

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED] BHG

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] BHG. My maiden name was [REDACTED] BHG [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh. My father was called [REDACTED]. I think he was in the merchant navy or something like that. I can't remember his face. I must have been very young the last time I saw him.
3. My mother's name was [REDACTED]. I have heard that she was also known by the name of [REDACTED] but I don't know where that came from. She was married three times. I don't know much about her first marriage. I have only been able to get little snippets of information on that from my records. My father, [REDACTED] was her second marriage. The third man my mother married was called [REDACTED]. I think she was known as [REDACTED] after she married him.
4. My mother was apparently a very intelligent lady. She went to James Gillespie High School which I believe is a very good school. From what I've heard and what I've read about my mother she was a strong woman. I think she would have fought Goliath if she had to. However, she suffered from terrible depression. She suffered terrible anxiety. She was just not a well woman really. Looking back I understand more about my mother. She suffered terribly. I realise that she was neurotic.

5. I have two full brothers. My brother [REDACTED] is about two years older than me. My brother [REDACTED] is two years younger than me. I have a half-sister and half-brother called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Their father was the man who my mother first married. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are older than me. I'm not exactly sure of their ages. I think [REDACTED] was in the merchant navy. [REDACTED] lived with us also but I don't really remember that. I think she now lives in Oregon in America..
6. The first place I remember us living was Greendykes near Niddrie. We lived in a little prefab in a cul-de-sac. There was a big back garden which had a little stream at the bottom of it. There were rats. I remember my mother opening a box of cornflakes and a big rat jumping out. The other thing I remember is sleeping in the back bedroom and seeing the shadows of the trees outside against the back of my curtains. That always used to scare me as a child.
7. When I was about five I used to go to ballet. [REDACTED] used to do highland dancing. I think I quite liked it. I remember doing a little thing on a stage on my own. It was to The Blue Danube. Those are the only real early memories I have from when I was really young.
8. As time went on we lived in a lot of different houses and places. We never lived anywhere for any great length of time. It felt as if my mum was a bit of a gypsy. We were always moving here, there and everywhere. I think I went to a number of schools growing up. I think I went to a primary school on Preston Street at some point. I don't remember where we were living at that time. I don't really remember anything about the school or my schooling. My records say I went to Craigmillar Primary School for two years. I think that was the last school I went to before I went into care.
9. We had to look after ourselves when our mother went out. We were left on our own. At one point I remember living in Liberton. I would have been about seven. [REDACTED] was about five. We were out and [REDACTED] got knocked over by a car on Liberton Road. I don't think I was actually there when he was knocked down. I was most

likely playing or something like that. Apparently he was bounced along the road like a ball. [REDACTED] was taken to hospital. He ended up being in hospital for a long time. He suffered brain damage. I remember that when he came home he would go walkabout. He'd walk off and disappear. He ended up having to be put in [REDACTED] Children's Home in [REDACTED]

10. I think it was after the accident with [REDACTED] that my mum started to go a bit crazy. That was the tipping point. She became very stressed about what had happened to [REDACTED]. She was very upset. Apparently my mother was then given thalidomide. She wasn't pregnant at that time so I don't know why she was given that. One of the side effects of the drug was that she suffered peripheral neuritis. She became quite poorly.
11. I think it was in Liberton that my mum ended up marrying [REDACTED]. He lived with us. I remember being told by mother never to sit on his knee. There wasn't anything that happened but I was told to stay clear of him. I don't know whether he was a bit of a weirdo or something. My mother maybe just thought that she had to be careful when I was around him. I can remember being at the top of the stairs and hearing raised voices during that time. My mother was arguing with [REDACTED]. I looked down the stairs and saw my mum holding a carving knife. My mum saw me and told me to go back in my room. It was terrifying.
12. I remember that we ended up living in a place where my mum was looking after an elderly man who had tuberculosis. We all stayed in the one bedroom. My mum then got a job in an office at [REDACTED]. We later moved to the Gracemount area to a massive big tall flat.
13. I can't remember whether there was any involvement with the local authority or social services before I was placed into care. I have no recollection of people coming in to see me or anything like that. It wouldn't surprise me if there had been some sort of involvement. My mum was really going off the rails.

