

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ILG

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is ILG. My date of birth is 1948. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background

2. I graduated from Moray House College in 1970 with a diploma in Technical Subjects and began teaching with that qualification.
3. Subsequent to that, I obtained Postgraduate, a BA in Social Science. I completed the SCSSA (Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration) Moray House Headship Course. I have also completed the Postgraduate Certificate in SEN (Special Educational Needs) at Northern College.
4. Prior to working at Oakbank School, I was employed for eight years as a teacher by Midlothian County Council. For the first two years I had a 0.9 timetable there, the remaining 0.1 of my week I taught at a nearby Special Educational Needs (SEN) School.
5. At that time education was an elitist profession and I discovered that my promotion hopes were limited because I was a diplomate and not a graduate. I had become an

APT (Assistant Principal Teacher) of Guidance, but promotion prospects beyond that were limited.

6. In the seventies, following the Houghton pay deal a more open promotion structure became available in teaching. Up until then, there were Heads, Deputes, Principal Teachers and nobody else. They then introduced a structure of Head, Deputes, Assistant Heads and created a guidance structure which offered promotion chances. It was made clear to me that my chances of getting anywhere were limited because of my diploma status.
7. Inadvertently I had commenced teaching with a 0.1 SEN timetable. I actually enjoyed and had an aptitude for the work despite having entered it almost by accident. I was teaching in a new town, and there were a great many unhappy and often angry children shipped out to the new town from Glasgow and Edinburgh who didn't want to be there. Often they were quite difficult to work with. I developed an expertise in working both with them and with those children with SENs. My mentors suggested that I should get another qualification and consider a more specialist career.

#### **Posting at Oakbank Residential School, Aberdeen October 1978 – June 1997**

8. I moved to Oakbank School in October 1978.
9. The job of Technical Teacher was advertised in the Scotsman and the Press and Journal newspapers. I applied for the post and was successful.
10. My wife and I made the very conscious decision to uproot from where we were and move north as I wanted to specialise in, not only SEN, but also SEBD (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties).
11. Whilst working at Oakbank, I completed Post Grad course of study with the Open University. I graduated in 1983 with a BA degree.
12. Within two years of my graduation I was appointed to the post of SNR

13. Oakbank was an all-boys' school for children between the ages of 11 and 16 years. It was situated in the centre of west Aberdeen and was bounded by Midstocket Road, Oakhill Road, Woodstock Road and Cairnaquheen Gardens. It was the stockbroker belt of Aberdeen and people wondered why the school was placed there.
14. When it opened in 1878 Oakbank was a mile and a half outside the town and if you read the local press from the time, it said *"the good burghers of Aberdeen can sleep safe in their beds tonight because all the rogues, togues and vagabonds are safely incarcerated in Oakbank School which is built out with the city beyond the mile end mark"*. There is a district of Aberdeen now called Mile End. Midstocket Road and Kingsgate came together at Mile End and that wedge of land from Mile End westwards to what is now the city limits was formerly Oakbank lands. These lands encompassed hundreds of acres. As the city of Aberdeen grew they were sold off during the ensuing one hundred years or so for housing and development.
15. When I started at the school, it was situated in seven acres of grounds. The main building was constructed on a double cruciform structure. Behind which was the boiler house, the gymnasium and the old workshop block. The workshop block was subsequently converted into a swimming pool. I became involved in the delivery of that project. There was a modern (1960/70s) house unit and the technical block where my classroom was situated.

#### *Purpose of Oakbank School*

16. I had obtained an insight into the workings of List D schools before I went to Oakbank. When I was teaching in Midlothian one of my colleagues left us to go and teach at Dr Guthrie's School in Edinburgh, and being typical technical teachers, we helped him to establish his department. So, I had experience of what I thought was going to be at Oakbank, albeit the children at Dr Guthrie's were slightly younger than those that I went on to work with at Aberdeen.

17. The way that I viewed it, my purpose at Oakbank School was that I was going there to work with and educate a group of pupils who, for some reason or other, had fallen foul of either the law or the education system.
18. The pupils presented with a broad range of abilities from poor to good and in some cases very good.
19. What was most marked to me was whilst there was an air of bravado / toughness / couldn't care less amongst many of the boys, there was also a very much gentler / softer / almost innocent / naivety element to them in their behaviour. This became abundantly clear away from the formal classroom setting when I was on residential duty either in the evening or at the weekend.
20. At these times these boys in their early teens would enter into games of "Chasey"; "High Tig"; "Hide and Seek"; "Kick the Can", games that would normally be played by younger (primary aged) children.
21. It would appear that, for reasons out with their control, many of these boys had lost out on parts of their childhoods, and by engaging in these play type activities they were rediscovering / experiencing parts of these lost childhoods.
22. The benefit of providing these experiences was most felt in the workshop / classroom setting where I found that I was becoming "more trusted" by the boys.
23. On a similar theme to "building trust", many of these boys had endured bad experiences of dealing with adult male figures. Some came from abusive homes where the parents drank and were violent towards them, or, they suffered abuse at the hands of their mother's new partners, who didn't really care for the "charges" that the mother brought with her to the new relationship.
24. The fact that some of the boys were able to stand close to an adult male stranger and not fear intimidation was an achievement in itself.

25. It took time to build these relationships and one had to be cautious in developing one's teaching style.
26. Never to stand too close to, or over a pupil. Always approach from where you can be seen.
27. Factors such as these makes demonstrating workshop procedures with tools challenging.
28. Trust needs to be built up over time. Reassurances given. It takes time, often on a one to one basis.
29. Getting such children to attend daily classes was a great achievement, getting them to participate in lessons was often a victory for pupil and staff alike.
30. When I started at Oakbank, there were over a hundred pupils at the school. They were disenfranchised from the education system and unfortunately one of the downsides of List D education was pupils were becoming disenfranchised from their homes and their community. At that time pupils were sent "away from home", thus pupils could be sent from Aberdeen to the south, from Glasgow northwards and those from Edinburgh pupils could be sent west. It all seemed quite random to me.
31. The idea behind this was to take pupils away and give them a fresh start, but whilst you were giving them this fresh start and compensatory experiences, they were gaining that benefit, but losing family connections. It was a less than perfect system, but it was to be hoped that it was better than what they already had.
32. The general culture when I arrived at Oakbank was actually quite positive. There were no pupils running around either upset or distressed or claiming anything was wrong. It was definitely institutional, of that there was no question. The staff were very supportive, and it was an all-male establishment.

33. Some of the practices, like giving pupils cigarettes was irresponsible. It was designed to give the school some control over it. However when they chose to do it, they chose to give pupils raw tobacco to roll their own. The theory being, if you didn't roll your own, you didn't get a cigarette but that meant they were not getting any filter on the tobacco.

### Management Structure

34. SNR [redacted] was [redacted] whom we referred to as [redacted]. [redacted] was a really nice [redacted] and a very progressive type of [redacted]. GZG [redacted] who was SNR [redacted] SNR [redacted] and SNR [redacted], EJU [redacted] was the other SNR [redacted] and SNR [redacted] SNR [redacted]
35. [redacted] was always finding ways to improve things and [redacted] decided that the school would have a swimming pool. It was to be a self-build project harnessing the skills of the school staff. It was decided that we it would build by converting the former workshop block and dressing rooms and showers. The physical size of the pool was constrained by two main factors, Building Regulations and the physical size of the existing building.
36. When I started there in 1978, the school was still Crown property, so it had Crown immunity to do whatsoever it wanted. However, the school was unaware of this status and applied to the local authority for Planning Consent that was denied. Having applied for, and been denied, Planning Consent, the decision was binding and could not be appealed. Despite the setback the decision to progress the project was made. NB. The decision to decline Planning Permission specifically declined permission to widen a doorway to enable access of a mechanical excavator to the building. There was no objection to the actual concept of building the swimming pool.
37. The Instructors Team comprised a Builder, a Joiner, a Mechanic, a Heating Engineer, a Painter and Decorator and two Gardeners. As well as providing instruction to the boys the Team was charged with maintaining a seven-acre campus and, what was

then, a Victorian Category "B" Listed Building. The Team had a heavy workload, so it was not reasonable or practicable expect them to get involved in the swimming pool project on a full time basis it just wasn't feasible.

