

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IAB

Support person present: No.

1. My name is IAB. My date of birth is 1945. I was born in Paddington, London. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background

2. The first job I ever had after leaving school was as a machine worker. I then worked in a quarry. I moved to Reading in England and worked in a factory. After that, I moved to Essex. I worked in a factory for a while then I started travelling the country with that firm. I used to drain water out of the ground before buildings could be built in deep. I went to Elgin to do a job and I met my wife on a train. After that, I was a milk man. I started a milk round by myself, but I lost that. We then moved to Aberdeen and I drove a van.
3. I must have been about 38 years old by that time. I remember going home to my wife and my wife asked me what was wrong. I just felt that there was nothing in front of me. In all the jobs that I'd done, there was no future for me. She sat me down and got me to think about what I'd done and what I liked. When we had the milk round, we always had boys working with us. I did that for quite a few years and I had quite a few different boys working with me. It was great. I enjoyed that. They were always good.
4. My son was . I felt that I wanted to go and work with youngsters. I went to a place in Aberdeen and spoke to a man there. He told me about working with handicapped folk. I didn't want to do that. I didn't think that it would be fair to my

son or to myself. I would never be away from it. Around that time, I was reading the paper and I saw that they were looking for a deputy for a children's home, Brimmond. I decided that I'd go for the job. I thought that I quite fancied it. I went up to Brimmond and told the lady in charge, Mary Harkins, that I had come to see if I could get an interview for the job of deputy. She asked me if I'd ever done anything like that before. She laughed a bit when I said that I hadn't. We spoke for a while and she offered me a job, but it wasn't the deputy.

5. I started working at Brimmond and it was great. I worked there for about eighteen months from around 1983 or 1985. I was a member of the care staff. When I was there, one of the deputies of Brimmond was telling me about Oakbank. He told me that they had a football field, swimming pool and that they went skiing. That appealed to me, apart from the swimming because I wasn't a good swimmer. Oakbank were advertising for staff and I decided to apply. I must have been about forty so it was around 1985.

## **Experiences at Oakbank, Aberdeen**

### *Recruitment to Oakbank*

6. Oakbank were advertising for care staff and I put my name down for an interview. I got an interview and I got the job. A man that used to be SNR [REDACTED] of Brimmond also got a job at Oakbank on the same day as me. His name was ERM [REDACTED]. He had been SNR [REDACTED] at Brimmond and his wife was SNR [REDACTED] but that was a long time before I worked at Brimmond.
7. I was interviewed by the headmaster and five or six local councillors from Aberdeen Council, who ran the school at the time. There was a board of people running the school. I don't remember providing references from Brimmond or other previous employers. There was no probation period. I just worked alongside the rest of the care staff who were already there.

### *First impressions*

8. I always remember the first day I went in to Oakbank. I was taken into the play ward, where all the boys were, by SNR [REDACTED] of Oakbank, EJT [REDACTED]. When I walked into the play ward, there were two boys who used to be in Brimmond. They seemed to be excited to see me. That did a lot for me. Because of those two boys, I seemed to get on with all the other boys. I just loved the job. For years, I could have worked seven days a week no bother at all because I enjoyed it so much.
9. What I didn't like about Oakbank was that the boys never got out. I didn't like that at all. I remember being on duty one Saturday. It was a beautiful day. I went through to the play ward. Down in the corner, there were about six to eight boys sitting down. They were with SNR [REDACTED] at that time because SNR [REDACTED] took turns to work weekends. They were playing bingo. I thought that I'd get myself into trouble, but I said, "[REDACTED]" SNR [REDACTED] turned around and looked at me. He asked me what the problem was. I apologised and told him that I knew I might get into trouble, but it was a beautiful day and the boys were just sitting inside. He asked me what I wanted to do and I said I wanted to take the boys out. He said, "On you go."
10. The boys couldn't believe it. I put them onto the bus. There was a chap there who used to be a care worker. He had problems with the union and was demoted to caretaker. His name was EJS [REDACTED]. He was always with me and he would drive the bus. I said we could go up to the beach and stop at the side of the beach. The boys were allowed to take cigarettes or tobacco with them. As we turned off the road and into the beach area, Shell had helicopters with people jumping out of them. The boys were excited so I told the caretaker to stop there.
11. I opened the door of the van and the caretaker asked me what I was doing. I said, "What do you think I'm doing? I'm opening the door." He told me that I couldn't do that and that I couldn't let them out. I told him that I could. I asked him what he did and he said he was the caretaker. I told him that I was one of the care workers and it was my responsibility. I said to the boys that they could get out and sit and have a cigarette. I told them that if they ran away, I'd ensure they wouldn't do it again. They sat there for

45 minutes and they were no bother at all. After that, I would always get the boys out as much as I could. I used to do a heap of stuff with them. I think there were a number of folk at Oakbank who were against that.

*The institution/culture*

12. I think there were about twenty boys at Oakbank when I first arrived. They were there because they had problems. I believe that in most cases they had problems with their families. I know that years before I got to Oakbank lots of boys used to come there from Glasgow. The furthest boys came from was Perth and Dundee when I was there. Boys came from anywhere from Aberdeen to Perth and Dundee and anywhere from Aberdeen to Inverness. There were also boys from as far away as Shetland.
13. Most of the boys were fourteen, fifteen or sixteen. The youngest boy that I can remember was twelve years old. His name was [REDACTED]. A few times, when I came into the school in my car, he would run towards me saying, "Uncle IAB [REDACTED] Uncle IAB [REDACTED]" and jump on me. I remember speaking to EJT [REDACTED] about him. I wanted to get him out of Oakbank. He was too young to be with the other boys. He always wanted to be with them.
14. EJT [REDACTED] told me that they had found [REDACTED] a place in Dufftown. He went out there and some time later EJT [REDACTED] told me to take his car and go and bring him back. I went to pick [REDACTED] up and asked him what the problem was. He told me that they were all country yokels and farmers. He said that the entertainment on a Saturday was racing the tractors down the street. He came back to Oakbank and then after a while they found him a place in Dyce. I can't remember the name of it. I remember they phoned Oakbank to say that they couldn't look after him. He was only twelve, but he had to go back to Oakbank.
15. I can remember the first girl at Oakbank, but I can't remember the date she started. It was a long time after I started there. One of the ladies who worked up in the unit asked to speak to me and told me that we were getting girls. She asked me what it was like to work with girls. There had been a couple of girls when I worked at Brimmond. She

told me that they had a room all done up with pink duvets and curtains. She told me that it was beautiful. The girl started at Oakbank and the member of staff came to speak to me the next day. She told me that the girl had broken the room to bits.

