

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Ian WATSON

Support person present: No

1. My name is Ian Watson. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh. My mum was called [REDACTED] and then she married my dad who was called [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
3. My dad had been a prisoner of war in Japan and then came back to Edinburgh and he was a soldier based at the castle. Then he met my mum and left the army and moved to the Craigour area of the city. My dad moved out there to work on work on a farm and that's where his family was born. I grew up in a house on [REDACTED] that was right next door to the farm. [REDACTED] worked on the farm when [REDACTED] growing up.
4. Life at home was ok. We never had much, but the family did ok. I went to Fernieside Primary School. Then in 1969 my dad had a heart attack in front of me and died. I was aged nine and I was the only one in the house when it happened.
5. When I went back to school afterwards I didn't concentrate. I was having problems with reading and writing at school and I was getting bullied. None of it was getting

addressed. I started skipping school and spent a lot of time in my own wee world. I helped my mum who was on her own after my dad died. Social work got involved and I ended up with a social worker who was called Miss English. She was based in Newtoft Street, Gilmerton social work. She was my social worker for a while and she'd worked with my mum as well after my dad died. [REDACTED] pretty much took over at that time as my mum was struggling.

6. Miss English never addressed any of the issues I was having in school and she didn't really ask me about it. I ended up in front of the children's panel and I went to a couple of panels in Davie Street, at East Crosscauseway in Edinburgh. A panel decided I should go to [REDACTED] for disabled people. That didn't work so they sent me to another one in [REDACTED]. Both of them were miles away from where I stayed. They gave me a bus pass and told me to make my own way there which I didn't do half the time.
7. I was put in front of a children's panel and the social worker recommended I was sent to an assessment centre before finding a long term place, and that's what the panel decided. That's what my mum told me. I was at the panel hearings. I think I was asked why I was skipping school and I couldn't tell them at the time. My mum was at the panel hearing and she was asked about me, but I think they'd made their mind up before I went in the room.
8. I never did anything criminal when I was skipping school. I never got to go home from that panel hearing and I was taken straightaway to Howdenhall Assessment Centre. I was aged twelve and this happened in 1971 or 1972.

Howdenhall Assessment Centre, Edinburgh

9. There was a main entrance at the side of the building. To the left was an L-shaped building and another building to the right. The building was on two levels. If you went in through the reception area you could see right into a dining area to the left. The corridor on the right led to classrooms at the bottom. Up the stairs was the dormitories.

If you went to the classrooms and beyond them was the gymnasium to the left. There was a square in the middle of the building for when we got put out to get exercise and you couldn't get out of there. The ground in the square was covered in tarmac.

10. I didn't know at the time who ran the school and I've since found out it was the local authority. There was a headmaster in charge. There were four or five members of staff and they worked in shifts. The staff was all male and I don't remember any being female. The headmaster lived on the site in a house [REDACTED]. I remember Mr [LWI] who was [SNR] and he was ex-military. I think he lived nearby [REDACTED]. He'd tell you what he wanted done and if you didn't do it he gave you a clout. I can't remember the names of the others. There was a school and I think one of the teachers was called Mr [GQH]. He worked in the classrooms and he wasn't involved in our living area.
11. Howdenhall was for boys only and there were about ten to fifteen of us. I was aged about twelve and the boys went from my age up to sixteen. There was one boy who was only nine or ten and he was there because his mum had died, and he was left on his own. It was the only place they had to put him.
12. I didn't know how long I was going to be there for. I thought I'd be there until I was sixteen as everyone spoke about leaving at sixteen. I didn't understand what an assessment centre was for.
13. The boys were split in two and there were two houses for the boys. Mr [LWI] ran one of the houses. I can't remember who ran the other house. I can't remember if the houses had different names.
14. Other boys in Howdenhall were in the same situation as me. A lot were caught breaking into houses or shops. They'd been shoplifting. You had to be in there for something to be the big man and the one who'd done the biggest job. That's what they spoke about. They were in trouble with the law and I'd just been playing truant.

Routine at Howdenhall Assessment Centre

First day

15. I had a social worker called Miss English and she took me from the children's panel to Howdenhall in her car. I had no possessions. She just dropped me off at the door and left me. It felt like being flung into a burning fire. I knew from the minute I walked in the door that it wasn't a nice place and I could see the people who were in there. I was told what I was to do and what I wasn't to do by the headmaster in his office, and it was mostly about what I wasn't to do. It felt intimidating and he didn't do anything to put me at ease. I don't remember the headmaster's name. I was shown to my dorm upstairs and shown my bed.

16. There was a couple of older laddies hanging about the dining hall and just looking at them I knew I was going to be in for a hard time. When I came down from looking at my bedroom I was told to wait in a seating area. There were residents sitting there and they asked where I came from. That was when bullying started coming from right away. I was from Craigour and another boy was from Bingham. Back then there was a gang culture. He was older than me by a couple of years. He gave me a hard time throughout my time in Howdenhall. He came over and skelped me. The staff didn't see it happen. His name was [REDACTED]

Mornings and bedtime

17. We had individual rooms in a corridor and the rooms had glass partitions so staff could see into the room as they walked passed. It used to be a dormitory before they'd partitioned the rooms off. I had a bed and a locker and a shelf for my clothes in my own wee room, but I had no real privacy.