38. SNR [REDACTED] LIL [REDACTED] the P.E. teacher was the driving force behind swimming pool. He and I teamed up to work on it as a project with the boys safe in the knowledge that the Instructors Team were on hand to provide specialist support / advice / input as required. I was asked if I minded giving up the classroom to do this. I was quite happy to do it because, as far as I was concerned, I was helping to teach boys the technical aspects of the Construction process in a "real life" practical situation, which gave them ownership of the project.
39. Because of the local authority decision to decline Planning Permission to enable access for a mechanical excavator it took nearly four years for staff and pupils to manually excavate the site.
40. In one of the statements by a former pupil of which I have had sight reference is made to the "*digging out of the hole*" as being "*slave labour*".
41. For the avoidance of doubt I wish to clearly state that all pupils who participated on a voluntary basis.
42. Pupils opted into it, there was no compulsion at all. Everyone was a volunteer. Pupils had the choice to sit in a classroom or go outside help with the excavation and chill out. That became the working model. With a school population of 100 plus the number of pupils engaged on the excavation phase of the project at any one time rarely exceeded a dozen. This number rotated on a continuous basis as enthusiasm to be involved fluctuated.
43. It took sixty months to build the pool. It worked out that it cost a thousand pounds a month and when it was finished, it was valued at a quarter of a million pounds. There was no additional funding to assist with funding of the project. At that time, the school was still funded directly by Social Work Services Group (SWSG) based in Jeffrey

Street, Edinburgh. The core funding came from savings made to the school budget. This sum was supplemented by the energetic fundraising initiatives of the Oakbank School Staff. The staff created The Friends of Oakbank Association in order to raise funds. Initiatives included organising a "100 Club"; a Summer Fair; an Annual Sale of Plants and other Fund Raisers.

## **Children**

44. The decision to send children to Oakbank was down to either the Children's Panel or a Sheriff. An admission was normally a planned event on recommendation from the panel, but very occasionally an unplanned admission came directly from either a Children's Panel or the Court.
45. When children were recommended by the Panel to come to us, the papers were received and they were considered. There was a review team comprising of Frank Woods, the principal psychologist, Dr Jill Wilson, principal psychiatrist from Cornhill Young Peoples Unit, LIL [REDACTED] represented education and the other three social work seniors. They would decide whether it was appropriate or not for the child to be offered a place.
46. I was never party to the discussions, but I do know that not all applications for a child to come to Oakbank were successful. If they were successful, the child and his family were invited to come for a visit and got to see the premises as they were, including the bedrooms, classrooms, toilets and communal showering areas. I don't think anybody refused us.
47. At our weekly education staff meetings, LIL [REDACTED] would advise who had been offered a place and give background information about them, including their educational stage. The team would come back and confirm at the next meeting if the child was coming and what the start date would be.



48. When I started, you could roughly split the pupils that came to Oakbank into broad categories. In my opinion there were those children who were willing to engage with the school and benefit from the service we provided, then there were those children who were more difficult to engage with, but who could benefit from our service once they had become engaged, and finally there were those children who were very reluctant to become engaged in the school, and regarded their being placed at Oakbank as a punishment rather than a chance to restart or reset their lives.
49. Once the decision that a child was to come to us had been made, we had an ethos of positivity with all of them.

#### *Daily Routine*

50. The children lived in units that were called Scott, Kelvin and Lister Houses. There were no houses as such, the house was a grouping of people, much like a mainstream school house.
51. They slept in dormitories which were subdivided into cubicles. It was an advance on Victorian days so, instead of just three straight wings of the cruciform with sixty or seventy beds, there were areas partitioned off. Some cubicles had one bed in them, others had two or three and I think each wing had a partition area at the end with six beds. The more needy pupils, who were just scared or awkward boys, got the single bed areas. They were situated up near the night care officer's room which was located on the corner at the cross of the cruciform.
52. The boys had a bedside cabinet very few kept anything in it because they were not very secure. Very few of them had posters on the wall and it was very impersonal. There was no apparent distress at this. The pupils just accepted that was the way things were. The bedroom and house units in the main school would later be significantly upgraded.
53. After rising in the morning, the pupils downstairs to the washroom and communal shower area, which was Dickensian, but it was clean and well looked after. It had

Terrazzo (synthetic marble) floor and walls. It was a large room with rows and rows of stainless-steel wash hand basins. There were heated towel rails around the edge where each boy had his individually numbered towel.

54. The boys showered twice a day, once in the morning and once at night. For showering the boys lined up outside the shower room and about a dozen were allowed in at a time. The shower room had showers on three sides. There were also two individual showers where, perhaps at the weekends, individuals could go in and have a personal shower, when it was convenient.
55. Off from the shower area, was an archaic concrete toilet facility. Cubicles that you could walk into whilst people were on the toilet and a concrete urinal along the length of the wall. On completion of the swimming pool project a modern toilet block was constructed.
56. At bedtime the boys all came through, got undressed, put their socks and pants into the bins to be washed, folded their jeans and clothes and handed them in to the clothing store. The clothing was placed into a doocot or pigeonhole, with their shoes in a compartment below. In return the boys received their pyjamas and slippers, they then went for their night time shower and wash.
57. There was supervision in the shower area, but I had little experience of the morning routine as I only came in when it was time for school. I did get limited experience of their valet routine when I was on evening duty and at the weekends.
58. After washing in the morning, they went into what was originally called the play ward, historical phraseology based on the Naval Service, but was later renamed the Assembly Hall. There were no seats in there, the boys sat on box benches round the side. It had glass brick Victorian windows for the obvious reasons that, not everybody wanted to be there.
59. The boys were then lined up and went through for their breakfast. The food was always very good. Mrs LIY and Mrs Christie were the matron and deputy matron. They

were lovely ladies and all the boys referred to them as <sup>LIY</sup> [REDACTED] and 'Ma Christie' which was just a maternal thing.

60. After breakfast they returned to the play ward or went to the smoke room for the first of their six cigarettes of the day. Staff could smoke anywhere in the school apart from the classrooms, but eventually that was reduced to two designated smoking areas.
61. In the evening there was a TV room and a snooker room. That was the extent of their domestic leisure facilities. It was somewhat sparse. The leisure facilities were augmented by the use of the gymnasium and the outside sports facilities of 5 aside football pitches; a basketball court and a full size football pitch. When members of the education team were on residential duty at evenings and weekends classroom based activities, art, crafts, table games were also on offer.
62. At weekends, most boys got home leave whilst others had to stay for differing reasons. Some parents didn't want them home, others were not allowed leave due to misdemeanours, whilst some boys preferred to remain in school.
63. As a school we staged an annual show, where pupils and staff performed for the entertainment of the whole school. Pupils and staff also produced an annual magazine "The Oakbank Express".
64. In the early days, we had a place called Char Cottage up in the Feuchside Estate, beyond Banchory. Staff and boys would spend part of a week at the cottage undertaking outward bound activities, trekking, camping out overnight, developing survival skills. They would also undertake the upkeep and maintenance of the cottage.
65. With colleagues I took parties of pupils from Oakbank on west coast adventures on the islands. There was an Adventure Training Centre run by an ex-commando on the Isle of Luing and it was fantastic stuff. The boys undertook abseiling, rock climbing, confidence and trust / team building and water based activities. With colleagues I led a party of pupils who were doing Duke of Edinburgh Award to Austria to undertake their expedition there.

66. I think there were about fifteen hundred incidents of absconding during [REDACTED] as [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED].

### *Absconding*

67. The question often was, when does a child become an absconder? You're upset, you're angry, you run out the school, you disappear. Do I give you an hour in case you come back, and then report you as missing if you don't, or, do I report you as missing right away as you might go out and be run over by a bus? If you didn't report a child as missing right away, there might be questions raised as to why the child was not reported and why were the police not made aware. It was a very fine judgement call that had to be made, and it was down to knowing the individual child.
68. Some children got a fair distance and some even got home or back down to Edinburgh, Glasgow or Perth.
69. If children ran away from the school, it would depend on the circumstances as to who brought them back to the school. Depending on where they were apprehended, either the police or the local authority social worker would return them to school. We could go out to look for them and the easiest place to find them if they were going south was going over the Bridge of Dee because all roads south lead to there. We were allowed to take a vehicle and sit there and invite them to come and sit in the car if they had changed their mind about absconding.

## **My Time at Oakbank School**

*Technical Teacher – 1978 -1984*

### *Induction and Training*

70. Before going to Oakbank, I hadn't had any residential experience other than two very short stints. When I was a student, I had kept in touch with the school I myself had

attended and I had taken pupils from there trekking in the lake district. I looked after twenty pupils which I hadn't done before, but I had been in the Boy's Brigade and the Scouts, so I had been on camps and I had an idea of what I was getting into and doing.