16. Staff wouldn't share things with you at Oakbank. I started to take boys out and about. There were a lot of staff who appreciated what I did by taking them out, especially at weekends. Boys would say, "IAB [REDACTED] can I come, can I come?" Some of the staff used to say they'd come with me too, rather than stay at Oakbank. I don't know why other staff didn't take the boys out. Maybe it was because of relationships between staff and the boys. There were definitely other members of staff that boys would have wanted to go with. I believe that I opened up Oakbank a lot.

#### *My role at Oakbank*

17. When I went to Oakbank and all the time I was there, I never counted myself as a social worker. I was a care worker. I had no qualifications to call myself a social worker. When I first went there, there were teams but I've forgotten the names of the teams. I was just a member of the care staff. I worked in shifts. They were 8:00 am till 5:00 pm and 3:00 pm till 10:00 pm. At the weekend, it was 8:00 am till 10:00 pm on Saturday and Sunday. I was everywhere with the boys.
18. Later, the children went into different units. I really don't know when that happened. It might have been in the early 1990s, but I think it was between five and ten years after I started at Oakbank. Two members of staff went into our unit, which was Rosemount. The other member of staff, KFJ [REDACTED] had been there longer than I had so he became the unit manager. I became the deputy. I didn't have to apply for the post, I just became deputy. I don't think there had been a deputy post before. The other unit in the school was called Ashgrove and then there was another unit, which was separate from the school. The separate unit was for children who didn't cause problems in the school. They were easy to look after.
19. When I became deputy of Rosemount there were only two of us working there as care staff, myself and KFJ [REDACTED] I can't remember there being other people with us at that

time. Later on, I remember other care staff being there with us. [KFJ] looked after the boys from the south of Aberdeen and I looked after the boys from the north. My responsibilities were the running of the unit and making sure everything was okay. When I was on duty, I was responsible for what the boys were doing. I'm sure there must have been other staff in Rosemount, but I just can't remember them.

20. When I became deputy of Rosemount, I don't remember there being much of an increase in pay. I wasn't given any training for that role. I didn't find it more difficult than my care staff role. I never saw myself as a boss because I felt that I would do things before anybody else. I would do things that other people didn't want to do.
21. I was also a keyworker to some of the boys in Rosemount. I would speak to them about how they were doing if I had time. That didn't happen a lot because there were only about two or three staff in the unit. When I first started, [EJT] wrote all the reports about the boys. Latterly, we had a good secretary and I would put what I could do down and she would do it for me. I would go with boys to Children's Panels in the course of that role.
22. I got a bit fed up with Oakbank for a while. I wasn't feeling good. I didn't want to go back into the units. I went to see the headmaster and he asked if I wanted to go out of the school to the separate unit. There were about fourteen children in the unit, including girls as well. I went to work there as a deputy. My line manager there was [LIM] I enjoyed that unit and I enjoyed working with the girls.
23. After [SNR] [HMY] left Oakbank, [ ] was in charge. [ ] put experienced people to be in charge of units. Another member of staff, Veronica Young, and myself were asked if we would work in the classroom area. I don't know what our job title was. [ ] didn't tell me that I had to work in the classroom, [ ] asked if I would do it. [ ] told me that I would get the same holidays as the teachers, which I thought sounded good. I don't really know what my role was. I think it was to support the teachers. Most of the time we were in an office in the classroom area. I didn't receive any training for that role. I think my line manager was Mrs [ ], who

was SNR [REDACTED]. I had a working relationship with her but I can't really remember whether she supported me in that role.

24. After a while, it was coming to the holidays. I spoke to [REDACTED] about the holidays and [REDACTED] said that [REDACTED] couldn't give me them. Before [REDACTED] became SNR [REDACTED] I was very close to [REDACTED]. I had been at [REDACTED] wedding. We were really great friends. I was so disappointed when [REDACTED] did that. Veronica Young left and another woman came in. I can't remember her name, but she was good. She left and went to become a manager of a nursing home. I met her there a couple of times and she told me that I was the best boss she'd ever had.

*Layout and structure*

25. Oakbank was in one of the best areas of Aberdeen. It was quite a big building. When you came in the front door there were offices and a dining room on the right-hand side. On the other side of the dining room was the headmaster's house. If you came in the front door and turned left, on the right-hand side was where the boys' clothes were hung up. Next to that was a shower and toilet room. On the other side was the play ward. At that time there was a snooker room and a TV room. Before you went outside, there were stairs that led up to the classrooms. Underneath that was a smoking room for the boys. There was a door to go outside and across the play yard was a swimming pool. Above that was what they called the units. On the other side of that was where the boys used to go for carpentry and painting.
26. About five or ten years after I started at Oakbank, they put the boys into different units. I worked in Rosemount unit. Rosemount had about ten or twelve boys in it. There was also Ashgrove and a third unit, which was separate from the school. On each side of that separate unit was a house. For a while, a man called Dave Vicar or McVicar had his house at the side of the unit. The secretary and her husband lived in the house on the other side of the unit. When they moved, they turned it into a unit for boys over the age of sixteen who were ready to leave Oakbank.