14. All I remember about being placed in care was that it was dark. [REDACTED] and I were told to put clothes into a little brown suitcase. My mother told us that she was taking us off and dumping us in a home. We didn't really know where we were going or what we were doing. I remember, even then, feeling a sort of sadness in my mind.
15. I have since learnt a bit more from the records I have recovered. In those records it says that my mother dropped off three children one evening at 8 o'clock at the children's department. I can't remember [REDACTED] being there at that time. I think he went to Craigerne earlier than that. They also say that my mother then handed over the keys to her flat and walked out. The records also say that my mother was thought to have gone to London but was not able to be located. They then say that we were hurriedly placed in one of the Church of Scotland's children's homes in the short term. They say that we were then going to be placed longer term in other children's homes.
16. Looking back I think my mother just wanted us to go away because she couldn't cope. I understand now that she was struggling to look after us whilst suffering from her mental health problems. As a child I did think that she didn't love us. I thought that because she was never there for us. I guess I just didn't understand it all back then.
17. My mum moved to America after we were placed in care. She apparently ended up working for the [REDACTED]. She said that they used to be friends. My mum would send pictures sometimes. I don't know where all those pictures went.

Unknown Church of Scotland Children's Home

18. I would have been about nine or ten when I was put into care. I don't remember anything about being in the Church of Scotland home. I don't know what it was called or where it was. I don't know how long I was there. [REDACTED] ended up going to a different home. He went to a place called, I think, William Golding Technical

School in Hertfordshire . It was a home where they got the residents to eventually do a trade.

Balcary Children's Home, Buccleuch Road, Hawick

Time spent in Balcary

19. I went to Balcary when I was nine or ten. I think I stayed there on and off until I was about fourteen. When my mother wasn't in America there were occasions when she took me out of the home. I can't remember how many times she did that. It might have been as long as a month at a time that she took me out.

Structure and layout of Balcary

20. Balcary is in Hawick. The home was run by Barnardos. I don't think I had ever been outside of Edinburgh before I went there. I'd say the age range of the children in the home was between three and fourteen or fifteen. There must have been about thirty odd kids in the home. It was both girls and boys but we were all kept separate. We didn't share dorms or bathrooms or anything like that. The only time we really were together was during mealtimes in the dining room. We had separate playrooms but sometimes we did play together. That didn't happen very often though.
21. There was a massive drive that swept right round leading up to the house. It was an old big house. It didn't look like a big rundown horrible old place. It was a nice house. The grounds were beautiful, they were neat and tidy. There were massive great fir trees everywhere. There was a field at the back of the house where they kept a donkey.
22. When you came into the house there was a massive big reception area with big wide lovely stairs going up. I remember sliding down the bannisters. I think I was just being mischievous. On the bottom floor there was a dining room, a medical room, playrooms, a TV room and an office. Further up the house there were separate

dorms for the boys and the girls which were further divided along age groups. On the right hand side of the house there were two or three dormitories for different aged girls. Right at the top of the house was a dorm for the older girls and a sewing room. The boys had dormitories separate from us in another wing.

Staff

23. Miss O'Brien was the matron of the home. I don't know why they called her a matron because she didn't have a medical role. She was in overall charge of everybody in the home. Her nickname was "Marmajee" or something like that. I don't know why we called her that as children. Miss O'Brien was lovely. She was a very loving motherly kind of person. She did a lot for the kids. She was a really nice lady.
24. Miss O'Brien lived on the first floor of the home. She had her own little flat in the building. Her flat was nearer to where the younger children slept. I can't remember whether any of the other staff slept in the building also but I think they might have. If they did I don't know where they would've slept.
25. Mr and Mrs Baron took over from Miss O'Brien when she retired. I would say they would've been about forty when they started. I think I was about twelve when they came in. I think Mr Baron is dead now but his wife might still be alive. They had a son called [REDACTED]. At first I wasn't sure of the Barons. Mrs Baron seemed quite "hoity toity". I think I was worried that Mr Baron might be a bit strict. I think that was just my first impressions of them though. I'd just been so used to being with another person. In the end I never ever really had any problems with them.
26. I remember that Mr Baron wrote a poem about one of my friends and I. It started "this is a tale of two bonnie wee lasses, who giggle and chatter whilst in their classes, the first is none to lean, complexion fair and teeth none too clean..." I can't remember the rest of it.
27. Below Miss O'Brien, and later the Barons, there were certain people who looked after certain groups of kids depending on their age and whether they were boys or

girls. Certain kids were delegated to certain members of staff. I don't know what sort of experience the staff had with looking after children. A lot of them were very young. I don't know whether they would have had any qualifications or anything like that.