71. After being told in 1973 that my career was going to stall, I built up my CV by being a staff member at Middleton Hall International Youth Camps for a fortnight in 1973.
72. When I went to Oakbank, I didn't get any formal induction or training about residential care.
73. The structure there was that there was a head, the deposes and the senior assistants. EJP was one of the senior assistants and he was my team leader. He was a lovely, very gentle man and he did induct me in the ways that the residential component of Oakbank operated.
74. It was just a case of him saying to me that I was there as part of the team and, if I felt unsafe or insecure, I was to go and see him immediately. If I saw anything brewing, if I thought I could handle it, I was to deal with it, but if I didn't think I could handle it, I wasn't to go anywhere near it and I was to go and get him. I was told it was okay to go in and tell a boy not to do that, or tell them to 'behave yourself and away you go'. If the tariff was going up, I was to get somebody else to come and help me.
75. There was no formal restraint training but Mr EJP explained a restraint method that I was to use if I couldn't get anybody else to help and had to deal with a situation myself. The restraint method was like a rugby smother tackle from behind. Your own safety was the first priority as an angry boy could try and kick you with the back of their heel and they could head butt you by swinging their heads backwards, so we were to make sure we had ourselves organised. However, before any restraint happened, it was a case of talking and reassuring. There was nothing illogical about it. This was a practice, not a policy and I never saw anything written down.
76. As for an induction or any special training for the teaching side at Oakbank, LIL was only the Senior Assistant on the education side. He was effectively my line

manager, LIL couldn't really tell me about my own subject and where my department was situated as it was away from the rest of the school, so I was basically left to get on with it.

77. The education system was two tier. It was classroom based and workshop based. That was one of the things that attracted me to the job in the first place. Even although I was going to be classroom based, being a technical teacher, I was going to be working in partnership with tradesmen.
78. Prior to ROSLA, which was the 'Raising Of School Leaving Age' from 15 to 16 years old in 1972, there was a scheme available where pupils that weren't fitting into mainstream, could leave school and go to technical college and do a pre-apprenticeship course. That way, local tradesmen could go into the college and find a person to become an apprentice for them.
79. When I first started at Oakbank, the department I inherited was in a nice new block, but it was quite poorly equipped. My predecessor had been an elderly man who had endured ill health before finally retiring. When the workshop had moved from the old granite block, they had taken everything lock, stock and barrel with them so there was very little new modern equipment in the place at all.
80. One of the things that I asked for, and got, was new machinery to get the place up and running. It was great and the pupils were really keen to get on board with me. Two of the pupils had been pupils of mine at ██████████ High School, so I got a good PR from them.
81. As a workshop we were, at that time, governed by The Factories Act which dictated Health and Safety procedures so accordingly we had a quite strict safety / discipline policy. I never had any problems as I explained why we needed this discipline for safety reasons and the great majority of pupils all understood and adhered to it.

82. My other responsibility was to work one night a week from 5:00 pm to 10:00 pm and one weekend in every four on residential duty which was part of a contractual obligation for all teachers.
83. On weekend duty, there were usually five or six members of staff in the team and your duty period could run from 8:00 am on the Saturday morning until 10:00 pm on the Sunday night depending on the number of boys in for the weekend. The actual hours you were asked to work was dependent upon the programme of activities devised for a particular weekend. If there were fewer boys getting leave, you may have to be amenable and agreeable to come in and supplement another team.
84. When I was on duty, I never had to sleepover. There was no requirement because SNR SNR house was physically attached to the school, so SNR and then SNR replacement, HMY were the ones night staff would go to.
85. SNR lived in and loved that place. Every night SNR would go through after the staff had left and make sure everything was orderly and everybody was calm. If anything was up or suspect, SNR was on the case. SNR was an excellent SNR SNR was never in SNR bed before midnight.
86. Until I was promoted, I was just a regular member of the duty team. When I started residential evening duty through the week it was at teatime, 5.00pm. With others on the team I would take the pupils through from the hall to the dining room and sit and supervise them. I could have my tea if I wanted it but that depended on the tone of the place. With there being up to a hundred plus pupils not everyone got on with everyone else all of the time. Sometimes there was an undercurrent so you had to keep your eye on them in order to prevent things happening instead of dealing with them after they happened.
87. At that time, I was a sportsman so I was invariably asked to take the boys outside to play football, go to the gym or do other physical activities. That was considered appropriate as you wanted them to settle down at night, you wanted to tire them out. In addition, if I took twenty-two kids out to play football, the ratio of staff to boys was

usually one to ten so that lightened the load and freed other staff up to get other work done. It let the others occupy the remaining children and let the team leaders get the chance to have some quiet time to sit and chat one to one with a child away from a classroom or social work office setting.

88. There was no real oversight or performance reviews of my role by LIL [REDACTED] or anybody else, but I occasionally met with [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] for an informal conversation in the evening.

*Senior Assistant 1984 -1985*

89. I became a senior assistant in 1984 but I can't say exactly when. My responsibility then became supporting the workshops. Until then, there had been no support for them. Sometime between me becoming a senior assistant and being promoted [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] I linked in with SCOTVEC (Scottish Vocational Education Council) who were based in Edinburgh and found out what certification they offered and how we could put it together. It turned out to be very simple.
90. We decided to offer SCOTVEC courses in Joinery, Building, Painting and Decorating and Health and Safety. Each subject had many levels of competency. We decided to offer the first two levels of basic competency in each subject. Each course comprised up to eight criteria which had to be met.
91. It didn't quite get off the ground immediately as there was a bit of initial reluctance from the Instructors The instructors were all exceptionally skilled tradesmen, and they all had a good manner of working with boys, but they were not all conversant with putting what they knew into the format that SCOTVEC wanted. Both parties wanted the same outcome but the Instructors did it one way and SCOTVEC wanted it presented in another format. It became my task to develop the packages and put "SCOTVEC speak" into "Instructor speak". Thereafter the courses ran very successfully for several years.



92. As SNR [REDACTED] I had autonomy to develop the education provision as long as it accorded with SNR [REDACTED] HMY [REDACTED]. My relationship with the SNR [REDACTED] was professional. There was nothing personal, or social-about our relationship.
93. When I was SNR [REDACTED] we did have policies for education we adhered to the Scottish government policies, as they evolved SCOTVEC, SEB, SQA, How Good Is Our School, Higher Still.
94. Once I became SNR [REDACTED] my first initiative was to develop the SCOTVEC programme.
95. Whilst I was SNR [REDACTED] we became co-educational and started taking girls into the school. I can't remember the exact date, but it was probably three or four years before I left in 199 [REDACTED]. It was a master plan of SNR [REDACTED] to address the falling number of male pupils coming to the school.
96. It was originally a disaster, but eventually it became a success. The teachers teaching team were already prepared to go co-ed, we were all capable of teaching boys and girls, that having been part of our teacher training. The implementation of introducing girls to the school was not achieved without great difficulty. I do not believe that it had been well thought through.
97. The Oakhill House Unit was located in the school grounds separate from the main school building. The Oakhill building comprised provision for up to thirty boys in bedrooms ranging from single occupancy through pairs up to a five bedded room. There were two shower / toilet suites each used by up to fifteen boys.
98. At first there was only one girl who came as a resident, One of these washroom and shower suites was then given over for her exclusive use the other being used for the

remaining twenty-nine boys. This was but one example of the poor planning of what was a quite complex initiative.

99. The girl, [REDACTED] was a former pupil of Rossie Farm School, Montrose, and her coming to Oakbank was part of a release programme. This was an example of how certain things weren't fully consulted. On hearing that a single girl was being admitted, I advised against it. At that point in time I did not believe that the school was sufficiently well equipped to cope with a dual gender population. SNR [REDACTED] was adamant that she was coming, and that we had to cope with her. We coped with her reasonably well, even though, on umpteen occasions she found times not to come to school for different reasons.
100. The girl had a chaotic family background and only had her mother who I believe was addicted to either drink or drugs. She trashed her room, and she was just a very unhappy, unsettled girl with complex needs. She couldn't cope with being the only girl. Her position was never considered. It was seen by SNR [REDACTED] as a first step. He decided we would bring her in and prove it can work. He told us, if we had any objections or concerns, then we were to find a way to solve them, because it was going to happen.
101. The venture of going co-educational did eventually work, once we had a group of six girls. We didn't have a single class of six girls, but we integrated them into the classes with the boys.
102. We graduated to bigger numbers of girls and the disparity between the units began to decrease. Once there were more girls in school it was fine.
103. The co-education worked well eventually, but the way it was conceived and executed initially was of massive concern to me.