### *Staff structure*

27. SNR [REDACTED] when I started at Oakbank was [REDACTED]. Later, HMY [REDACTED] took over. When he left, [REDACTED] was in charge. When I first started, EJT [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED]. He was my line manager. I think he had a certificate or qualification, but of what I don't know. There was another gentleman who was a youth and community worker. He died not long after I arrived. There was another worker at the unit who did the same role. ILG [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] until Mrs [REDACTED] took over from him. There were about five teachers in the school. There were also teachers in the workshops, including a joiner shop, brickwork, mechanics and painting.
28. When I went to Oakbank, I was a member of the care staff. I think it was about the early 1990s when the boys were moved into units. I became the depute of Rosemount unit and KFJ [REDACTED] was the manager. The caretaker was called [REDACTED] and his son, EJS [REDACTED] got a job at Oakbank. I'm sure that he was in Rosemount with us. He was a member of care staff. I could have been his line manager, but I'm not sure about that. I'm not sure what my position meant to anybody else.
29. I can remember one night I was just about finishing my shift. A member of staff came in. I think his name was IAA [REDACTED] I'm sure it was about a boy who was on leave that night. He needed to be picked up and brought back to Oakbank. I asked the member of staff to go and get the boy. He said that he wouldn't go. I asked him again and he refused. I told him to go home. The member of staff went home and I collected the boy and brought him back myself. The other staff had put the boys upstairs to bed. The next day, I was told off for sending the member of staff home. I told them that he had refused to do his job. I was told that it made no difference and that I had no right to send another member of staff home. I can't remember who it was that told me off. I didn't argue about it. I was told off and that was it. It didn't bother me and I didn't hold a grudge.



*Recruitment of staff*

30. I didn't have any involvement in the recruitment of staff. I'm not sure what the procedure was for the recruitment of staff. I can remember a woman coming in to have a look around at night. She was interested in becoming a member of staff. EJT had asked me if I would take her into the unit with me. I took her into the unit and just before we went into the office, we heard someone shouting, "Fuck off." She said that she didn't think it was for her. It was quite funny because the boy who was shouting "fuck off" was her nephew, but she didn't realise that at the time.
31. When SNR was SNR of the school, the care staff were quite qualified. When ILG was SNR, a player came in as a member of staff. ILG used to play and I think they were mates. At that time, I don't think staff were coming in who had experience of working with children who had traumatic home lives. That changed when came in and I think things improved. That was one of the reasons that I was moved out of the units. Qualified care staff moved in to work in the units. I don't think that meant that the children were better looked after.
32. There were quite a lot of families working together in the latter part of my time at Oakbank. There would be fathers working with sons, brothers working with sisters. They would come together. There was a union meeting that was held after became SNR. A lot of the old care staff, like myself, went to the meeting. There were lots of people going on about there being too many people who had family relationships working at Oakbank. Most of them were Catholics and they didn't like this. As time went on, most of the older people that I worked with disappeared. I didn't know that they'd left at the time. They were just gone. I don't know whether they left of their own accord. I don't know whether things changed after that union meeting. I wasn't really in the units to see how they were working.
33. There was a bad atmosphere between staff before that meeting. At that time, was fantastic. was a friend of mine. One man said to me that there was no way he was going to work with. used to be in a post beneath his.

had worked part-time and would do sports with the boys. [REDACTED] would take the boys into the gym. Quite a few of the staff didn't like that because [REDACTED] hadn't worked at Oakbank full-time. Some people definitely didn't like that [REDACTED] was going to be SNR [REDACTED].

#### *Supervision/appraisal*

34. I don't think there was anybody supervising me in any of my roles at Oakbank. I never received any kind of appraisal. When it came to communication with senior management, I think I can remember going to one or two meetings and that was it. I was never asked to comment on the performance of other members of staff.

#### *Policy*

35. I didn't have any involvement in the policies, procedures or how things were administered at Oakbank. I had very little say in anything at all. It didn't bother me. I did what I had to do and I enjoyed the work that I did. I always wanted to be with the boys and deal with the boys. SNR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and HMY [REDACTED] would have taken the lead when it came to policy for the school. ILG [REDACTED] would have had an input as SNR [REDACTED] and EJT [REDACTED] as SNR [REDACTED]. A few years after I started, EJT [REDACTED] died and a man called LIQ [REDACTED] took over his role.
36. I can't remember whether there was a written policy or guidance documents that we had to read.

#### *Strategic Planning*

37. I wasn't involved in any strategic or long-term planning for Oakbank. I do recall that there were plans for younger boys to come to the school. I think they were going to go up to the unit. I don't know what sort of age those boys would have been. I think the motivation for wanting younger boys was probably financial.

## *Training*

38. I don't recall much training at Oakbank. We did a first aid course at Oakbank, but I can't remember who took it. The only other training I can remember getting was in restraint. The first training we had was from prison officers who worked at Peterhead Prison. I think it took place at a school in Dyce when HMY [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] of Oakbank. I think about eight or ten members of staff did the training. It didn't last all that long, but we went on more than one occasion. I think we went two or three times. Each session was for about an hour or two. I didn't like it. I remember what they did to you. We practiced the holds on other colleagues and I can remember getting hurt. I think I can remember being on the floor with one of the prison officers. Although we did the training, we didn't actually use those kind of restraints at Oakbank.
39. We then had another training session with a man who was head of a house for children in Peterhead or Fraserburgh. I can't remember what we did at that training, but by the time I went to that training, [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED]. I really can't remember what we did at that training, but it was nothing like the first training we had been on. I don't know how long that training lasted. We didn't get a certificate at the end of the course, but all of the staff had to complete it. I can't remember getting a refresher course in restraint.
40. We did a course for PE at the Hilton College. The only part of it I can remember was at the end of it, we learned how to relax. I can remember two of the people on the course started snoring. Another part I always remember was that whenever you went into a swimming pool, you were never to praise the good swimmers. You were supposed to praise the ones who were trying to swim.
41. I don't recall getting any training when it came to the care and protection of children. I was the first member of staff to go to Newton Aycliffe in County Durham on a course. I did the Certificate of Social Services (CSS) course, but I never completed it. I went to Stirling to do that and I also went to the local college in Aberdeen quite often. It was my own idea to do that. I found the courses very hard. I wanted to try and do the CSS because there were no other social workers at Oakbank. I found it very difficult to put

my learning down on paper. I was told that if I could have spoken the papers, I would have passed no bother at all. I believe that when I didn't do the final part of the course, certain people at Oakbank didn't want me to pass. There was nobody at Oakbank to help me in any way and nobody supported or encouraged me at all.