28. Jasmine Bell used to look after the boys. I'm still in contact with her. She must have been about twenty odd when she was working in the home. She must be about seventy now.
29. Roberta looked after the girls. We called her "Bobby." She would have only been about twenty years old. I think she now lives in Lockerbie. She was really nice and I really liked her. I felt comfortable around her. She was the only member of staff that I really spoke to. I remember saying to her when I was a bit older "if I ever leave here will you let me live with you?" I felt so secure and safe with her.
30. I remember someone called Betty. I don't know who she was. I think she helped with the girls. I never really had any involvement with her but I do remember some of the other children not liking her very much. I don't know why some of the children felt that way. There was someone called Miss Hutcheson. I can't remember what she did. All I remember is her smoking in the kitchen. She always had a cigarette in her mouth. She also helped out with looking after the kids.
31. Ma Summers was the cook. She was a lovely big lady. She prepared all the meals. I remember her carrying all these big pots and pans around. There was a person that used the sewing room upstairs for repairing our clothes. I don't remember her name. I remember her sewing up tears that the girls had in their tights.

Friends in Balcary

32. I remember there being younger and older children there. However the children only really played with children who were their own age. You never really bothered with the young ones. Veronica "Ronnie" Hicks and Marjorie McFarlane were my two closest friends. Ronnie was in there from about the age of three or four. She had

come from quite a big family. We were always kept together. Another child I remember playing with was [REDACTED]. He was a little coloured boy. He was lovely. I also remember playing with a boy called [REDACTED] BKZ [REDACTED]

Routine at Balcary

First day

33. I can't remember how I got to the home. I remember seeing the house for the first time and thinking how big it was. I remember seeing the trees and the big old gardens. My first impressions were that it was like a prison or something. I was just a kid though. I grew to love that big old house. I don't know whether it was Miss O'Brien who met me. I know that she was always there for new people who came in. I think she helped me to settle in. I do remember worrying whether people weren't going to be nice to me. That's just how you thought as a kid. I was there trying to cope on my own. I just tried to be strong because there wasn't anything else I could do.

Daily routine

34. I think the people who looked after us came in and woke us all up. After that you went and washed yourself. I'm pretty sure we had to make our own beds. You then got your school uniform on. You had your breakfast at a certain time. I can't remember what time we had it. After breakfast we had to go into the medical room, line up and have a spoonful of malt and a spoonful of cod liver oil. It used to make me heave. I didn't like it but you had to have it. We also had to have Haliborange tablets. I didn't mind them. We all then walked to school. We weren't allowed to go down the main stairs to school. We had to use what they called "the shortcut" at the back of the house. I remember that Ronnie and I used to jump on the back of the bread van and hitch a lift to school. The driver wouldn't see us doing that.

35. When we got back from school we would change out of our uniform and hang it over a chair ready for the next day. We then put on our play clothes and either went out or to the playroom to play. We might have gone out to play after tea. I can't remember. At night we got to sit up and watch television. We would then go upstairs and get ready for bed. We would have to clean our teeth with that horrible toothpaste you used to get in a tin. It was called Gibbs. It was vile. Lights out was at a certain time. I think that was at eight o'clock or something like that.

Sleeping arrangements

36. There were four girls in my dorm. I shared mine with Ronnie Hicks and Marjorie McFarlane. There was somebody called [REDACTED] in our dorm but she wasn't there very long. I can't remember her much. Her brother was in Balcary as well. I think he was called [REDACTED].
37. The dorm wasn't bad. We had our own single beds. It was like hospital sheets on the beds. We used to have to make our own beds. I'm sure I remember having to make hospital corners. I think we had to do that in the mornings. I think you had a little locker and chair by the side of your bed where you could put your bits and pieces.