## Strategic Planning

104. I was involved in developing a strategy SNR [REDACTED] HMY [REDACTED] was an autocratic SNR [REDACTED]. It was very much that things were to be done his way. He was very, very concerned that Oakbank was the Dickensian model of social care and he was quite right. He went over the top in his efforts to address these issues.
105. In terms of being involved in the strategy that he wanted to make the place more attractive and conducive for learning, then yes, I was involved with that. Anything to do with the money or spending though, I had nothing to with that.
106. As the mixture of needy pupils became more concentrated there was a need for more support. I thought we needed more support in the classrooms, but SNR [REDACTED] was determined to get more Care Staff in on the social work / care side. He wanted that staff group enriched and wanted a ratio of one staff to six pupils I think it was.
107. We then had a stand-off. SNR [REDACTED] wanted six extra care staff and I wanted three staff to be support staff in the classroom, because currently I was providing that support and I was the most highly paid Support Worker in the country. I was quite happy to do it, but if I was doing that, I wasn't, fulfilling my SNR [REDACTED] role as SNR [REDACTED]. So there was a disparity to it.
108. We came to a compromise in our strategic planning in that, I would support his application to the board to get more money for care staff, but I was to get use of their services on the classroom floor every day.
109. Care Staff were required in the classroom area to provide additional support, to anticipate and prevent disruption, because if the pupils knew that Support Staff were there, they were less likely to be disruptive. You can't predict what was going to happen as some pupils came in with the intent of disrupting, whilst others may have reacted to something happening in class.

110. This deployment wasn't popular with the care staff because there was no facility for them to work from. In the first instance they operated from a store cupboard in the corridor with no windows. Understandably it was the ignominy of being housed in a windowless cupboard that was upsetting. Care staff expressed concern that they were up in the classroom area and nothing was happening, but they failed to realise that it was their presence there was why nothing was happening. The issue of a suitable base from which the Care Staff could work was resolved over the summer holiday break when a doorway into a room in the adjoining wing of the school was created to provide an acceptable facility.
111. I drafted the [REDACTED] strategic plan and as part of that, I created a promoted structure led by me. It comprised an [REDACTED] and two PTs (Principal Teachers) and they became the [REDACTED] team. It was great because they were in the classroom every day and covered when I was engaged on other duties and when I went up to Shetland once a month. [REDACTED] SNR was [REDACTED] who became [REDACTED] and later became [REDACTED] SNR. Jenny Sherret was the Home Economics teacher, [REDACTED], who later became Mrs [REDACTED] was the Science teacher and Alan Hardie was the Instructor who retrained as an FE (Further Education) teacher.
112. We used to meet regularly as a team and work out what we wanted to do strategically:- the curriculum, consider class group compositions.

### **External Monitoring**

113. We were inspected by HMIE shortly after I was made [REDACTED] SNR. An HMIE team, led by Chief Inspector Alex Finlayson, was in charge and his colleague John McAlpine also came to inspect us. John McAlpine was a List D School specialist. The inspection revealed a number of strengths and a number of weaknesses, the main concern being that we were not realising the real potential of the pupils.

114. Up until that point in time if a child arrived with a live educational folio in any subject we completed it with them. By arrangement the child was then presented for examination back through the school that had sent them that child having been retained on that schools presentation list.
115. During feedback sessions both Messrs Finlayson and McAlpine helped formulate the basis of what was to become the Oakbank Strategic Educational Development Plan. Initially to consolidate the good work that was already being done, specifically in the workshops by investing in the SCOTVEC programme.
116. Thereafter to expand the classroom subject provision and presentation base. Ordinary "O" Grades, had / were morphing into Standard "S" Grades. Certification has changed / was changing from the straight pass / fail of yesteryear to the more progressive system of grades ranging from A to F. There was no longer a case for the existence of the "non certificate" pupil.
117. The school had to raise its expectation of pupil success from that of simply being able to cope with life when leaving Oakbank, to one of having positive aspirations and being equipped to achieve them.
118. There wasn't another HMIE inspection again until <sup>HMV</sup> [REDACTED] was removed in 199[REDACTED].
119. The care provision was checked more frequently than was the education side. This was because there were two different inspection bodies, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and: And the Care Inspectorate I can't recall what it was called at that time. Care and Education inspections never took place at the same time.
120. When the inspectors did come, we were told beforehand as it was announced they were coming. We didn't have to get anything ready as we were ready as we were.

## Personal Influence

121. When I was a teacher at Oakbank, in terms of being a professional teacher, we acquitted ourselves no differently from a mainstream school. However, we were more tolerant of misbehaviour, lack of co-operation or reluctance or resistance to come into a classroom. We devised strategies around that, that wouldn't be tolerated in mainstream education.
122. Mr ILE in his statement, describes my colleague Jimmy Ross as somebody he told he wouldn't do Maths, but he would play chess with him. Jim was a very skilled and accomplished teacher and by playing chess with Mr ILE would have had him doing English and Maths without him even being aware of it, but Mr ILE would be doing it on his terms. That wouldn't happen in mainstream so there was that degree of interpretive flexibility.
123. Whilst I was at Oakbank as a teacher, as part of my own professional commitment, I attended meetings and conferences at the weekends, either at Strathclyde University or Moray House to keep up to speed with developments in education. That was part of my strategy to become a successful teacher. I was aware of these requirements in respect of the policies, and these were the things that we worked at when I was at Oakbank. There had been a plethora of Reports impacting on the education sector.
124. One of the consequences of List "D" schools being cast aside by, successive governments (first of Thatcher and then Blair, in his inclusion document), was that we needed to become compliant with national regulations in relation to Health and Safety and things. That had moved on from when we had crown immunity, without realising it.
125. What I wanted to do, and succeeded in doing, was getting Oakbank School established as an SEB / SQA centre in its own right. We had our own Centre Identity Number. We expanded the curriculum and presented an increased range of subjects English, Arithmetic, AP&H (Anatomy, Physiology and Health), Art, Home Economics, Social and Vocational Skills, Conversational French and Woodwork. Our pupils were

getting more passes or improved bandings. That was considerably more than they had gotten before and proof that they had gone through the education system, could cope with it and were familiar with it. That was the big goal.

126. My teaching team were excellent, I had recruited a fantastic group of players, but the instructors weren't qualified to teach, they were tradesmen. One of the things that was considered necessary was to enable them to become qualified.
127. To be a teacher in Scotland you had to have passed Higher English and historically, you had to have a diploma or better. However, there was a qualification called the Further Education Teacher's Certificate. It enabled people with trades qualifications to teach to college level.
128. I had to explain to the Instructors that we were going to have to get them trained and overcome any reservations reluctance that they may have had. We ended up devising a system where we got these staff members trained at virtually no cost, as no additional funding was forthcoming. The school had to absorb any costs from within existing budgets.
129. By the time we were able to send the instructors on this course, Aberdeen and Edinburgh had stopped offering it, but Glasgow hadn't. Over the course of three years, one by one the instructors went down to Glasgow for a one week block and then undertook distance learning before going back down the following term. For this process to succeed required a collegiate approach from the staff, and I went back into the classroom to cover for the instructors when they were away.
130. Over a period of three years, we got a number of the instructors, <sup>EJW</sup> Alan Hardie and Alan Rae all qualified as further education teachers. An additional incentive for them to complete the qualification being that they got an increase in salary. Only one instructor, <sup>EJV</sup> didn't want to do it and he transferred over to the Care Team.

131. It was a pleasure to achieve the involvement with SCOTVEC, SEB and get the Instructors qualified and see it all working to the benefit of the boys and the school.
132. The then (Thatcher) government decided that they would still fund List D schools, but instead of funding schools directly as hitherto, they paid the local authorities and said that the local authorities were then responsible for paying their own bills to fund children they were sending to the schools. The money wasn't ring fenced, so each council then had to make choices as to how the money was best spent and that was the death knell for a number of schools, as many councils opted not to use the List D service.
133. With the closure of schools across the country we had an influx of really needy pupils from further afield than hitherto. I ended up being the liaison officer for the Shetlands.
134. Over time the impact of the change of the funding model resulted in a net outflow of pupils because we were affected by it as some local authorities just stopped using the school.
135. As numbers were diminishing there was a market for getting day pupils in. I was responsible for creating that service. The children came from Aberdeen city.
136. The Head and the Board dealt with the fiscal arrangements and arranged whatever fees were going to be charged.
137. My role was to work with Jim Banks, the Principal Psychologist for Aberdeen City. Names of pupils would be put forward for coming to us and if they were deemed suitable, they would then be enrolled. There were up to ten day pupils at any time. They were picked up by us daily using the school minibus, which would be out and about picking up other residents who had been home on overnight stays for part of their pre-discharge schedule.
138. The day pupils mixed in the classes and workshops, but they didn't mix socially. They were given their own base where they could take their breaks and have lunch. The



reason for that was, it was felt it would be an intrusion on the residential children having strangers coming into their living areas.