18. Mr [REDACTED]^{LWI} was in charge of the boys in my group and he woke us up early in the morning. We had to make our beds, clean our room, stand at the door and the staff checked our rooms. If your room was ok you'd go down for breakfast. Then we had to stand in a line at the top of the stairs and Mr [REDACTED]^{LWI} would shout if there was something found

in a bedroom that shouldn't have been there. Then he'd take you into the room and give you a shouting at. We had to fold our bed clothes in a certain way and if you didn't he'd shout and tell you how stupid you were.

19. One of the other residents had shown me how to fold them and he'd been told to show me what to do. His room was always perfect. He'd been in Howdenhall for a good while and he knew how to do it. We were told that's how we had to be before we went anywhere and if you weren't you'd get skelped.
20. We were locked in our bedrooms at night. If you needed the toilet in the night you had to ring a bell for a member of staff to come and let you out.

Bed wetting

21. I wet my bed and I didn't want anyone to know. Staff made a loud announcement about it. When I went down for breakfast the other boys knew about it and they'd pass remarks and call me names. The staff said if they did that it would make sure I wouldn't wet the bed again. We were punished by having to take our sheets off to put in the washing basket. Mr ^{LWI} used to make me carry the sheets up to the laundry area in front of everyone. I had to say in front of everyone 'I won't wet the bed again'. He physically punished us too with a slap over the head or on the jaw or a punch.

Mealtimes / Food

22. The food was like normal school meals, but I got breakfast and tea as well. I was always hungry. There wasn't enough food. It was part of the punishment to be hungry. I never saw any force feeding.

Washing / bathing

23. There were showers up the stairs and toilets. We had a wash in the morning at a sink, not in the shower. There were four or five sinks. We got a shower at night. Mr ^{LWI} supervised us getting washed. Other staff supervised them sometimes too. I can't

remember their names, but I can see some of their faces. There were two or three showers on the wall and you waited your turn. There was no privacy. The water we used was warm enough for us to use.

Clothing / uniform

24. They gave us clothes to wear. It was underwear, socks, a pair of trousers and a top. They took away my own clothes and put them into a box and put them in a room.

School

25. After breakfast we got sent to the classrooms. That's when I met Mr GQH. Mr GQH was the teacher. He called me a 'Dumbo' in front of the rest of the class. He was trying to get me to write things and because I couldn't do it he slapped me and gave me the belt. That was on the day after I arrived. That was how he ran the classroom. He didn't just do it with me, he did it to other boys too. I thought I was going to get help with reading and writing.
26. Mr GQH used the tawse. He treasured it. You had to stand in front of the class and put your hands out. They'd get three or four on each hand. I got a few on that first day in class. Then you went back to your desk and I couldn't hold a pencil after the belting on my hand. The teacher had no time for me. He just put me at the back of the class with some plasticine and told me not to annoy anyone. There was no effort to try to help me.
27. There was a break in the middle of the day for lunch. After that we went back to the classroom. Sometimes there were other activities like going to the gymnasium. Right after my dad died I was in the Sick Kids Hospital. I had a kidney issue and a doctor said it was caused by the shock of what I'd been through when I saw my dad die. I didn't feel the same and I didn't like doing activities. They built an assault course at Howdenhall and made us run round the gym. I couldn't do those kinds of things. I was forced to do exercises in the gym and people laughed at me when I couldn't do those kinds of things.

28. I couldn't do the assault course and I couldn't throw a medicine ball like the other boys could. The home should have known I'd been in hospital and the social worker knew about it. I told the staff about it too. The PT guy was another one from the army and he shouted as well and he'd make us run about and sometimes I felt like I was going to die.

Religion

29. We didn't go to church and there was no religious instruction.

Work/chores

30. We had to keep our bedroom spick and span. There wasn't any work to do.

Trips / Holidays

31. They used to put us in a minibus and go for a drive. We went on a bus for a drive to the Borders and let us out for a walk and then it was straight back in and then the drive back. It was just for a trip. We went to Melrose or Jedburgh for a walk round. We didn't stay over anywhere.

Leisure time

32. After PT in the afternoon we all got put outside in the square. The teachers would sit and smoke and drink tea in the dining room and they could watch us through the window. All the boys were out together and we used to sit about the square. Other boys were always wanting to fight and the teachers could see that. There was a gang culture. People kept to themselves and they didn't want to say where they were from. After our evening meal we were sent to our rooms and there was no activity for us.
33. At the weekend a retired priest came and took us out on an assault course. There was a football pitch at the side of the assessment centre that was fenced off. He used to

take us out there and made us play murder ball with a big medicine ball. We had to run with it from one side of the pitch to the other no matter what and you weren't allowed to lose the ball. The other boys could get the ball off you by any means by punching, kicking and biting.

34. I can't remember the priest's name. He was from one of the churches nearby. He came in at weekends and would sit and blether to us about religion and then take us out to the assault course or the pitch to play murder ball. The field and the assault course was part of the assessment centre. Other than that activity, at weekends, I was locked up in my room.
35. Nothing was laid on for us to do. I spent more time in my room than I did outside. Just to get outside was brilliant. There was nothing to read or to play with. There was no television. We were just told to stay in our bedroom and we were locked in at night.

