
76. My life has been a mess and I feel that the care system has completely destroyed me as a person and has let me down when they should have been caring for me. There was no need for me to be in care and I have always wondered how that happened. I had no choices of my own. The system just failed me.

Reporting of Abuse

77. The only time I tried to tell my mother about the abuse I suffered in care she told me to stop telling lies or I would get the people into trouble, and I would be in trouble too. There was no one I could trust enough to tell them what happened to me. I have never reported what happened to the police.

Records

78. I recently applied to see my records of my time in care, but I was not able to go through them because it was so upsetting, and I have had to put them away. I only applied because my sister^{LWB} also applied. I didn't expect six large boxes with lots of files and I just can't bear the thought of having to read them.

Lessons to be learned

- 79. People have to learn from the mistakes that were made in the way I was treated when I was in care. I would also like to see the people that abused me being punished for what they did to me.

- 80. 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.. 8/12/2022.....