139. During my period <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] there were a lot of changes made to the building. I wasn't responsible for it happening, but I was involved in a lot of the design, creation and delivery of these facilities. My initial subject was engineering drawing and draughtsmanship and I have an eye for these things, so was heavily involved in the renovations. All the units were massively upgraded, the assembly hall was reduced in size, and the TV and snooker rooms were turned into nice lounges.
140. As <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED], I never had any control over the residential side of things.
141. Something else that I feel I heavily influenced was, changing the perception of the police in the eyes of the young people at Oakbank.
142. I had been on a STEP Schools Traffic Education Programme teaching pupils how to ride motorcycles and I got a Police Traffic Officer to bring his BMW (super) motorbike to the school. He impressed the boys with his skills.
143. At the school we had a really good football pitch that I arranged to get the local police to play their home football matches on it.
144. We didn't tell the pupils who was going to be playing on the pitch, just that there was going to be a match getting played that they could go out and watch. The police team did not disclose their identity, simply calling themselves Grampian. Some of these guys arrived on their big Harley Davidson motorbikes wearing their leather jackets and informal garb and later let the boys sit on their bikes.
145. The inspector who was running the team at the time, went to his car after the game and put his tunic and police hat on. The boys were astonished when they realised that they had been supporting a team of guys, who had let them sit on their bikes and

seemed like just ordinary guys, were actually the police. We arranged for the officer who had brought his bike a few years before to come back and see the boys again.

146. I feel this step was instrumental in changing some of the children's perception of who the police were, I genuinely believe that was a tremendous thing for the pupils as there were many who actually respected the police but were scared to do so in front of their peers. "Pigs" was the phrase for the police at the time but that one instance of getting them playing football at the school and what they did by letting the boys on their bikes after, made a real difference as to how the boys then viewed the police and some attitudes changed.
147. This accidental strategy changed their perception. You had to take opportunities as they arose. You could have a plan to go one place, but if there was a chance to take something up as a bonus point, you took it and that was one of the examples.

#### **Recruitment / Training / Supervision of Staff**

148. As SNR [REDACTED], I had [REDACTED] for recruiting [REDACTED] staff. We advertised in the Scotsman and the Press and Journal newspapers.
149. We were however shifting sands and I couldn't always guarantee a full-time permanent position, so supply teachers were often engaged on short term contracts. The benefit of supply was you could see how they individuals coped in this specialist setting. When you got a good one, they would then get kept on. This was the model we applied.
150. One thing SNR [REDACTED] and I both agreed on was, appointing dual gender staff. I was recruiting female teachers, and he was wanting female staff in to get rid of the historical "men only" mantra mentality that residually was still in evidence.
151. The other thing that I did was that I knowingly employed a couple of gay teachers. They were perfectly nice men, and the boys were okay with them as they were openly

gay, and it was fine. In terms of working with boys they got the best out of them, and the boys related to them. We went from being a very closed to a very diverse staff.

152. There would be an interview and reference process. If there was anything of interest or concern in the written references, we would take it up with the referee. I was happy with every decision that had to go to the board other than two. I disagreed with them but I was told that's fine you can disagree, but that is what's happening.
153. Once staff were recruited, they were not given a formal induction or handed sets of paper. They spent time with me, I explained the procedures and protocols to them and, for the main part, it worked.
154. What made the job more attractive was that I had negotiated with SNR to do away with the requirement for new teaching staff having to sign up to residential duty working one night a week and one weekend in four. They could do it if they wanted to, but unlike it had been before, there was no contractual agreement or requirement to do it.
155. By freeing up the overtime payments from that source SNR was able to recruit the Care staff he wanted to populate the social work side of the school.
156. Supervision of staff was constant and on-going. I am not going to say it was continual assessment, but I was never far away from the classrooms and when things happened, we found out, we came back, we had feedback and discussed what happened, asked ourselves how did it happen and how we make sure it doesn't happen again. In terms of keeping profiles, written appraisals or role reviews, we never did them. The fact that we had the recruitment method of trial and error first made it quite easy.
157. When HMY first arrived at the school, he was shocked at the recruitment system so he and Frank Woods, our principal psychologist, got an Open University training package and did the full kit and caboodle. When next recruiting a member of the teaching team we had half a dozen applicants. We had half a dozen folk in that. They went through the whole procedure, role play, speech play and it took days.

158. We recruited a man who had recently become available from another school in Scotland who had taken kids in covered wagon trains across America and he had done everything. He arrived, did all his welcome process and we put him in his classroom with his first set of kids, which was a junior set. There was screaming and bawling within twenty minutes and the social worker on the floor had to go in, take the upset kid out and sort them out.
159. We decided at lunchtime that as a lot of things had happened, he should go home and have a rest and come back the next day, now that he knew what he was dealing with. He had assured us that having done the trek across America, nothing was beyond him. The next morning, he came in and the same thing happened again. He came down the staircase in the middle of the school to where I was standing. He dropped his keys into my hand and said, "Don't bother with the salary" and he walked out the door. He had passed every single recruitment process, but he didn't have the nous.
160. I only say this to show that the method I employed to recruit, though less structured interviewing, worked and I never had anybody who had to leave, certainly not within twenty-four hours of starting.

*Upgrade and Improvements of Accommodation in Main School*

161. Earlier, I described the living conditions in the main school I encountered when I arrived at Oakbank.
162. I did not distinguish between the Main School and the Simpson / Watson House units in the grounds where the facilities were more akin to a domestic setting. Lounge / Dining / Leisure areas – bedrooms with own furniture and storage for possessions / individual shower cubicles. Latterly Simpson / Watson houses were later merged and renamed Oakhill.
163. Phase one of a major refurbishment saw the main school lounge accommodation raised to a comparable standard than those in Oakhill. The three House units (Kelvin, Lister & Scott) were merged into two and renamed Ashgrove and Rosemount.

164. This entailed the creation of separate Dining / Lounge / Social areas for each House by the conversion of the TV and snooker rooms and the reduction of the assembly hall (formerly the play ward). This work was undertaken "in house" by the workshop team of instructors. The glass brick and metal framed windows were removed and upgraded to modern double glazed window units. The glazing work was undertaken by contractors.
165. The practice of the whole school processing through to the dining room for meals was dispensed with. All meals were still prepared in the school kitchens but were delivered to each house unit where they were taken in a more informal domestic style setting.
166. Phase two of major refurbishment saw the replacement of the institutional dormitory cubicles with individual mainly twin bedded bedrooms. This work was undertaken by contractors.
167. Each bedroom was designed and finished to a high standard of comfort whereby pupils their own possessions and decorate their rooms to their own specific taste. Each room had a small coloured TV, this resulted in the upstairs TV room becoming redundant and converted into office space.
168. Phase three of major refurbishment resulted in the replacement of the ground floor toilet block (refurbished post the swimming pool project) with a modern suite of unisex toilet facilities comprising individual toilet and hand wash amenities, suitable for dual gender use. This work was undertaken by the in house workshop team of instructors.

### **Discipline and punishment**

169. There was no written policy on how discipline was managed at Oakbank. We had a practice as opposed to a policy. That was the way it was in these days and I think that addressing that issue will be a big thing that comes out in the Inquiry report.

170. The ethos of the school was to involve the pupils for the pupil's benefit, whether it was for education or whether it was the care side.
171. We had a unique system at Oakbank, called 'Boys Hearings' where the boys were given ownership of disciplining themselves for minor demeanors such as not coming back from leave, misdemeanours in classrooms or workshop or other similar incidents. Where children transgressed, it was dealt with at the weekly 'Boys Hearing'.
172. At this Hearing, each of the five units Scott, Kelvin, Lister, Simpson and Watson had a rep and they formed the equivalent of a jury of the boys peers. They sat under the guidance of Mr EJP with the Care staff and LIL LIL continued this even when I was SNR because he had been doing it for years. There was no point in changing that. The case would be presented detailing what a boy had done and the boy would then put his case the boys would decide on and recommend a punishment. It was nothing draconian, but it got them involvement and gave them ownership. The recommended sanction would then be heard at an appeals' hearing with and EJP EJP on a Thursday night.
173. The boys in question would attend, it wouldn't just be a case of this is what is happening, it was a counselling session, it was entirely therapeutic, and it could take hours. There was nothing rushed. Some pupils might not even have been seen yet by the time others were going to their beds. The whole thing was supportive. If a sanction was being invoked, the child had to understand how or why. Sometimes they refused it. I'm not saying it was all sweetness and light, but the idea was that for every action, there is an equalling opposite reaction, like the first law of physics. It was that sort of mentality.
174. It depended on severity of what a boy had done as to whether it was the staff or boys who were responsible for deciding the sanction. Examples of what would be dealt with by staff would be physical assaults, bullying, solvent abuse and magic mushrooms being brought in and used.
175. As far as I am aware, children were never kept in confinement as a punishment.

176. Corporal Punishment was applied in the board room and only by SNR [REDACTED]. No other staff, including myself, had corporal punishment at our disposal. We had no authority to lay hands on the children, other than in a supporting, guidance or a restraint situation. I only ever witnessed one incident of corporal punishment, when two boys were belted on the buttocks.
177. If a sanction or punishment was imposed on a boy, it would be logged in their file and in the unit log.