Personal possessions

36. We weren't allowed any personal possessions and if you got caught with a pencil out of the classroom they'd throw you into a room. They put that kind of fear in you that if you were caught with anything you'd spend time in the room or you went to SNR SNR office and got put over the chair. Getting belted over the bare backside wasn't a one off. Other people had it at as well.

Birthdays and Christmas

37. I didn't have my birthday at Howdenhall and I don't remember anyone having a birthday in there. I wasn't in there over Christmas.

Visits / Inspections

38. My mum did visit me. We sat by the Head's office where there were two chairs facing each other and the Head sat in his office with his door open. He was always there and it meant we couldn't speak freely.

39. The social worker Miss English came a couple of times. I saw her by myself. I told her about Howdenhall and what it was like and getting belted. She said it was just how the place was run and I wouldn't be there for long as I was going somewhere else soon. She thought it was a legitimate way to treat me. I don't know if there was any review of my stay at Howdenhall. I didn't have to go back to a panel. I don't remember seeing anyone inspect the place.

Healthcare

40. There was no dentist and there was no doctor on site. If there were any injuries the PT teacher would put bandages on people. It was just first aid that they offered. There were no health checks.

Running away

41. I ran away a couple of times. One time we were meant to be doing the assault course and I climbed over the wall and kept on running to Loanhead. Then I walked to Gilmerton. I went to people that I knew. The police caught me three days later. I was in my mum's home. The police came in and took me back to Howdenhall and I was taken to SNR [REDACTED] office. The police handed me over and then left. SNR [REDACTED] told me to take my trousers off and bend over a chair. I had to take my pants off too. SNR [REDACTED] hit me on the bare buttocks with a belt. Mr LWI [REDACTED] was also in the room.
42. SNR [REDACTED] told me I wouldn't run away again. I was pretty sore for a while until I ran away again for a couple of days I got the same treatment the next time. The police picked me up again and took me back. The police asked me why I ran away and I told them I was going to get hit with a belt if I went back, but they just handed me back over. Back then the belt was legal and that was the way of the world.

Abuse at Howdenhall

43. After I got the belt for running away I was stuck in a room upstairs with no clothes on. I was left there for two or three days with no clothes. It was part of the punishment. They did it to a few people, it wasn't just me. It was used as a punishment and it wasn't just for running away.
44. It was a square room at the end of the dormitories with a glass window for the staff to look in at us. It was like a prison cell. I was locked in there by Mr ^{LWI} and the secure door was banged shut. There were scratches on the back of the door and writing on the wall. There were bars on the window. I had to take all my clothes off and leave them at the door of the cell.
45. I slept naked in that locked room for two or three days. There was no mattress and I was given one blanket. I was let out when they'd finished punishing me for running away. I got some food that the staff brought me. It was just basic stuff like a sandwich. That happened after the both times I ran away.
46. They started doing that with me when I got back to the dormitory. I had to leave my clothes at the door as I wasn't allowed clothes in my room. That was because I'd run away. I had to strip my clothes off in front of everybody and go back into my room. I had to strip in front of other boys. I didn't have pyjamas to wear.
47. I was put in that secure room a couple of times for fighting and it wasn't even my fault. It happened to other boys too. I heard them screaming. I heard them being battered or hit by the staff. That could be by any member of staff.
48. There was a model of the assessment centre in the classroom. I moved one of the pieces on it. The teacher took me outside and gave me a lecture on what I'd done. He had long, dark hair in a bowl cut. We used to take the mickey out of him as he used to try to look like one of the Beatles. I can't remember his name. He was about to walk

back into the classroom and turned round and said I'll make sure you don't do it again and punched me straight in the face.

49. I could see white stars and fell down in the toilet. I got up and was taken back into the classroom. My front teeth were sore and they were slanted back. I asked a different member of staff if I could see a dentist. They said they didn't have the facilities. I didn't tell staff how it had happened and just that my teeth were sore. If I'd said a member of staff did it, I would have ended up getting punched again. When I went to Oakbank School later on that was one of the things that I had to go to was the dentist because of my teeth. I ended up losing my front two teeth.
50. If boys were caught fighting they were taken to the gymnasium and given boxing gloves. They told us to fight each other. If you refused to fight the PT teacher put the gloves on his hands and he punched you about the head and the body and told us to fight back.
51. One time, when I was caught fighting, the PT teacher sent the other boy away and took me into the bit where there used to be mats for when we climbed on the wall bars. He told me to take my trousers off and play with myself while he watched. I didn't do it. He was a man in his forties, ex-military, with a beard and he looked a bit like Peter Sutcliffe with the same shaped face. He was ruthless.
52. I knew he did it to other boys as they talked about it. He took them into the bottom cupboard area in the gymnasium to do it. He punished me for not doing what he told me to do. That could be a punch there and then or I ended up in the room upstairs. Other boys said they didn't do what he told them to do it, but some of them did it. They said the PT was standing there and touching their private parts as well. I didn't see it happen, but other boys told me it happened.
53. The PT teacher did night-watchman duty. He used to come into your bedroom when you were lying on your bed. He tried to touch me. I jumped up and out of my bed. I made him aware I wasn't going to do what he wanted. I think a lot of the kids who did what he told them didn't understand. I just knew it was wrong. He punched me for not

doing what he wanted. I didn't tell the social worker Miss English about this as I didn't see her again. If I told the wrong person and it got back to the staff member I'd be in for trouble. I just tried to get through it with my head down.