### *Living arrangements*

42. I lived at home with my family when I worked at Oakbank. We lived in Dyce, which was about four or five miles away from the school. Most staff lived away from the school. On the road that Oakbank was on, there were quite a number of houses owned by the school itself. [REDACTED] had one of those houses along with other school staff named [ILG [REDACTED]], [EJW [REDACTED]] and [LIM [REDACTED]]. There was a house that became vacant and it was offered to staff. I looked at it but it was no good for us. It was very steep and my son was [REDACTED]. Next door there was a lovely bungalow. The last [SNR [REDACTED]] before [EJT [REDACTED]] lived there.
43. There were two houses on [REDACTED]. Dave McVicar lived in one of those. Someone called [LIR [REDACTED]] and his wife and son also lived there at one point. On the other side was the school secretary and her husband. When they closed that, it was kept for older kids over the age of sixteen.
44. Everyone had access to the kids' bedrooms. There was a door to the bedrooms. When I first started, there would be one member of staff on duty overnight. After a while, there were always two on duty. That started when girls arrived at Oakbank. There would be a man and a woman on duty at night. They were permanent night staff. There was an on-call system for the headmaster. Staff who were not on duty at night would have to go through the night staff if they wanted access to the bedrooms. The night man's office was next to the door which led up to the sleeping area. I had to work a nightshift once when I was working up in the unit.

### *Visitors/parental contact*

45. I did interact with parents of children at Oakbank. I'm lucky that the parents who came to speak to me were brilliant. They would speak to me because I was the keyworker for their children. Three or four sets of parents would come to the school and speak to me. The others didn't really come to the school, unless they were coming to a Children's Panel or a review. There was no parents' day or anything like that.
46. I can remember one couple who came from Peterhead. Their son was lovely. The boy was talking to me one day and I asked him what his mum and dad did. He told me that his dad was an inspector of the fishing boats. He asked me if I liked fish and I said that I did. About a week later, the parents came to see at the school at night time. After they'd looked around, the father asked me to bring my car around to his car. He had five boxes of fish in his car for me. After that, I said that I didn't like fish.
47. I can remember another couple coming to tell their son that his cousin had had a bad accident. They thought that he might die. The boy was in a bad state. He was one of the boys who was at Oakbank when I first went there and he had come from Brimmond, where I worked previously. When I was at Brimmond, I was told that the boy had lost his grandad, who he used to stay with. He started sniffing glue and he had been sniffing glue really badly. I asked his parents whether they ever spoke to him about how his grandad had died. When they came to speak to him about his cousin, I told them that they must tell him exactly what had happened. The cousin did survive but he was quite handicapped.

### *Discipline and punishment*

48. If boys couldn't cope in the school area, they were sent down to the units and would stay there. I think that pocket money might have been deducted if boys damaged property. The glazier must have a house in Barbados after all the windows he had to repair. I think that punishments must have been recorded, but I don't know where. There was a diary on the desk in Rosemount which recorded everything, like people

going away on leave or coming back. That might have had damage and things like that. Each unit had a diary like that and any staff could write in it.

49. When I first started at Oakbank, they used the strap. It happened just days after I first started there. I can remember EJT asking me to come and speak to him. I had to go into the boardroom. I asked him what was wrong. He told me that we had to strap a boy. I can still remember the way my stomach felt. I think I was supposed to hold a boy's arm and there was no way that I could do it. I told him that I couldn't and I wouldn't. He said something like, "You will. Otherwise, the door's there." I said that I couldn't do it. He told me to go into the staffroom, which was opposite. I said that I thought I had to go through the door because I wasn't going to strap a boy.
50. EJT then came into the staffroom. He told me that I had a job and that they weren't going to strap the boy. I think I just about cried. He said that if I hadn't helped to strap the boy, I would have gone through the door. I said that I was prepared to do that.
51. Just after I started, I think that a law came out about corporal punishment. I think that Oakbank was one of the last schools that was able to use it. I think that at the time they were going to strap that boy, they weren't allowed to do it. I can remember speaking to the last boy to get the strap afterwards. He said that he had it once but he would never have it again. I think the headmaster was authorised to administer corporal punishment. I'm not aware of any other staff being allowed to administer it, but it stopped around the time that I started at Oakbank.
52. If boys ran away, they would lose leave. When they were brought back after running away, they were put into pyjamas and they weren't allowed out until they had leave again. If a child ran away and it was better for him to go home rather than be kept in, he would get to go home. Whenever anybody ran away, we had to put in a police form and phone the police. They would come and pick it up. The police used to come back and question the children to complete their form. I think the police asked why they were running away. I'm sure the staff would have asked why they had ran away as well. I might have asked boys that question, but I can't remember.

53. I'm not aware of there being a policy for discipline at Oakbank. If a child wasn't allowed to go home for the weekend, he would be told by the seniors. I think that kind of decision was taken by SNR [REDACTED] or SNR [REDACTED]. I can't remember whether there was any confinement or segregation of children as a punishment. There was no punishment room that I can recall. I can remember two boys being taken out of the units and upstairs to the TV room because they were running away quite a lot. They were put into pyjamas and dressing gowns by ILG [REDACTED], but they were just in the TV room. They were taken away from the rest of the boys. The idea was that they didn't have clothes to run away in.
54. I can remember another two boys who ran away with their pyjamas and dressing gowns on. I received a phone call saying that they wanted to be picked up. They were wearing their pyjamas and I laughed when I saw them. They told me that when they went down Rosemount, which is at the bottom of Oakbank, the police stopped them and asked them where they were going. They told the police that they were going to a pyjama party and the police let them go.