### **Restraint**

178. When HMY [REDACTED] became SNR [REDACTED] he had come from a very social work background in England and he put a number of practices and policies in place. He made sure that if you were getting into a restraint situation, you had to have at least one other person with you. That person should be calmly talking and reassuring the child and if possible, there should be a third party there who is capable of taking notes.
179. The school had TINTON carpeting which is like a rough weaving, so somebody should be there to put something under their heads as some boys deliberately marked their faces on the carpet to try and get staff into trouble, by alleging an injury had been caused during the restraint.
180. The Restraint Policy was a very detailed written policy and staff were given in-house training and demonstrations on how to do restraint by experts who were brought in.
181. The only type of restraint that we were encouraged to use, and I ever used, was the smother tackle. If you had to put the child onto the floor, you did it safely and you would hold them in such a position that you could limit their movements so they couldn't damage themselves. Sometimes when a pupil didn't respond positively to being restrained it was necessary to apply appropriate but proportionate energy until the pupil responded positively. Throughout you were trying to talk them through and make sure they were responsive and under control. Ideally it was a case of release the

restraint as quickly as you could safely do so because it is as unpleasant for the individual having to apply the restraint as it is for the child. It is a very unpleasant experience.

182. When a restraint did happen, the incident was recorded in the House unit log. There was a threshold for recording, and it would get recorded if you had to restrain somebody and put them on the floor as they were unlikely to go down onto the floor themselves without a struggle. Hugging somebody and telling them "not to be daft" rarely got recorded.
183. When I was a senior and worked weekends, there was a separate weekend log kept. That was my record and after the weekend, if there had been a restraint or any other incident, it may not have been recorded in the unit log by the staff that you were on with at the time, not deliberately, but in error. My log was handed to the incoming care team on a Monday morning. There was a get together with the team leaders, each would bring their unit logs in and everything was cross referenced.

### **Problems at Oakbank School**

184. I have never heard of Oakbank School being the subject of any concerns whilst I was there. Having seen the statements that were sent to me, it would appear that I must have been going about with my eyes shut. What Mr **ILE** and Mr **KNR** have made out in their statements, was not the place I worked at.
185. If there had been something wrong, I am a whistle blower, I would have been in and would've had it sorted. I became a teacher to work with children. Sexual and or physical abuse is wrong, and the people who perpetrate it cannot be tolerated in the profession. The idea of going around and slapping children is just not right. If it happened, it must have happened when I was not present.
186. I had no concerns about anything that went on in the school. I thought giving children cigarettes was irresponsible, but other than that, there was nothing. It was a place that



was providing compensatory experiences and there was nothing untoward with any of these experiences.

### **Child Protection Arrangements**

187. Staff were not given any specific instruction or guidance on child protection arrangements. If you had any concerns about the conduct of the way a child was treated, we talked about it at our regular staff meetings. Any issues concerning a child's behaviour or wellbeing were discussed.
188. A basic part of the initial professional training for all teachers is being made aware of the pastoral duty of care to all pupils, coupled with the responsibility of being alert to issues of child welfare and to recognise and report any issues of concern.
189. We watched out for potential welfare issues. Whether it was a boy being bullied, coming back to school dirty and unkempt, or coming back from home leave with bruises on him, we would all know to look out for that.
190. Within the school itself, we considered the school to be pristine. The children's welfare was at the heart of everything we were doing. There is no point in teaching a child who is not happy as he or she will not take it in.
191. We had an unwritten practice amongst ourselves which was, if a teacher / instructor was experiencing difficulties with a child, we looked for common denominators causes of these difficulties:- what class they had just come from; the class they were going on to; Was it a subject issue? Was it a personnel issue? Did issues arise at distinct times of the day? Was there a discernible pattern? Were there factors out with the classroom / workshop? Once a potential cause was identified, with the child it could be addressed and hopefully remedied.
192. Your job as a teacher was to receive the class in good order and then hand it on to the next class still in good order, so that the next teacher wasn't inheriting an issue

arising from your class. That was the mantra that we operated to. It was a case of do not cause upset to the children or, if you do cause upset, then share that with colleagues and the support staff.

193. We were always being proactive because why would you make your job harder. It's not rocket science.
194. There was no written guidance from senior members of staff as to what, how and in what timescales colleagues were expected to report any concerns about the welfare or treatment of a child. Quite simply, nothing like that was in existence. It was all down to common sense. The staff meetings were the vehicle for exchange of information.
195. I was never approached, and I never approached anybody to say I thought something was untoward. That may be a deficit on my part for not having put that procedure into place but quite frankly, it never occurred to me to formalise a procedure.

#### **Reporting of Complaints / Concerns**

196. There was nothing written down with guidance about what to do if a child raised a complaint either about another child, or about a staff member or made a disclosure about something that had happened when they were on home leave.
197. If a staff member was told a confidence by or about a child, they should either share it with me or if they thought it was too sensitive for me, they should share it with the child's key worker. In each House unit there was the team leader and there were individual key workers who were directly responsible for the kids. The reverse of that was that sometimes the key worker would come and tell you there had been something of concern to be aware of so there was a communication network going on. Some key workers were better than others.
198. I never had any child come to me and make a disclosure and I can't recall any staff member coming to me with a disclosure they had received. If someone had come to

report it, I would have gone to the key worker and if it was ultra serious, I would have gone to <sup>SNR</sup> but I can never recall having to do that.

## **Abuse**

199. There was no definition of abuse as it applied to children at Oakbank.
200. I wasn't involved in any policy or strategic planning for any potential abuse, but we did plan for disruption whilst they were in the care of the education department.
201. Abuse was talked about obliquely, in the context that a member of staff left Oakbank to work with the social work department and was subsequently convicted of child abuse. It concerned a man called Sam McBrearty who was convicted of child abuse from when he had worked at Quarriers Children's Home, prior to coming to Oakbank. I have no idea what kind of abuse it was that he was convicted of. To the best of my recall, three young ladies made a complaint against him, and I have no idea of what, why, where or when.
202. Oakbank had trained Mr McBrearty and put him through his CQSW (Certificate of Qualification in Social Work). He repaid his indebtedness to Oakbank by coming back and working there for four years. He then took up his post with Grampian Regional Council Social Work Department then, out of the blue we heard that he had been convicted.
203. Mr McBrearty had stayed in a house that was attached to one of the units.
204. There was a definite discussion around that time about whether Mr McBrearty had perpetrated any abuse while he was employed at Oakbank. There was a thorough check carried out by the care team. I was not part of this process. I was told there were thorough enquiries, and that Oakbank had been checked out and nothing untoward was found. I never had sight of any report to that effect. I was given that information anecdotally.

205. I never saw any behaviour at Oakbank that I would class as abusive.
206. In the main the Care team were recruited as unqualified and inexperienced people. Some had worked as Residential Care Officers in other places, but others came in cold. Training was provided "on the job". Occasionally an individual got a bit overwhelmed, they were a bit spooked. Nobody in my opinion did anything untoward, but given advance training and with some experience they may have been better equipped to better handle certain situations. That is not me glossing over somebody assaulting anybody or doing anything wrong but saying that they learned by experience on the job.
207. There were some unusual appointments to the care side. A lovely wee guy, George Mackenzie who was appointed I am told, on the basis that he had managed and operated the swimming pool at Aberdeen University and we needed someone to run our swimming pool at Oakbank. He became a member of the care team, but that was just an expedient use of resources. Fortunately he had an excellent rapport with the pupils.
208. Whilst I was <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] I never had any complaints made to me by anybody about staff, children or anybody else.
209. I was not aware of any complaints that were made to the Care side that they had to deal with.

### **Record Keeping**

210. Every child had an individual education file. Yellow coloured for males and green for females. These files were standard Scottish Office issue and accompanied children from their sending school. We maintained that education record throughout their tenure at Oakbank. There were Care records kept which I could access at any time. There was nothing to stop individual teachers going round and asking to look at a particular child's file. Some things like, falling out with family, or being involved in crime

when they were on home leave, didn't always get fed back to the classrooms. If a teacher had a child that wasn't responding in class in the usual way, they could go to the care team and check the file to see if there was a reason why.

### **Investigations into Abuse**

211. In my first summer as SNR [REDACTED] an incident arose which resulted in me being investigated after a pupil alleged that I assaulted him.
212. His allegation was made to his Social Worker who escalated it through the Social Work Department Management Structure.
213. The Social Work Department in turn raised the matter with the School.
214. In the interests of openness and accountability the School immediately reported the allegation to the Police, and I was subsequently arrested and charged.
215. Because of the seriousness of the allegation the matter was referred to the Police Internal Affairs Department. It is this department who investigate complaints against Police Officers.
216. As part of the investigation I was thoroughly interrogated by the Internal affairs Team. Staff and pupils who had been present were also interviewed, and a report was submitted to the Procurator Fiscal.
217. The process took a number of weeks, and resulted in me being exonerated.
218. I subsequently received a letter from the Procurator Fiscal Service for Aberdeen stating that there was no case to answer.