54. Boys were in fear of something happening to them. The first time I saw it was in the showers. Two boys were doing sexual things with each other. I saw them do that and got a fright. Then I saw it happening among the boys in the gymnasium and then the PT instructor. I can't remember any other abusive behaviour.

Leaving Howdenhall

55. I was in Howdenhall for two or three months. Then I got moved to Oakbank Residential School in Aberdeen. I found out that morning that I was moving. I got my own clothes back and I was told to wait in the reception area. Then a man came out of the headmaster's office and took me with him. I was told I was going to Aberdeen and I didn't know where that was. I was pleased to be leaving Howdenhall as I knew that two boys from Howdenhall had been put in prison and that was my fear.
56. They put me on a train with this man. He was a social worker and he was called Brian Chatham. It was the first time I'd seen him. He took me to Oakbank and I didn't see him again until I left. He told me on the train that it was a List D school for boys. I didn't know what that meant. It felt like a long way away and I was enjoying the journey looking out of the window.

Oakbank Residential School, Midstocket Road, Aberdeen

57. It was a big place. It was a secure school and they locked the doors. We couldn't get outside of the school and we had some freedom to move around inside the school in certain areas. The main door to the dormitories was locked, but we weren't locked in our rooms at night. The outside grounds were secure round the football pitch. There was a big fence.

58. When you went in the front door of the building there was a massive staircase. On the first level there was a secretary's room where there were boxes of files. Next door to that was the conference room with a big long table in it. That was where the headmaster used to sit. Further along from that was the dining area and then the kitchen.
59. On the other side of the building was a big room they called the 'Play ward'. That was what the teachers called it when they sent you to that certain area. The first part of the room was the TV room and the next bit was a snooker room with snooker tables and billiard tables. Then there was a bigger area and we could play football in there. On the other side of that there were the showers and the sinks. You went up the stairs right above the play ward was the classrooms, and there was five or six of them.
60. On the other side of that level were the dormitories. There was three of them. They had house names and I can remember Scott, Lister and Kelvin. You were allocated to a house and the person in charge was your housemaster. I was in Scott House at the start then much later on I was moved to a unit at the back of the school. That was when I was due to leave Oakbank. Scott was a big, massive room with high ceilings. It had been all separated into wee rooms by partitions that you could look over if you climbed up.
61. Oakbank was run by a headmaster and I can't remember his name. There was more staff members than at Howdenhall and I think there was about ten of them. I don't remember any of their names. All the other staff were men. My housemaster was called Mr Campbell. There was about sixty to seventy boys in the school and they were aged from about thirteen to sixteen. Life in Oakbank was scary and that was because of the behaviour of the other boys and the staff as well.

Routine at Oakbank School

First day

62. I arrived at the school in Aberdeen after my train ride from Edinburgh. The school was on Midstocket Road. I felt frightened again. The social worker dropped me off. I was taken by a member of staff to a big communal shower that could take fifteen to twenty people. I was given clothes and I was told to strip and go into the shower and put on the new clothes. It was a big area with sinks all the way round.
63. When I was in the shower the member of staff I was with went away. Then some boys who were residents came into the showers. There was four or five of them. They asked me where I came from and I told them it was Edinburgh. They all started spitting on me. It was like the gangs in Howdenhall and this time it was gangs from the different cities. The boys from Dundee stuck together and the Aberdeen boys stuck together.
64. The first night I was there I got put into Scott House and there were three beds in there and my bed was over at the window. The next room had the same set up. The next room had two beds and the rooms carried on like that. In between the middle bit was a single bedroom and the same on the other side of the corridor.
65. On my first morning I got up and went downstairs. I didn't know what to do. We sat in the area for our house. I sat down at a table because there was a space. A boy sitting at the table kicked me on the shins. I hit him over the head with an empty plastic tray. It was just temper at the time. I got put on a table by myself and that's the way it stayed for the time I was there. I was at a table on my own and I was in a room on my own.
66. I'd already been through the bullying in the assessment centre and I wasn't going to take it anymore. I wasn't punished for this, I was taken away by my housemaster and told not to let that happen again. I found out later that the boy I'd hit was the biggest abuser and bully of kids in the school. I worked that out as time went on and I could see what he was doing.

Mornings and bedtime

67. We had to stand and parade in the different houses and stand at attention and at ease. They didn't inspect us, but your clothes had to be clean and shoes polished. This happened in the play ward. Then we marched from there to the dining room. Our shoes had to be polished. If they weren't clean enough you went back to your room to start again and come back out again.
68. The first night I was in one of the boys jumped over the wall and landed on me and started fighting me. A member of staff came up and I was the one who was standing up out of bed so I got the blame for it. They put me in a single room that was in the middle and I stayed in that room all the time I was there. It kept me away from everybody else. I didn't have a door to the room, it was just a curtain. That was the same for all of the rooms. The main door into the dorms was locked all the time. If you needed the toilet in the night there was one on the right hand side that was just off the main room.
69. At bedtime we went upstairs at about nine o'clock. We went into the showers at eight o'clock. You had to say your number and you got a change of clothes made up for you in a wee pack. Then you handed the dirty clothes back in. After your shower you got into pyjamas and your slippers. Then you went back up the stairs into the dormitory. That was what you did until about ten o'clock depending what was on. If The Sweeney was on the telly everyone stayed up to watch that until ten. After that you went to your bed.