#### *Restraint*

55. We were initially trained in restraints by prison officers from Peterhead. I didn't like those restraints. They were holds that inflicted pain. One hold involved bending wrists forward and back. Another involved pushing someone's nose from underneath. It had a name but I can't remember what the name was. We didn't do those restraints at all at Oakbank. It was a type of restraint that they would use on prisoners. We were trained in a different type of restraint when [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] but I can't remember much about the training. I can't remember if that training had a name, but it was more about holding the children, talking to them and trying to calm them down. That's what I tried to do with the boys.
56. I would use restraint but not very often. Over the eighteen years I was there, I maybe did it three or four times. Towards the end of my time at Oakbank, there was a boy in the school who I had to take down to the ground frequently. Some days, I had to take him down and hold him six or seven times a day. He was only a little lad. I don't think

he was hyperactive, but he used to run all over the desks when he was in the classroom. He was a sad lad. I don't think he realised that he was doing this all of the time. The teacher would call me and tell me to come and take him out. He would run everywhere and it was difficult to catch him. When I caught him, he would start fighting me. The easiest way was to hold him under the arms and bring him down to the ground. I would walk backwards with him and he'd lose his balance. He would have just sat down on his backside. There were usually other people there, involved in the restraint with me. I don't know if that was a technique that other staff used, but I don't think the training helped me. There was no policy or protocol about how to restrain. Whatever staff did, they did.

57. I never saw staff using restraints in a way that I thought was excessive. I didn't see other staff using restraints very often. It could happen anywhere in the school, but I wouldn't say that it was frequent.

*Day to day running of the school*

58. I was just a care staff. I didn't have any involvement in the day to day running of the school. I suppose I did have responsibility for the day to day running of the unit where I worked. If abuse had taken place, I don't know whether it would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring. I wouldn't have known about it. I don't think that it would have come to my attention because I was just care staff.
59. I had regular interactions with the children. I don't really think I asked the children whether they felt safe or how they were feeling. I've never known a boy to come and speak to me about concerns. I never asked a child how he was being treated by staff. I just always thought that the boys were safe. I don't think most of the boys were happy to be at Oakbank, but I have known a few boys who cried when they were leaving. They didn't want to leave.

*Concerns about the institution*

60. I didn't think that the children had a good education at Oakbank. A lot of them just used to walk out of the class. They didn't want to be in the classroom. When I first



went to Oakbank, I didn't think that the accommodation was very good either. The boys just had partitions between them. They had old blankets, like army blankets. There were no toilet facilities for them where they slept. They were outside the bedrooms. It wasn't very nice at that time. Latterly, they put doors on the units.

61. In eighteen years working at Oakbank, I think I only saw one fight between two boys. Three or four times, I can remember a boy telling me that someone was hitting him. I would speak to boys that were causing problems for the other boys and ask them if they'd ever been bullied. I asked them what it was like. I can remember them saying that they didn't like it. I would then get the other boy to come back and they would shake hands. I think that worked. That was when I was up at the school. I think I might have recorded those occasions in a diary that I had at the school.
62. I never received any complaints from children about other staff members. I didn't really have any concerns about other staff. I'm not aware of any external organisations having concerns about the way that children were being treated in Oakbank. However, the senior staff never shared that kind of thing with us. If the parents had complained, it wouldn't usually have come to me. I wouldn't have received such complaints.

#### *Reporting of complaints/concerns*

63. If a child or a person on behalf of a child wished to raise a complaint, it would have come to myself or whoever was on duty. I don't remember any child ever coming to me to complain about anything. I think that children did feel able to complain. I think they'd say whatever they wanted to say, but I suppose they could have felt intimidated by the staff. If a child complained about another child or a member of staff, I don't think there would have been any reprisals.
64. I do remember receiving one complaint. A mother came to the school and I went to the door. She said that she had come to see me. I asked her what the problem was. She told me that she worked in a bar in Aberdeen. She said that a member of Oakbank staff was in the bar. He was telling one of the other people who worked in the bar about her son. She had come to the school to complain about the member of staff talking about her son. I don't know why the mother wanted to speak to me, but I got

on great with her son. His name was [REDACTED] and he was in Rosemount Unit. I can't remember the member of staff's name, but he was one of the night staff. I can't remember what was said in the bar about [REDACTED]

65. I did report [REDACTED] mother's complaint to HMY [REDACTED]. I told him that one of the staff had been speaking about one of the boys. I don't know what HMY [REDACTED] did as a result of what I had reported. In Oakbank, if you said anything or raised a concern nobody would come back to you. I was just a care worker so they weren't going to tell me. If he did do anything as a result of my report, I have no idea what it was.

#### *Trusted adult/confidante*

66. Children went on home leave so they could tell their parents if they had any concerns about Oakbank. There was a psychiatrist at Oakbank, Frank Woods. He would call youngsters to come and speak to him. I remember that he made a dossier that we had to fill in. It was called HELP (Health, Education, Living, Person). The psychiatrist worked at Rossie Farm as well as Oakbank. I never heard of any complaints received from boys by the psychiatrist.

#### *Child protection arrangements*

67. I don't recall being given guidance on the protection of children. I don't think there was anything like that. We weren't given guidance on how to respond to reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff. I can't think of anything that was put in place at Oakbank to reduce the likelihood of abuse or ill-treatment of children.

#### **Abuse at Oakbank**

68. The word abuse was never used when I worked at Oakbank. I never heard a definition of it or received guidance from senior management about what constituted abuse. There is one incident that I can recall at Oakbank which I would define as abuse. I was up in the classroom. I saw a member of staff called Porter with his arms out towards a boy and moving. I told him just to leave it. I could see hands going from both the boy

and the member of staff. It was in a corridor. I can't remember anything being said between them. Porter was a PE teacher. The boy had ran up to the classroom and Porter had come up after him. Later on, the boy said that he'd hurt his arm and Porter had done it. I think the boy broke his arm. I can't remember the boy's name, but I think he was about fifteen.