219. During the whole period, from the time of the alleged assault to me receiving the letter from the Procurator Fiscal, I continued to work in my role SNR I fully expected to be suspended, but the only person who could have taken my place would have been SNR SNR told me that he had full confidence in me and I was to carry on as if nothing had happened.

### **Investigations / Civil Claims**

220. I was never involved in investigating any other members of staff for abuse or ill treatment of children.

221. The only other investigation at Oakbank of which I am aware of occurred after I left, and SNR had been appointed SNR Andrew Porter, a PE Teacher whom I had appointed, was dismissed by SNR on the grounds that he had manhandled a child. He contested that, had his dismissal overturned and received a substantial sum of compensation from the school.

222. I have never been involved in investigating any civil claims made against Oakbank.

### **Police Investigations**

223. I wasn't involved in any other police investigations, nor am I aware of any others whilst I worked at Oakbank or since.

### **Convicted Abusers**

224. I am not aware of anybody else who worked at Oakbank, other than Sam McBrearty, being convicted of the abuse of a child.

## Other staff

LIL

225. LIL taught PE and all the kids all called LIL as it was a very informal atmosphere. He was about the same height as me and broadly built. He was outgoing with a great personality.
226. He was the driving force behind the swimming pool being built
227. He encouraged pupils and, like me, was a firm disciplinarian.
228. He was well respected by the pupils. He was tough as nails, honest and straight as the day is long. He was the man who reviewed the pupils coming to Oakbank-
229. He was a team leader. He was interviewed to be SNR at the same time I was. When I was appointed, that was a difficult period for both of us. He was the local man who was disappointed, and I was the 'carpetbagger' with no local connections who had been appointed.
230. A short time thereafter a third SNR post SNR was created and LIL was appointed. This resulted in a triumvirate of myself as SNR, LIQ SNR, LIL SNR. The SNR role was described as being "the intermediary between the SNR and SNR services" thus becoming a buffer for SNR.
231. I never witnessed any behaviour from LIL that ever gave me any cause for concern.
232. As with any of the staff, if I had any concerns about their behaviour towards the children, I would have reported it at the time.

EJT

233. When I started, EJT was a house parent in either Simpson or Watson house. He is now deceased. He came to Oakbank as an unqualified RCCO (Residential Child Care Officer). Oakbank sponsored him through his Social Work (CQSW) training on completion of which he returned to Oakbank as a senior social worker in the school until he became SNR.
234. He was well respected by the pupils. He was conscious of the fact that he was a late entrant into the profession. I think he had joined the marines straight from school.
235. I have no concerns about his behaviour towards the children. He was a well-built man and had a presence about him, so he had no need to do anything to impress the children.

IAB

236. IAB was a Welshman who is now deceased. He was an unqualified residential childcare officer. He was totally committed to looking after his charges. He regarded his group of charges as his responsibility and would go out of his way to make sure that everybody knew it. He was the type of guy who would come round the classrooms asking how they were doing. Not every Care worker did that. If there was a social work report to go in, he was very thorough with that.
237. I had no concerns about his behaviour towards the children. He had an outgoing personality and because of that, and enjoyed great popularity with the pupils. There was not a bit of badness in the man's body.

EJS

238. He was the son of [REDACTED] who worked in the school. EJS worked for us for a while as an unqualified RCCO. He left us following a holiday in Europe.



239. He wasn't particularly well respected by the pupils and I wouldn't have appointed him.

HMY

240. HMY is HMY SNR He was an anglicized Scot who originally came from Dalkeith. He was ex-paratrooper.

241. On appointment he was not qualified to take up the post SNR in Scotland. His appointment was conditional upon his successfully completing an MEd qualification within a prescribed period, of I think two years.

242. I do not believe that his was a good appointment for the school. He didn't have 10% of the impact on the school that his predecessor did. loved and lived for the school. For HMY it was a job, and it was being done his way or no way.

243. He was not my cup of tea, and we weren't compatible. I was not his choice SNR The board appointed me. I believe he wanted another of the candidates to be appointed.

244. He didn't carry me with him, I was able to get a lot of money out of him for the physical improvements I wanted to make to the school, but only because there was mileage in it for him.

245. He came up from where he had been SNR of a large children's centre and sought to bring most of the practices up to us. Some of them were good, like getting children into bedrooms and individual showers.

246. The social work staff were pleased enough with what he was planning to do but he was very heavy handed and bullish.

247. Shortly after he first arrived, he moved the board room (his office) from a central position where used to be based and interacted with the boys as they

went past. HMY moved it away so that he wasn't in that area and had the board room re-situated from just through from the link . He was very much less of a presence around the school than his predecessor.

248. His interaction with the children was poor. He was very formal and did not have any sort of rapport with the children.
249. In other workplaces, a lot of people refer to senior colleagues by their Christian name, but at all times he was Mr HMY to everybody. He referred to us by our Christian names. He was neither a team builder nor a team player.
250. He was driven and focused, but in my opinion, he was very much out of touch with what was going on in the school in general.
251. At some point in Oakbank's history, our Board of Governors changed from being Councillors appointed by the City of Aberdeen Council to being Councillors appointed by Grampian Regional Council. I was not aware of that happening, it was just one of these seamless transitions. That was the beginning of the end for Oakbank.
252. It was my experience that those Trustees appointed by Aberdeen City, to look after the welfare of Oakbank did so rigorously. On entering the Board Room they "took off their Aberdeen City hats", and donned "Oakbank Hats". In that role they focused on what was best for Oakbank , even if it was at odds with their "City" interests.
253. The relationship between SNR and the Board of Governors was always critical to the prosperity of Oakbank. Because of his management style I believe that at some point Mr HMY lost that good relationship.
254. When Mr HMY left Oakbank he got into politics. He is now the and has been for several years.

EJV

255. EJV was a neighbour of mine. He was a [REDACTED] at national / European level and was a builder to trade. He was a skilled builder, but communication was not his greatest strength. When the opportunity to become trained as a further education teacher was offered, he declined it.
256. He expressed an interest in joining the Care Team, and he ended up doing a very good job of running what became the Independence Training Unit (ITU). He and a colleague called Wendy Huyton ran it between them. The ITU provided the basics of preparing those who were leaving Care by teaching them how to budget, showing them how to use it and giving them all the grounding so that when they left, they would be able to be self-sufficient.

- [REDACTED]
257. The only [REDACTED] I know is ILF [REDACTED]. He was the night care officer, and he was an absolutely amazing man. He used to run the dorms on his own when there was a hundred and odd boys on the role. ILF [REDACTED] was an unarmed combat expert, (Kung Fu etc), and would demonstrate them to the boys.
258. He got on that well with them. Such was the respect that the boys held him in that if some naughtiness was planned in the dorms, somebody would go and tell him.
259. He was a really nice man. I had no qualms or concerns about ILF [REDACTED] behaviour towards children.

KNS

260. I have no recollection of anyone called KNS [REDACTED]

█

261. I only knew of one █ in the school. <sup>KZD</sup>█ was the gardener. He predates me at Oakbank. He was a very lovely, gentle man who loved gardening. He was limited when it came to working with the boys, you could only give him the nicest and most passive of boys to work with. The reason being his disciplinary control was limited.

262. He was a really nice man, a man of the church who sang in the local operatic society. He brought all these particular skills into the school. He was always the first one up on the stage when we did concerts and the pupils loved him. He was a stalwart of the Friends of Oakbank, and spent many unpaid hours producing plants for the annual plant sale which contributed towards funding the building of the swimming pool project.

zLIM █

263. I've never heard of <sup>zLIM</sup>█

FZR █

264. <sup>FZR</sup>█ was a Residential Child Care Officer. I didn't work with him very much. He was a nice enough guy. <sup>FZR</sup>█ was the son of <sup>KFJ</sup>█ who was in charge of what became Rosemount House Unit. That's all I can really say about him.

HPW █

265. I do not know the name <sup>HPW</sup>█

## Applicant Allegations

ILE

266. Mr ILE has given a statement to the Inquiry and on page 14 at paragraph 71 of his statement he says, *“One time I was at the hatch to collect fresh clothing and Mr ... was doing that job. He asked for my number before he would issue my clothing. I knew my doocot was right next to where he was standing. I was just worn out with all the abuse and refused to give my number and asked for my clothes. Because I was refusing Mr ILG and Mr .... came from behind and started hitting me. It was all body blows.”*
267. I do not remember and have no memory of ILE
268. For the record, I have no recollection of the events Mr ILE describes in his statement.
269. If the incident Mr ILE describes ever happened, it certainly never happened as he described.
270. As I have said earlier in my statement, me being on duty at the clothing hatch was a very rare event, most probably at a weekend.
271. I can offer a possible alternative scenario incorporating the “facts” as described by Mr ILE
272. I undertook residential duty at the weekend and I was Team Leader and in charge.
273. The hatch we are talking about is changing area next to the shower area. The pupils will have all come down the stairs from the dormitories to have their shower and get their clothes from the hatch. There will have been some pupils in the changing room and some in the showers. Some others will have been in the play ward, and some others helping the cooks lay out breakfast in the dining room.