Bed wetting

70. I continued to have problems with bed wetting. It was still going on.

Mealtimes / Food

71. You sat in an area of the dining room for your house and you kept to the same bit. In the morning you'd go down to the dining hall to get breakfast. After that you went back

into the play ward to get counted again to make sure everybody was there and that's why we were put on parade.

Washing / bathing

72. We had a big communal shower that could take fifteen to twenty people. It was a big area with sinks all the way round.

Clothing / uniform

73. I think our clothes were changed every second day, certainly the underwear was every second day. You only got your trousers and top changed if it was ripped or in a really bad state. We wore grey trousers, a grey or brown top like a T-shirt and black shoes. We got wellies for working in the gardens. There were senior staff who ran the laundry and the kitchen. There was a house keeper type woman who ran everything like the stores.

School

74. There were five or six classrooms. After breakfast you went to the classrooms. They found out my capabilities and I got moved to another classroom. There was a teacher to help with problems with reading and writing. It didn't do me any good as I came out with the same issues I went in with. The school recognised I had issues and told me there was a special teacher who would help me, but it didn't work. The teacher had his hands full and there were too many other people in the class causing trouble.

Religion

75. Sometimes they did take you to the church at the bottom of the street if you were there at the weekend. We weren't expected to say prayers at the school.

Work/chores

76. We had to go to work in the afternoons in the paint shop, the gardens, the joiners or the engineers. They called it going to your work party. I had no choice in what I did. They told you what you were doing. I was always in the gardens or greenhouses. There was an old gardener who had been there for years. He was alright. He lived in a house nearby. I was potting plants, hoeing and pulling up tatties for the kitchen. I had to take veg up to the kitchens in the morning. It was teaching us a trade. I enjoyed it and it meant I got away from the classrooms.
77. After you finished work you got dropped off and you weren't allowed to walk through the gardens to the school by yourself. You had to wait for a member of staff coming to get you and take you back and he'd put you in the play ward. It happened with all the work parties that they'd get dropped off. Everyone would be in the play ward until about four o'clock and then everyone would be shouted on parade to be counted before going along to the dining room for tea.
78. You had to keep your own space clean. We didn't have to do any heavy physical stuff around the school. You didn't have to fold your clothes in a certain way like in the assessment centre or have your bed block made.

Trips / Holidays

79. There were day trips now and again. [REDACTED] was at Aberdeen University at the time and sometimes she used to come up and take me out to the pictures. She came a few times. That was allowed and she could see me on my own. The staff didn't take us on any other day trips anywhere.
80. The school had a house where we stayed sometimes in the summer holidays. I only ever stayed there at weekends. It was just a short holiday for a few boys and some staff as well. We used to help in the forest with the fallen trees and help to pile them all up to be taken away. I think it was part of our payment for the weekend. It was hard work.

Leisure time

81. After tea time we'd leave the dining room and go back along to the play ward or you went to a bit outside where you could go. If you smoked you got a cigarette. I didn't smoke, but I started to at Oakbank. You had your own tin that was kept in a box with everybody's tins. You got five fags a day. Everybody in the school smoked so I started when I was thirteen to fit in.
82. After that you were taken back into the play ward. There was a games room or the TV room or the snooker room. The older boys ran the snooker room. You were lucky if you got a game of snooker and you were lucky if you even got through the door. The teachers were just as bad and they took over the tables. Most of us had to sit and watch the TV.
83. When we moved from one area to another, like the classrooms to the gardens we were always escorted by a member of staff.
84. Boys could play football, but they needed two members of staff to take them to the football pitch. If there wasn't enough staff on at the time you couldn't go outside, there had to be a certain number of staff on duty. We used to point out that so-and-so was in the office and why couldn't he come as well to cover. We did get to go out to play football sometimes.
85. They used to take us away to the Balmoral estate to do grouse beating. We were dragged out of bed early in the morning and given special clothes. Only sixteen of us did it. This was after I turned fifteen. The school got paid for this work. We didn't get anything.
86. If you weren't going to your own home at weekend you were locked in the school. You'd be in the play ward. There were board games to play and also you could use the snooker tables as there wasn't so many boys in at the weekend. There wasn't always a member of staff in the play ward. There was meant to be someone standing

in the play ward all the time. As soon as it was empty that's when a boy got hold of another boy if they wanted to. That was the time when you had to watch out for yourself. If there wasn't a member of staff you could end up being battered. Then, when a staff member came in and you told them, they'd just say don't do it again.

Personal possessions

87. A few boys had radio cassettes of their own that they'd brought in. There was somewhere to lock them away in our own lockers. We had an allowance and that's what you used to buy your baccy. They had a tuck shop and you could spend your allowance in there. I didn't see any money, it was all written down on a piece of paper. The housemaster looked after that.