69. Because I had seen what happened, I went to a meeting with the councillors and SNR SNR, which was ██████████ at the time. The meeting was about two weeks after the incident. They asked me what had happened and I told them what I had seen. After the meeting finished, that was the end of my involvement in the matter. The next thing, I saw on the internet that Porter was paid £30,000 because he said that it had nothing to do with him. I think his name still comes up if you put it into the internet. I don't know why he got £30,000 and whether it was because he lost his job. I don't remember that. After the meeting, the incident was never mentioned to me again.
70. There was a member of staff called IAA IAA. He was on a course at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham. Somebody phoned Newton Aycliffe to speak to IAA IAA IAA. They said that he hadn't been there for three days. At the same time, there was a boy from Oakbank who had been missing for days. I can't remember his name. One Saturday afternoon, I was with my daughter in my van. We were going out of Dyce, where we lived, and heading to the B&Q in Bridge of Don. As I came to the end of the road, I had to turn right. I stopped for the traffic coming along. As I stopped, I saw a car right in front of me. I recognised it as IAA IAA car. The young boy missing from Oakbank was driving and IAA IAA was in the front passenger seat. I'm sure it was a Fiat. I tried to get close to him to stop the car, but I couldn't get near to it.
71. I'm sure I went home and phoned LIQ LIQ to tell him what I'd seen. I think LIQ LIQ LIQ came and picked me up. We drove out along the Ellon Road. We saw IAA IAA IAA car coming down the other side. It was being driven by a woman who used to be deputy of a unit in Oakbank. I can't remember what her name was but she was in her forties or fifties. That was the end of it. We didn't know where IAA IAA and the boy went. We didn't know where she was going. I think that IAA IAA lost his job or

he didn't come back to Oakbank. I'm not sure whether he got the sack or resigned. I think the young boy came back to Oakbank.

72. I was never the subject of an allegation of abuse or ill-treatment towards a child at Oakbank. One day, I was in the unit. We were serving dinners. It came in a hot oven that was brought from the kitchen. A young boy kept moving towards the oven. His name was [REDACTED]. I told him not to do that because it was scalding hot. I told him that he'd burn himself. He did it about four or five times. I told him that he was going to injure himself. I was going to try and get him into the unit. Instead, he went into the play ward. I just held him there. He was trying to get past. I held my hands out. I was in the doorway trying to stop him going past. I held him for minutes. He tried to get past me again to touch the oven. I stood in front of him and he went out. I didn't touch him. I put my hand out because I wasn't going to let him go out and burn his hands. Nothing more happened and that was the end of it. The boy got his lunch afterwards. I think his social worker came up to visit him that day. It's possible he mentioned the incident to his social worker.

73. I'm not sure how long after that incident it was, but I was near where the bursar's office used to be. A police officer was outside. He was in plain clothes. He said hello to me and told me that I wasn't in trouble. He said that I'd been cleared and that there was nothing wrong. He walked away. I can remember just standing there and wondering if he was joking. I didn't know what had happened. I went to see LIQ [REDACTED]. There were other people going out of his office. He asked me what was wrong. I asked him what the meeting in the boardroom had been about. He said that he didn't know anything about it. I told him that a police officer had just told me that everything was fine and that I'd been cleared. I can remember LIQ [REDACTED] going mad and telling me that he would find out what it was all about. To this day, I never found out what it was all about. I thought it must have been about the boy [REDACTED], but nobody ever told me. It left me always wondering what had happened. There were lots of things kept from me and other staff at my grade.

### **External monitoring**

74. I think I can remember two external inspections of the school. I don't know how they went as I wasn't involved in them. I can't remember speaking to the inspectors myself and I can't recall them speaking to the children. I don't remember reading any reports from the inspections. I was a care worker so those things weren't shared with me.

### **Record-keeping**

75. We kept diaries on the units. The only other record I can remember keeping was the medical book. Each unit had one and we recorded if a child hurt himself or cut himself or something like that. There was a matron called Mrs LYY and she would treat boys if they hurt themselves. She was fantastic to the boys. I can't recall any other records.

### **Investigations into abuse – personal involvement**

76. I can't recall any members of staff being the subject of an investigation. I wasn't involved in any investigation on behalf of Oakbank.

### **Reports of abuse and civil claims**

77. I was never involved in the handling of any civil claims against Oakbank.

### **Police investigations/criminal proceedings**

78. I can't recall any police investigations into staff at Oakbank in relation to the abuse or ill-treatment of children. I've never given a statement to the police about the abuse of a child at Oakbank and I've never given evidence in court. I went to a room with a judge when a boy wanted to leave Oakbank and go to another place, but nothing else. I'm not aware of any staff at Oakbank being involved in a police investigation either before or after the time I worked at Oakbank.

## Other Staff

HMY

79. HMY was SNR of Oakbank when I first went there. I liked him a lot, but I did fall out with him a couple of times. He didn't spend a lot of time in the units. He came in once or twice to have a look. On a few occasions, he asked me to do things with him or go places with him. We went to Glasgow for something, but I can't remember what it was. He phoned the unit and asked if I wanted to go the next day. Another day, he phoned me and asked me if I would go to a Rotary dinner with him so I did that. I don't know why he asked me to do these things.
80. I didn't see HMY with the children very much. I never saw or heard of him abusing any children.

LIL

81. I recall LIL. He lost his job when came in SNR. Before that, I worked with him. I don't know why he lost his job. He was a PE teacher. He was good. I thought that he was very fair to the boys. I didn't have a lot to do with him because he worked in the gym department and I worked in the unit. For a long time, he was in charge of nights along with ILG. I worked with him for years and he was a good boss. I never saw him discipline children. I didn't hear or see of him abusing children.