274. I would have been circulating between the various locations making sure everything is going fine. At some point Mr ILE has asked to get his clothes, without giving his number. In the Clothing Hatch there are no names just numbers and occasionally, in the past, some naughty boys gave the wrong number to get somebody else's kit.
275. There would have been a member of staff within the Clothing Hatch handing out clothing and a second member of staff outside the Hatch supervising the changing and shower areas. A fairly "pastoral" role with it being either a Saturday or Sunday morning after a long lie in bed would have been a case of coaxing the boys to "lets get going boys, breakfast is waiting".
276. I very much suspect that Mr ILE explanation of politely asking for his clothing and requesting *'will you please refer to me as my name and not my number'*, may be a rather sanitised version of what could possibly have happened. I can imagine a situation where it would've escalated and could've been quite abusive.
277. I cannot guess Mr ILE mood. Why was he not at home on weekend leave? Had he lost his leave because of a misdemeanour? Did his (possible) loss of leave contribute to his mood? What prompted him to challenge the staff member at that point in time?
278. If you visualise it, Mr ILE is the man in front of the hatch causing a hold up and there are boys behind him wanting their clothes. It is no fun standing about naked as you can imagine, and the incident will possibly have escalated. Mr whoever (my 'co accused') may have attempted to move things along by asking Mr ILE to "get a move on" / "stop messing about" / "you're holding things up".
279. Mr ILE has decided to up the ante, the staff member has tried to coax him along and possibly reverts to move him on physically, he resists, I get sent for, I tried to intercede, I would have tried to intercede, logically, gentle guiding, coaxing, persuading Mr ILE flares up or somebody flares up, next thing is, events escalate, it has become a big incident and Mr ILE has got to be restrained. He doesn't respond to an enclosing restraint, he ends up being placed on the floor and, when he is on the floor, he is not

co-operating, he is kicking and that's why pressure is applied to hold him steady until the situation calms down and order is restored.

280. I have never in my life assaulted a child. For me as a teacher to start hitting children could only result in my career being ended.

281. I have absolutely no recollection of the scenario I have just described ever having happened, but I have taken Mr ILE story, and the fact that later on he talks about being assaulted by me again, and created this interpretation. The only time that I ever laid hands on a pupil when I was restraining them. I maybe wasn't the most gentle handed, depending on how much the pupil was resisting and whether they were striking me. At no time have I ever laid hands on a child, either in secondary school, Oakbank or in my subsequent career.

282. I am not aware of ever having caused any physical injury during a restraint. The restraint and any consequential injuries would have been recorded in the weekend log and into Mr ILE House unit log.

283. On page 19 at paragraph 99 of his statement Mr ILE states, "Mr ILG was SNR *If you did not behave in class or work hard enough he would beat you about the body with his hands. He beat me on almost a weekly basis. He would knee me in the back and press his thumbs into your back.*"

284. I do not recall any specific incidents that could be referring to. I never beat any child on the body. I have never kneed any child in the back. I never pressed my thumbs into any child's back.

KNR

285. KNR has given a statement to the Inquiry and on page 22 at paragraph 129 he states "... was bad for that. There was another man, Mr ILG We used to call him ... He was aggressive and in your face. He used to grip you and clout you

*on the ear. That's what my mum used to call it. I was brought up with that, so didn't really question it."*

286. I do not remember Mr **KNR** I read in his statement that he had also been a Day Pupil. I do not recall him even from that reference.
287. I would never *"grip or clout a child on the ear"*. I never laid hands on any child other than to restrain them legally and legitimately.
288. I have no idea why Mr **KNR** would say such a thing about me. Mr **ILE** alleged incident I could work out a logical scenario based on his version of events. The Mr **KNR** allegation I cannot relate to. I'm six foot two, at that particular time I was extremely fit. I had no need to go round clipping and holding pupils. What I did do was that I used to put my arm round a pupils shoulder when I was calming somebody down and walk and talk with them, but that was the extent of any physical contact. I stopped doing that when we became co-educational because I realised that was capable of being misconstrued.
289. To reiterate, neither Mr **ILE** Mr **KNR** nor anyone else was ever assaulted by me. I was a teacher all my life. Assaulting a child is tantamount to resigning, it is as simple as that. It did not happen.
290. Did I engage in restraint? When I had to, yes, and when I did, it was undertaken quickly, quietly, as efficiently as possible and it was proportionate. If someone *"got their back hurt"* as Mr **ILE** has claimed, I would surmise that Mr **ILE** was resistant to being restrained, and that he did not cooperate with the instructions being given to him. Any such injury would have been recorded in the House unit log.
291. I have experience of young people in a distressed state where unfortunately restraint eventually becomes the only option. In such situations once the mind set to resist has kicked in, adolescent boys can become quite incensed and can draw immense reserves of strength to resist and fight against the restraint. It therefore requires an equivalent level of strength to counteract the resistance and restore calm.



### **Leaving Oakbank Residential School**

292. Latterly I was not enjoying my work at Oakbank, and began looking for other career opportunities.
293. I was fortunate enough to obtain a suitable post and left Oakbank in 1997.

### **Lessons to be learned / Helping the Inquiry**

294. Unfortunately there will always be Children and Young People with "*Behavioural Issues*". This is a simple fact that society needs to recognise, accept and remediate.
295. Society also needs to accept that "*Behavioural Issues*" are a legitimate condition and that support services, both pro-active and reactive, are required in order to address this issue.
296. Deaf children; mute children, blind children, children with learning difficulties are all recognised and prioritised as legitimate conditions requiring enhanced support services. There is however a prevailing view that having "*Behavioural Issues*" is seen as a misdemeanour that requires a punitive approach.
297. Unless and until this attitude changes and there is a recognition that children with "*Behavioural Issues*" too have a legitimate condition requiring support services there will always be "badly behaved children and young people".
298. A double strand strategy is required both reactive and proactive. The reactive strand to address the issues presenting and challenging in society today, until the fruits of the proactive strand come to fruition.
299. The Proactive strand should be directed at possibly the root cause of these "*Behavioural Issues*", poverty.

300. After leaving Oakbank I was comparing notes with a Health Visitor at my new school. It transpired that of the school population at that time approximately 60% of the pupils (and their families) (from her catchment area), who later became known to the authorities because of "*Behavioural Issues*", were identified at a pre-school age as being vulnerable by the Health Visitor Teams.
301. Had proactive action been taken at that time, and support services put in place to support the child and her / his family the outcome for that child could well have been very different.
302. Putting an early intervention programme service in place to support the vulnerable child and his / her family in place would undoubtedly have been cost effective and probably have saved the local authority many tens of thousands of pounds, now being paid to host a pupil in a specialist resource such as Oakbank or the modern equivalent. A support worker with that Health Visitor team could have supported several families.
303. There is no short cut to addressing these issues, but what would greatly help would be the adoption by the authorities, local / national, of a comprehensive joined up policy of departments and agencies working collaboratively together, such a strategy should be made mandatory.
304. The creation of the 1968 Social Work (Scotland) Act was flawed and it is my opinion that in the intervening years (because of vested interests) nothing effective has been done to address the shortcomings of that Act.
305. Rather naively, even at this distance in time, I believe that the 1968 Act should be reviewed against the basic principles developed by the Kilbrandon Report of 1964.
306. In short Kilbrandon envisaged the creation of a single joined up service comprising Housing, Education and Social Work all working together as a single, cohesive, child centred, unitary service designed to address and focus upon the issue of "Children in Trouble". It is my belief that because of vested interests between various factions this simple goal has not been met.

307. To quote Niccolo Machiavelli:- *"It should be borne in mind that there is nothing more difficult to arrange, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prospered under the old order, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new."*
308. That is a long-winded answer, but in short what is needed is a joined up, pro-active fully funded service to address the issue of Children with *"Behavioural Issues."*
309. Even today, provision for children with *"Behavioural Issues"* needs a complete re-think. Kilbrandon did the groundwork in 1964 but for reasons best known to themselves the authorities only chose to implement his report in part resulting in what today is still an inadequate *"Cinderella"* service.
310. Regrettably I have no confidence that the matter will improve in the near future.
311. I sincerely hope that the outcomes of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry will contribute towards bringing the matter of Provision for Children With *"Behavioural Issues"* into prominence.

**Other information**

312. 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..... *30th September 2024* .....