Birthdays and Christmas

88. Birthdays weren't celebrated, but they did celebrate Christmas. There was a Christmas dinner and decorations. There was a tree in the dining hall. Some boys went home at Christmas. I got to go home once at Christmas in 1974, midway through my time there. I wasn't allowed to go home at other Christmases because of my behaviour. They gave us presents, but nothing big.

Visits / Inspections

89. After you'd been in for a certain amount of time you were allowed to go home at weekends. They had their own bus that they purchased from the RAF that the school fixed up. All the boys did some paint work on it. The school had minibuses as well, but this bus was for boys on weekend visits.
90. On a Friday it went from Aberdeen to Edinburgh via Stonehaven and Dundee and different parts of Fife to drop boys off. The Edinburgh boys got dropped off at Waverley Station and we had to be back there at one o'clock on a Sunday. That was your weekend if you'd been behaving. If you'd done anything wrong you'd be kept back.

91. My mum came up once and I was able to speak to her. It was at the time [REDACTED] was graduating. My mum just came to the school and got shown around the main bits of it by one of the staff. I got chance to speak to her on my own without a staff member being present.
92. My social worker, Brian Chatham, never came to see me at Oakbank after he dropped me off there. I didn't see Miss English there either. I don't remember anyone from outside coming to look at the place.

Healthcare

93. At Oakbank I had to go to see the dentist because I lost both front teeth. I reported the problems with my teeth as soon as I got to the school as they were really sore. Eventually I got to see the dentist. They had their own dental chair in the medical room at Oakbank so a dentist came in from outside to see me. He pulled my teeth and left me with a gap.
94. In the medical room there was a woman who worked there that we used to have to call 'Ma'. If we were ever injured or sick that's where we went for help. I only ever went to the medical room once for my teeth.

Running away

95. My first weekend in there I ran away. I was with four other boys and we went into a maze that was in a park in Aberdeen. The staff took us there. We found our way out of the maze and disappeared. I was gone two days. I went back to the school and left the others. We were sleeping rough and I was hungry. The other boys were breaking into houses and shops.
96. I got punished when I went back. I was told I wasn't going to get home at the time they said they were going to let me home. I'd have to wait longer than that. I got a few slaps and that was from the teacher who picked me up. I phoned the school and told them where I was and they came to pick me up. When I was getting in the van he hit

me on the back of the head and said 'do you know the money you've cost this school? the police are looking for you as well'.

97. When we got back to the school one of the other staff kicked my legs when I got out of the van and told me I wouldn't be doing that again. He was the teacher who was with us in the park when we ran away. He pulled me into the school and stuck me outside the headmaster's office. When I saw the head he told me it would be longer before I got to go home. I wasn't physically punished at that time. That was the only time I ran away.

Discipline

98. You'd be punished by not being allowed to go certain places. You had to abide by the rules of the school and you didn't get to do certain things that were going on that day. You sat in the play ward and did nothing. You were not allowed to play games or watch TV for maybe three days or three nights. There was physical punishment as well. That came later on and some of it was brutal.
99. You had to abide by the rules of the school. If you got anything wrong you sat in the play ward for days. Discipline normally consisted of withdrawal of privileges by the school such as visits home at weekend. They didn't use physical punishment in there other than what I've said elsewhere in this statement. They didn't use the belt like they did at the assessment centre.
100. I felt Howdenhall was worse than being at Oakbank. Oakbank felt like a break away from it until the problems started there as well. It was mostly other residents that were the problem and some of the staff. It wasn't all of the staff and some of them you could talk to and they'd do something about the problem you had. Some of them you talked to and then something bad would happen to you as a result.

Abuse at Oakbank

101. There were a couple of incidences in the shower room. Two older boys took me in the shower room and told me to undress and they pulled my clothes off me. They wanted me to do sexual things for them which I wasn't going to. They ended up punching and kicking me and a teacher was standing watching at the door laughing and did nothing about what they were doing to me.
102. I went to tell my housemaster Mr Campbell and it was looked into within the school and nothing ever came of it. They asked the PE teacher if he'd seen anything and he said he hadn't, but really he had because he was standing right at the door. The police weren't involved. The staff called me a liar. After that I wished I'd never said anything because it wasn't pleasant after that, the way I was treated by the staff and the other boys. When this happened I'd only been in Oakbank for four or five weeks.
103. One of the older boys used to get called [REDACTED] but his real name was [REDACTED] and he was from Dundee. He came from a really bad, dysfunctional family and there was an investigation of him raping his younger brothers and sisters. The two boys who attacked me were a couple of years older than me. I can't remember the name of the member of staff who stood at the door. I never mentioned it to anyone else like my own social worker
104. The night staff used to wake me up to change the bed clothes in the night time. It was the same member of staff, the one who stood at the shower room door and laughed. He did night shift. It wasn't just me he did it with. As I was in the middle bedroom if I moved my curtain I could see right down the corridor and I used to see him moving about the different rooms at night. He was in those rooms for a while and he wasn't just going in to check on them. Some of the boys knew what he was doing.
105. I reported him to my housemaster and I thought I was doing the right thing. I found out afterwards it wasn't the right thing to do. He turned round and said the reason why he had his hand under my cover was to feel if the bed was wet. He wasn't feeling the bed, he was feeling me. I reported him and got called a liar. Back then he was probably in

his thirties, quite tall. He was Aberdonian. He had dark hair and a moustache and the residents used to slag him about it because it was wispy. He was always loud. He used to take us sometimes for gym and he was the one who took us to the big area at the back of the school that was asphalt and we played football there. He used to shout at us. If you took the ball off him you got kicked or punched so you didn't tackle him.