Washing and bathing

38. You never had baths and showers every day. I think you had a bath on a Sunday night and that was it. I think that was you for the week. There were different bathrooms for the boys and the girls. It was all kept separate. I don't know whether we were all given certain times to go for a bath. It was a single bath and you had your privacy. We didn't all sit in the same bath at the same time or anything like that.

Mealtimes / Food

39. All the children ate their meals together in the dining room. There was a massive big table. I don't remember if there were any other tables. I think you had to be "seen

and not heard” during mealtimes. You could ask for things to be passed to you but you couldn’t sit there making a racket. I suppose they couldn’t have that happening because there were so many of us. I think you had to ask to leave the table.

40. I think you had toast, cereal and things like that for breakfast. You had your marmalade and jam. I remember there was also marmite. I used to hate marmite. I also hated the porridge because it had lumps in it. I can’t really remember the food but I think, other than the porridge and marmite, it was alright. I am sure that you had to eat all of your meals. I think you had to try your best to finish everything. They never used to force feed you or anything like that if you couldn’t finish something.

Clothing / uniform

41. We had our normal clothes and a uniform for school. I remember wearing big brogue shoes for school. I didn’t like them. I used to hide another pair of shoes at the back and change into them on the way to school. We would get changed out of our uniform at night time and put on our jeans or whatever. I can remember Marjorie, Ronnie and I went up to the sewing room to make clothes. I made a mini denim skirt.
42. I think my mum used to send clothes to me. I think she sent in little bits and pieces. I don’t know whether the home also gave you some stuff. I have read letters from my mother in my records where she was angry that I was made to wear ankle socks rather than tights. I do remember wearing those woolly itchy tights. They were awful.

Pocket money and possessions

43. We used to get pocket money on a Saturday morning. We would all line up in the office and be given a brown envelope with a sixpence or a shilling in it. The people who looked after us would then take us to the shops in Hawick and let us buy what we wanted. I always used to buy broken tablet. They put it in a paper poke. It was

the best thing ever. I also used to buy a magazine called "Fab". It had all the music in it. Sometimes we used our pocket money to buy our own records.

44. I had a teddy bear. I think my mum sent that to me from America after I arrived at the home. I don't think I had any pictures or anything like that. I think you kept your sweets, magazines and things in your locker by your bed.
45. I think [REDACTED] uncle worked in either Dubai or Kuwait. His name was Uncle [REDACTED]. He was quite a wealthy man. He was amazing. He was a really nice person. I remember him bringing quite a lot of things into the home for the kids. He always brought in nice presents for all of us.

Chores

46. I think we had chores but I can't remember what they were. It would have been cleaning or whatever. I'm sure we had certain things to do. I don't know whether we had something like a rota for clearing the dishes away after meals.

School

47. The first school I went to after moving to Balcary was Drumlanrig Primary School. When I turned eleven I went to the big high school. It was called Hawick High School. I was never intelligent. I think that my schooling was interrupted through me being taken in and out of the home by my mother. I remember being rubbish at sewing. I couldn't work the machine properly. I was absolutely awful at maths. I used to get into trouble copying other people's answers. I just didn't get it. The only thing that I liked was art.
48. I was quite good at sports. I used to do hockey and netball. I was in the swimming team and was part of the swimming club. I remember doing relay races and getting a silver medal in a competition. I think the swimming was done outside of school hours. Bill McLaren was the PE teacher there. He later became a famous rugby commentator. He was a lovely man but he did give me the strap once. I had

forgotten my PE kit. He gave me the leather belt across my hand. It didn't half hurt. It stung like mad.

49. I think we did get homework. We did that in the home. I am sure that we got help from the staff when we got stuck. It was most likely Bobby who helped us.

Religious instruction

50. I think we had to say prayers before mealtimes in the home. I think that was it in terms of religion in the home itself. On Sundays we used to go to Sunday School at a church in Hawick. It was most likely a Church of Scotland church. I had never been to a church before I went to Balcary. It was a new experience for me. I found it boring. We had to go though.