EJS

82. The caretaker at Oakbank was called . His son was EJS. He got a job at Oakbank after I had started there. He was a care staff in Rosemount, the unit where I worked.
83. EJS hadn't come to work for a few days. LIQ came into the unit and asked me if I knew where EJS lived. I said that I had a rough idea and he asked me to take

him up there. I think I asked him what was wrong and LIQ told me that he hadn't been in work. We went to the house and EJS came to the door. I must have asked him if he was okay. LIQ started speaking to him. He asked why he wasn't coming back to work. EJS said that he had gone somewhere out of the country. He had come back with pornography and he had been caught with it. He said that he wasn't coming back to Oakbank and that was the end of it. I never heard anything else about it and I thought it was probably for the best. I did see him some time later in Aberdeen. He told me he was going back to college, but I don't know what for.

84. I didn't really see EJS interacting with the children very much. He used to take them out on the bus at night for runs. He wouldn't have taken eight or nine kids with him. I think he took about three or four. I never saw or heard of him abusing any children at Oakbank.

EJV

85. I was speaking to EJV just the other day. He was in charge of bricklaying at Oakbank. He was a really nice man. I think we worked at Oakbank together for the full eighteen years that I was there. I never saw him disciplining a child. I never saw or heard of him abusing any children.

EJT

86. EJT was SNR at Oakbank when I first went there. He was my line manager until LIQ took over from him. EJT was a nice man. He was fair with staff and he was fair with the kids. He used to have a night where he was in charge of all the units. If there was any problem with the care staff, he would deal with it. I didn't see him disciplining any children. I never saw or heard of him abusing a child.

ILG

87. ILG was SNR a couple of years after I started at Oakbank. From the first time I went there, I don't think he ever liked me. I think it

was because I opened the school for the kids and took them out. I can remember one day he said to me that I shouldn't be taking boys out and that we didn't do that at Oakbank. I said that I did take them out. I thought to myself that I shouldn't have said that because he was the boss.

88. A few weekends later, there was a teacher called Rosco. He was a super guy. He asked me to do him a favour and work his weekend for him. I loved Oakbank so I was happy to do it for him. I told him it wasn't a problem and asked him to let Mr. <sup>ILG</sup> know. On the Saturday morning, I went in and it was all fine. At 9:00 am, <sup>ILG</sup> came in and asked what I was doing. I told him that I was working for Rosco. He said that I shouldn't be there and that Rosco should be doing it himself. I said something like I was sorry and I didn't realise that it was wrong. Later that day, I asked if I could take the boys out. <sup>ILG</sup> said, "Do what you want." I spoke to Rosco about it and he said that he had of course told <sup>ILG</sup> that I was covering the weekend for him.

89. <sup>ILG</sup> came up to me one day and asked me to take boys to Tomintoul. I said that was fine and asked him when. It was for about three nights. I thought the boys would love being away from Oakbank for four days. We got a bus and went up to Tomintoul. We stayed in a place where the nuns used to live. They wanted us to clear a path outside. It had collapsed and there was mud and muck on it. We had to load it all onto a tractor. I had five or six boys with me. I was there for the first night by myself and then <sup>ILG</sup> joined me for the remainder of the time. <sup>ILG</sup> wasn't yet <sup>SNR</sup> <sup>SNR</sup> and worked part-time. I can see the boys now. They worked like hell. We cleared all the mud, but it took us four days to do it. We went back the next week.

90. When the work was all done, it was going to be an outdoor centre. I thought that would be fantastic for the boys of Oakbank. We could take them there and it wasn't far from Aviemore. It was among the hills and I thought they'd love it. The man who was going to be in charge asked me if I would like to be on the committee for the outdoor centre. I thought that if I got on the committee then I would have the chance to get in first for the boys. He asked me to go to a committee meeting that Saturday night. I'm sure I went up to the meeting with <sup>ILG</sup>. It was all high up people from Aberdeen who worked for big companies.



91. On the Monday morning, I went into Oakbank. I met <sup>ILG</sup> and I asked who I was taking to Tomintoul that week. He looked at me like I was a fool and asked me what I was going on about. He asked me what was in Tomintoul. He said that was all finished and told me to go back to my unit. If you could have seen how those boys had worked and what they had done. That was the end of the school's involvement with the outdoor centre at Tomintoul. He put a stop to it there and then. I was almost in tears when I left.

92. <sup>ILG</sup> was never near the kids. I didn't see him disciplining any children. I never saw or heard of him abusing any children.

<sup>ILF</sup> *the nightwatchman*

93. <sup>ILF</sup> was quite a well-built man. He did the nightshift along with five or six other nightshift workers. When we took the boys upstairs to go to bed, we would always try to get them settled. <sup>ILF</sup> would tell us to get out and get going and that they were his boys. He would put his foot down. I never saw him disciplining the children. I didn't hear about him disciplining the children. I never saw or heard about him abusing any children.

<sup>zLIM</sup>

94. I don't know anybody by the name of <sup>zLIM</sup>. There was a <sup>LIM</sup> who was the manager of the unit when I went to Oakbank. He came back as a painter in the painting workshop and then became a unit manager. He was always around children. I don't think he interacted with them much, but he used to be there. I didn't see him disciplining children. I never saw or heard of him abusing any children.

## Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry about me

ILE

95. ILE has given a statement to the Inquiry. At paragraph 102 of his statement, he has said:

LAB a member of staff, would be friendly with some of the older boys. He would give them extra fags and would send them to bring me back to him when I had ran away. He would tell them to beat me. There were other times he would hit me as well. During some of the restraining he would have your hands up your back and punch me.”

I remember ILE He was a super boy. I can still see him. He always had a smile on his face when you came into the unit. You always thought you had to look out because he was going to tell you a joke or something. He was never ever a problem. I never heard him swear. He never swore to me. He never caused me any problems. KFJ was his keyworker rather than me. He was a pleasure to have. I took him to Tomintoul and he worked like a machine.