106. The night after I reported it the housemaster, the night staff member came into the room and told me I was a trouble maker and I should keep my mouth shut or he'd get me taken care of. I ended up getting another hiding the next morning in the play ward from [REDACTED] and another few boys. Staff used to run them like that like they were their guard dogs and told them what to do and stand back and watch it. The man used to continue to go into boys' bedrooms at night after I'd reported it to Mr Campbell. I think Mr Campbell also spoke to other boys because he'd questioned the boys who were in the shower room that time when I got battered. They just denied it.
107. I got taken to the hospital once after I got a severe kicking from other boys in the TV room. They bust my shoulder and my arm. A couple of days later, the older woman in the medical room called 'ma' saw me and took me to the doctor. The doctor then sent me to the hospital and I got an x-ray. I ended up with my arm in a sling for a while. There was a local doctor who used to come into the school. I can't remember his name.
108. The doctor and the hospital staff asked me how I'd been injured and I was told to tell them I'd fallen. That's what I was told to say by the staff member who took me to the hospital. That staff member was always present when I was seen. That member of staff didn't see me get injured but he knew how it happened.
109. What had happened was, I'd walked into the toilet room, there were toilets at the side of the showers. The same two older boys had another, younger, boy who'd just arrived at the school from Edinburgh and they had him in tears. They had him down on his knees and carrying out a sexual act on the boy called [REDACTED]. He was always doing that with younger boys in the school and he always had these two other boys with him. When I walked in on them they turned on me and beat me up. I told a member of staff

at the time what had happened, that I got a doing. I never told them what I saw the boys doing. That was the member of staff who told me to say at the hospital I'd fallen.

Leaving Oakbank

110. I was at Oakbank until I was sixteen. Not long before I left Oakbank I moved into what they called the unit. There were five or six boys in each side of the unit. The unit I was in was called Watson. There was a man there called HYV and he'd been a boxer at one time and he was ex-army as well. He was quite ruthless. He used to shout at you and send you back if your shoes weren't polished right for the morning. You had to leave your shoes out at night and polished ready for the morning.
111. He used to inspect them and then shout you through and take you into this wee room where the shoes were. If your shoe wasn't polished enough he'd pick it up and whack you in the face with it. He'd say you're lucky, it's only one of them. If it was the two of them you'd get two hits in the face. He thought it was funny. Seemingly he'd been in the school for a few years.
112. It was older boys in Watson unit. I was moved in there about six or seven months before I was due to leave Oakbank. There was no real preparation for life in the outside world like learning cooking, and the preparation seemed to be just about getting your shoes polished.
113. I was at home on leave for two weeks before I was getting out of Oakbank. I didn't go back. I told my mum I had a big bruise on my back at the time when I'd been battered by older boys just before I went on leave. I showed my mum and she knew, she could tell if I was lying or not. I told her some of the stuff that had been going on. She got in touch with the school and they told her that I'd fallen. They said I went to hospital and I didn't go back.
114. I managed to stay away until the day of the panel. I went to the panel that day and that was me home from school. That was the first panel I'd been to since the one before I

went to Howdenhall. My mum got told by the social worker, Miss English, that the panel hearing was happening. That was in September 1975 as I'd already turned sixteen. It was up to the panel if I was going to be released or not. I didn't tell the panel what was going on at Oakbank and I just told them I didn't want to go back. The panel decided to let me go back to my mum. There wasn't much else they could do for me.

Life after being in care

115. After the panel hearing I walked round a corner with my mum and got myself a job. My mum took me to a plumbers and told me to go in and ask if there was any work going. I ended up getting a job delivering furniture. I stuck at that for two or three years and stayed with my mum. My mum didn't believe in me going on the dole or anything like that.
116. I still had the social worker Brian Chatham and he came to see me at my mum's house. I told him about Oakbank. He thought it was terrible that I'd been sent there at the time, but he couldn't do anything about it. He came to see me once a week. Then he faded away. I can't remember what happened.
117. I tried to make the most of what I had. I didn't have a good education and I couldn't pick and choose what kind of job I did. I took what I could get. I skipped about. I ended up getting involved with drugs and ended up in prison. That happened for a while and I was getting into trouble, committing crime. I tried to avoid it but sometimes the situations I ended up in these things happened. I didn't get involved in any violence, but for stealing and fraud. I ended up an alcoholic and taking drugs.
118. I've had a few different jobs in the restaurant and hotel trade in Edinburgh and ran the kitchen for Pierre Victoire restaurant and then trained as a chef with Pierre Victoire in my early twenties. I didn't need any big educational qualifications in writing, I just needed to listen to what I was told to do. I was there about five years. If I'd had a better education I could have ended up with a better job, but there was nothing else for me.