Leisure time

51. We had free time to ourselves. There was never anything like "right just get up to your bedroom" or anything like that. We were allowed to play. There was a playroom for the girls. We had dolls houses, dolls and prams in the playroom. I loved my music. We had one of those old record players which could stack three records at a time. Sometimes we played our own records on that record player. There was a TV room for everybody. We got to watch television in there at night. You could read a book there if you wanted to. I wasn't into my reading though.
52. You could go out in the grounds and into the park to play. We used to climb trees. I was always up a tree. I loved climbing trees. I remember one occasion where I wouldn't come down from a tree because I said I wanted to be sent to America to be with my mum. We used to make little gang huts in the woods.
53. I remember the snow and going on sledges. The snow could get really thick in Hawick. I remember going down the "the short cut" on a sledge. There were all these knobbly bits of trees in the way. You used to hit them and get knocked off your sledge.

54. There was a donkey that was kept to the rear of the house. His name was Dobbin. He was lovely. I remember going on the back of Dobbin and sitting too far back. He bolted up and I was thrown off of him but I was alright.
55. I was in the brownies and the girl guides. I was a "gnome" in the brownies. I can't remember where we went to go to the brownies and the guides. There must have been camps but I don't remember them. I don't think I was part of any other clubs outside of the home.

Trips / Holidays

56. I can't remember much about the actual holidays and trips themselves. I don't remember what we did, when we went or anything like that. We sometimes used to go to North Berwick. I'm sure we used to stay in a place when we went on trips to North Berwick. I can't remember the name of the place. I think North Berwick was too far away for us to be just doing a day trip. I remember we visited a place called Humbie. I don't know whether it had anything to do with Barnardos. All I remember is that we stayed in these little house type things. I remember once going to Hadrian's Wall but I can't remember whether that was with the school.
57. You were allowed to go and stay with people who you liked after they left. It was like a little holiday for a weekend or something like that. I went to stay with Marjorie after she had left Balcary.

Birthdays and Christmas

58. I can't remember anything about birthdays. Christmases were lovely. They were really nice. The staff put out a little red pillar box. You would write a little letter to Santa telling him what you wanted and posted it into that box. There was a big Christmas tree in the reception area.

59. When you woke up on Christmas day you would find a massive pillow case full of toys. I think people donated the toys to the home. Sometimes you got the things that you wanted. We used to get dressed up for Christmas day. I remember wearing a big red velvet dress with black shoes. I can't remember anything else about what we ate or did on Christmas day itself but I do remember the toys.

Visits from family, returning home with mother and visiting mother in mental institution

60. Some of the children in the home had parents who would come into the home on a Saturday and take them out for the day. It was usually single mums or dads but it could be whoever.
61. I never saw my mum during the time she was in America. I always remember looking out and feeling upset because I wasn't getting a visit. I used to cry when my mum didn't come. The other children would be getting taken out by the people who were visiting them and I would be left sitting on my own. It was kind of sad. Nobody really spoke to me when I didn't get visits.
62. When my mum wasn't in America she did come to visit me at the home. She would sometimes take me out of the home and then find out she couldn't cope and put me back in. That disrupted my schooling and my childhood. It was hard on me.
63. One time my mother took me out and didn't take me back again. I remember that the police were called out to find me. I can remember being at my mother's home one time during a visit and doing something wrong. I can't remember what I did. My mother got a leather belt out and hit me with it. She got [REDACTED] to hold me down so she could hit me. It was awful. I remember thinking "how can you do this?" I do look back on that and ask myself "why did my brother hold me down? Why didn't he stick up for me?" I was most likely taken back to the home after that incident. I suppose I likely got taken back on a train when I was returned to the home. I don't know who took me. I wouldn't have been on my own.

64. I think that it was during one of my times going back with my mother that she attempted to commit suicide. She ended up bashing her head in the bathroom. I found her. It was awful to see. We had to ring for an ambulance. I was with [REDACTED] I think I was then taken back to the home again.
65. They eventually ended up putting my mother in a mental institution. I don't remember where that was. I went to visit her and she was on a mattress on the floor. There was nothing else in the room. She was drugged up to her eyeballs. She didn't know who I was.
66. During the holiday times in the summer my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would sometimes come and stay with me in Balcary. They stayed in the boys part. I think that was alright. We weren't used to being a family though. We weren't close. To me it felt sometimes that my brothers were strangers. I don't think I had any contact with my brothers outside of those visits. We didn't write or anything like that.