96. I never sanctioned or punished ILE I just can't believe the allegation that he has made. I don't understand the part about sending boys to find him. If I sent boys out to get him and he was taking drugs or drink and they joined in with him, I would've lost my job. There's no way I would have done anything like that. I certainly wouldn't have touched ILE I can't remember any such incident. Nothing like that happened. I've no idea why these things have been said about me. If what ILE described had happened then I accept that it would have been abuse. He was such a nice boy. When I read about what happened to him after Oakbank I was just about in tears. It was so sad.

HZY

97. HZY has given a statement to the Inquiry. At paragraph 172 of his statement, he has said:

*"There was another incident. I was in a classroom with Christina Abela, who was a teacher I got on very well with. She was teaching me some music. I think I used to play the French horn. She had brought one in and one lunchtime I went up to see her. I had told someone I was going up to her classroom.*

HZY [REDACTED] goes on to say the following at paragraph 173 of his statement:

*"There was a full scale panic about me not being where they thought I should have been. IAB [REDACTED] burst into the classroom and grabbed me by the scruff of the neck. He struck me across the face with the palm of his hand. That seemed to be the way they hit people. He shouted at the teacher saying that I was a "manipulative little bastard."*"

He continues at paragraph 174:

*"The teacher asked him what the problem was, she didn't understand. She said that I was fine there and to leave me there. She didn't say anything about him striking me. It was like that was normalised. So the teachers knew as well and nobody did anything about it. She was actually very reasonable with him because he had lost his temper."*

98. My response to this allegation is that it is rubbish. First of all, we were told never to rush into a classroom. You had to knock, open the door and say excuse me. I don't know why he would have been in the classroom at that time. The allegation that I would have called him a bastard is entirely wrong. I would never have called him a bastard because I'm a bastard. I never had a dad. I was a war baby. I hated that name and I would never have called him that.
99. I would never have abused him in front of a woman. I can't remember the incident. If he had been in a classroom and he had to be removed, I would have put my arms under his arms, lifted him up and taken him out. He was only a small boy. I would never have hurt him. I would never have hurt any child. I would never hit them. I never abused HZY [REDACTED]. The passage of time has not affected my recollection of what happened. I have no idea why these things have been said about me. If a child had been treated in the manner described I accept that it would have been abuse.
100. HZY [REDACTED] says the following at paragraph 162 of his statement:  
"IAB [REDACTED] was another one. I think he hit KLP [REDACTED]"

I never abused [KLP] [KLP] was like a little lamb. I can't remember him doing anything wrong in any way. He introduced me to his father, who used to be a panel beater. He did a few jobs on my car. The allegation is a heap of rubbish. I never hit [KLP]. The passage of time has not affected my recollection of what happened. I can't explain why these things have been said about me. If a child was treated in the manner described then I accept it would have been abuse.

101. I do remember [HZY] a bit. He was in Rosemount, the unit where I worked. I remember that he used to be a pain in the neck. He was always attention seeking. I remember him always being in the office, asking if he could get this, could he go here, could he do that. I remember one Sunday that I was in the office. The phone rang. It was [HZY] father. Whoever was on staff with me was upstairs with the boys who were in at the weekend. [HZY] father asked if someone could come down and take [HZY] back to Oakbank. I'm sure he said that he was either smashing up his bedroom or he had fallen out with his father, but I'm not certain. I said I'd do it myself. When I got there, [HZY] was going on at his father. He walked out, went on the bus and came with me no bother at all. I'm sure [HZY] used to tell stories about different things.

### **Leaving Oakbank**

102. My son died in 2002. I left Oakbank around that time. I had an accident in the school. There was something going on in the classroom. There were four or five staff in the doorway. I went up into the classroom to see what was happening. As I went into the doorway, I slipped on floor tiles. I went up into the air and knew that I was going to hit my head. I moved my head forward and injured my neck. I was off for quite a few weeks.
103. About a year later, I had to go off work again. [REDACTED] wanted me to go to the school doctor, which I did. I went three or four times. [REDACTED] asked me what I actually did and I said that I worked in the classroom. At that time, there was a boy in the school who I had to restrain frequently. The doctor told me that I couldn't keep doing that. [REDACTED]

said that I could have a serious accident myself. [REDACTED] decided that they were going to retire me.

104. After I left Oakbank, I wanted to work as a driver for a day centre for mentally handicapped adults. I wrote to Mrs [REDACTED], SNR [REDACTED] to ask if she'd give me a reference. She sent me a letter saying that [REDACTED] wouldn't allow her to give me a reference. I got in touch with [REDACTED] HMY [REDACTED] and he provided me with a reference. I got the job.

### **Helping the Inquiry**

105. I've no idea why these allegations of abuse have been made. I can't explain why the Inquiry has information that the experiences of abuse some children had at Oakbank has continued to affect and impact their lives.
106. I think that youngsters should be spoken to outside of places like Oakbank, instead of a social worker coming in once a month. When I first came in, there were one or two social workers who used to take kids out and speak to them outside. I often think it was easy to stick kids into places like Oakbank.
107. We never had enough time to be with the boys and speak to them. It was always up and down to the classroom and looking for them if they disappeared. Latterly, the job I had was in the school rooms. I had a small office there. I asked SNR [REDACTED] why he didn't have that office for himself so he was right in the middle of the classrooms. It wouldn't then need the care workers to go up if there were any problems. He never did and I could never understand it. Eventually, he did get an office but it was away from the school. It would have given the care staff more time to spend with the boys. I think that would have been really helpful and it would have benefitted.
108. There was one boy who was always a bit of trouble. One day, I asked him to stop running about. I sat him down and said he was a super lad. He used to play the guitar. I told him we could get the headmaster to pay for guitar lessons and that he was a

nice lad. The next day, there was a letter from him on my desk. He was thanking me for saying that he was nice and said that nobody had ever told him that before. I later learned that he died after leaving Oakbank. I believe 99% of the boys and girls who went through Oakbank had never had anybody tell them that they were nice. I believe that every child has something good in them.

109. 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.....  
A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. The letters 'IAB' are printed in the top-left corner of this box.

Dated..... 3.9.24 .....