119. When I was twenty-two or twenty-three I met my now ex-wife. We got married and we're not together now. We had a son and a daughter together. Now I have three grandchildren.
120. I went to work at the Balmoral in the back of house as a kitchen porter, I didn't want to go there as a chef. I ended up as a day chef because someone recognised me from another restaurant. I ended up getting a permanent job there which I didn't want, but the money was good. The job was hard and stressful. There was a lot of bullying going on as well and I sometimes found myself bullying commis chefs. A lot of them I spoke to pleasantly, but sometimes when it got busy it was stressful.
121. After that I started working in the building trade and I learned plastering. I was working with a pal and we were doing alright for work. I learned a lot from him and it meant I wasn't stuck in a kitchen any more.
122. In 2008 I was out walking my dog in Edinburgh when he brought back a bat in his mouth that I thought was dead. I tried to take it off the dog and it turned out the bat was not quite dead. It bit me on the hand. The next day my hand was very swollen and I felt very sick and dizzy. I managed to get myself to hospital in a taxi. I ended up in a coma for four months and I developed septicaemia. This led to me having both legs amputated below the knee. I now have prosthetic legs and an electric chair for getting around. It has meant I've been unable to work anymore.
123. Now I suffer from PTSD and that's related to my experience of being so seriously ill. Even though I was in a coma and it wasn't a dramatic accident that happened to me. It's made me think about things in a different way and I can't sleep. When I first came out of hospital, no-one had seen me because I stayed in the house and wouldn't come out, and that was due to lack of confidence. That's what that school did to me as well and took away my confidence.

Impact

124. My experiences in care took a lot away from me. I missed out on a lot, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
My mum and dad didn't drink or smoke. They never physically punished [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] never got hit. I never saw any fighting in the house. I used to hear about it going on in other people's houses and I couldn't understand it. I tried to get on with life the best I could and I always knew I was missing out in terms of my education. Howdenhall and Oakbank didn't address the issues I had with reading and writing.
125. At that time I'd never heard of dyslexia. I've never been formally diagnosed, but I've been told by a teacher. I used to go up to the social work department at night for school work and they organised it for me. That was in the late 1970s. It was a special teacher and she told me that was what I had. She was trying to teach me. I wish I'd stuck at it and gone back to classes but I was doing other things and the classes were in the evening. It meant I couldn't fill in job application forms.
126. I wanted to join the army at sixteen and they wouldn't take me when I told them I'd been in a List D school.
127. It's affected my ability to trust people. I have to watch out for why people want something from me or what they want from me when they come into my life. As a younger man I turned to alcohol and then drugs when I used to think about what had happened to me and it would come into my head and that's when I used to drink to try and get that away. The reason people take alcohol is to blot things out.
128. I eventually stopped wetting the bed, but not until I left Oakbank. I never did it again after. It wasn't until later in life that I noticed I didn't do it anymore. I think my bed wetting was something to do with the fear I felt at Oakbank. I was always watching and waiting for them coming and I remained that way. I was always wondering what was going to happen next. There was nowhere to run to and I was trapped in there with nowhere to go to.

129. People found out about where I'd been and I felt ashamed. I also bumped into a few people when I first came out who knew what it was like in Oakbank and I think it's because they'd also been sent there. I didn't tell them I'd been in there. I didn't want to talk about it myself and didn't want them finding out I'd been in there.
130. I told my ex-wife what happened to me in Oakbank and she used to call me 'queer'. I thought I had somebody I could tell what had happened to me when I was younger. She started telling people I was gay and that's what caused us to break up. I shouldn't have told her as it gave her something to hold over me.
131. I shouldn't have been put into a List D school. I should have been left with my family and given some help by my school. My teacher in primary school, Mr Gray, never had any time for me. It was him who said I was to go to a special school. I felt going to Oakbank was me being punished for something I hadn't done. I could never understand why I was being punished. It meant I lost trust in people in authority.
132. I had counselling at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital when I first came out from hospital following my episode with septicaemia. I wasn't asked about my background and I never mentioned being in care. It was group therapy that I had with other people who had had traumatic experiences. There were two women in the group who had been raped and I had to listen to what had happened to them. It put me off because I didn't want to be there. I felt sorry for them but I didn't want to listen to them talking about it. I stepped away from that therapy.

Reporting of Abuse

133. I never made reports about what happened in Oakbank after I left there. I was too embarrassed to tell anyone what had happened.

Records

- 134. I've approached Birthlink to get hold of a copy of my records in care. That was after I first contacted the Inquiry. They'd been told there's nothing in the records about me. They tried Oakbank and I think they tried social work and nothing can be found.

Lessons to be Learned

- 135. Children should get help to stay at home so they don't have to go into the kinds of places I went to. There needs to be more awareness of dyslexia and how to help children in school with it.

Hopes for the Inquiry

- 136. I heard about the Inquiry and what it was involving and I thought if I came forward to tell them about my part in it, maybe somebody else will come forward and tell the Inquiry about the same thing. It might help find the people who abused children and get them arrested for what they've done and I can get on with my life. Perpetrators are not getting away with so much now as they're not getting left alone with children like they used to

Other information

- 137. 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... *12/9/22*