Visits from social workers / Inspections

67. I don't remember there being any social worker assigned to me whilst I was in Balcary but there must've been one. I don't recall having any visits whilst I was in the home from people who were social workers. I don't remember having any visits from anyone other than my mum. I can't remember anyone speaking to me about how long I would be in the home or anything like that.
68. I have looked through some of the records I have recovered and there is mention of a Mrs Hunter and Miss Garland. They appear in a lot of the correspondence. I don't know who they are or how they were involved in my care. They could have been involved with Banardos or the local authority. They seem to be providing updates in the correspondence on my care and how my mother was. Their names are throughout the correspondence but I don't ever remember meeting either of them.
69. I can't remember anyone coming in to inspect the home.

Letters and telephone

70. My mother wrote to me but I think the letters were sent to somebody to read before they came to me. I think that was what my mother thought. Some of the letters I have found in my records are addressed to someone else. I don't know whether they were forwarded on to me.
71. Late one night Miss O'Brien woke me up out of my bed. It was the middle of the night. Miss O'Brien told me that my mother was on the phone. She picked me up and took me to the phone in her apartment. My mother was calling me from America. I don't remember what my mum said. I remember going back to bed after speaking with my mum and crying my eyes out. I can't remember anyone speaking to me. Miss O'Brien might have come and spoken to me but I can't remember that.

Healthcare

72. I remember a nit nurse used to come in to inspect you. A doctor would come in to give you your injections. There were proper nurses and doctors who came to the home. I can't remember going to see a dentist.
73. I suffered from terrible eczema. I've seen in my records that it got so bad when I was really young that I ended up in hospital for nine months. I don't remember that happening but it was before I went to Balcary. I do remember my skin weeping and it being very sore when I was in the home. I can't remember whether I saw a doctor or went to hospital when my eczema got really bad. All I remember is having cream plastered onto me and then my arms being wrapped. I used to scratch at my arms in my sleep. They ended up having to put cotton gloves on my hands so that I wouldn't scratch myself at night.
74. I don't remember seeing any other children getting medical treatment because they were ill or after they had injured themselves. I'm sure that if there was a problem someone came in or you got taken out to see someone.

75. I can't remember anyone talking about periods around me starting them. I don't even remember starting.

Sneaking out of the home at night

76. We used to sometimes sneak out at night. I don't know how we managed to sneak out but we did. There mustn't have been people looking in on us. We used to go down the back stairs. We must have been about eleven when we did that. I did that with a lad called [REDACTED] BKZ [REDACTED] I think [REDACTED] was also involved. We used to go over to the park. I think we even used to go into town. It was pitch black. I guess we didn't see the dangers back then. We could have been murdered or anything. I don't know why we did it. We maybe only did it as an adventure. My friend Marjorie has since told me that we once got caught by the police. Apparently we got a right telling off by the police. I can't remember any of that happening. All I remember is sneaking out.

Bed-wetting

77. There were rubber sheets on the beds in case people wet the bed. They were awful. I don't think I wet the bed. If people wet the beds then the sheets were thrown out of the dorm. I remember seeing sheets outside of the boys dorms when I went out in the mornings. I wouldn't know who were the ones who were wetting their beds.

Discipline and punishment

78. I don't think we ever got punished or anything like that. We did get told off though. I should imagine there were sets of rules for certain things. I can't remember being hit with a stick, cane or anything like that. I never saw that happening to anyone else. I never saw anybody else being hit or slapped. I don't remember anyone speaking to me about things like that.

Abuse at Balcary

79. I never experienced any abuse when I was in the home.

Leaving Balcary

80. I don't remember being sat down in the home and being spoken to about what was going to happen. I don't remember anything surrounding actually leaving the home itself. All I remember about leaving is ending up back at home with my mum and ultimately getting a job.

Life after being in care

81. My mother got a house just outside of Edinburgh. I went to live with her. I can't remember whether [REDACTED] lived with us as well. I found living with my mum hard. It was very difficult. I don't know whether it was because I had become a little bit rebellious.
82. I used to go out to discos. I remember on one occasion that I was going to go to a disco. My mum found out that I was going. She hid my makeup from me. I remember using shoe polish for mascara instead. I ended up with big puffed up eyes the following day. I looked like a panda. One time I went to the disco and, whilst I was there, somebody told me that my mum was outside. I hid in the toilet.
83. My mother used to get the police out on me all the time. One time I was put in a place where kids were put to provide respite for their parents. I don't know where or when that was. I was in there for a few days. My mum came to see me. She slapped me across my face. Things weren't easy. I think I was going down a destructive path. I ended up sleeping with a few people. I think I was looking for someone to love me. I was looking in all the wrong places. I was making all the wrong choices.

84. I didn't get any support at all from the home after I left. Nobody came to see me to ask how I was doing. The only person I had to speak to was my mum and she was neurotic.
85. The first main job I had after leaving care was as a general clerk with the co-op. I worked on the switchboard. I later went on to work for a company called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] They were based in Gorgie. It was a foundry but I worked in the office.
86. I think it was after I had that job that things went haywire. I just wanted to get away. I wanted to clear away. I ended up hitchhiking to Cornwall with two guys I knew. I must have been only sixteen or seventeen when I did that. I think I got a job down there working in a holiday camp. I think after that I lived all over the place. I remember living in Manchester.
87. My mother committed suicide when I was eighteen. I didn't even cry. I don't know whether it was because I thought that she hadn't been there for me. I feel awful about that because, at the end of the day, she was my mum.
88. When I was about nineteen, I ended up in Corby. That's where I got married the first time round. I had a daughter called [REDACTED]. I don't see much of her nowadays. The marriage only lasted about four years.
89. I ended up seeing another guy. He was getting into trouble for drugs and things like that. I never did drugs though. I ended up pregnant and I split up with the baby's father. I had a little girl called [REDACTED] Her name got later on changed to [REDACTED] I gave her up for adoption. I was going through a bad time and I knew that I wouldn't be able to cope. Doing that was an awful thing that I have to live with for the rest of my life. [REDACTED] did come looking for me in later life when she was eighteen. We are back in touch and we're the happiest.
90. I don't know what I did after that. I ended up with friends in Manchester and Hemmel Hempstead. I ultimately came up to Leicester where I met [REDACTED] When we first met

I was twenty nine and he was eighteen. We eventually married. We have been married now for thirty five years. I have two children to [REDACTED]. Their names are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are brilliant kids. They've never given me any problems. I've also got grandchildren. I just love them so much. I think, in the end, I settled into my own space and found happiness.

91. When [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to school I got a job as a playground assistant. I ended up coming into the school and helping out with the children who had special needs. I enjoyed that. I think I could relate to the children because I too had problems as a child. I think I could understand where the children were coming from. I then got offered a job at a high school looking after one boy who had cerebral palsy. Those were the best three years of my life. I loved that job. He was a fantastic lad. He was a little star. I retired after that job.

Impact

92. I don't care what anybody says but being placed into care is a big thing. It affects you for the rest of your life. It is a hard thing to explain to other people who haven't walked in your shoes. They just don't understand.
93. I never had years of being in one house or with one family. I went from one house to another, then I was in a children's home, then I was in and out of the children's home. I found that quite traumatic. It could be because of that, when I look back at my life, it feels like a jigsaw and I can't find all of the pieces. It could be that I have forgotten things because I don't want to remember them.
94. I think because I didn't have a constant upbringing I sometimes feel that I don't have an identity. Although I am happy now and have a fabulous family, I do still think "who am I?" It's silly but I still feel as if there is something still missing. I don't know what that thing is but I feel that way. Sometimes I wish that that feeling would go away. I think that has affected my self-esteem. I'm pretty easy going most of the

time but sometimes I can't face something or do something because of the way I feel.

95. I'm not brilliant at trusting people. I'm funny with trusting people. I don't know what it is. I have got a couple of friends but I don't really have what I would call "bestest friends". I prefer it to be just me and my family. All that might go back to my time in care and not being able to trust my mum.
96. We never really grew up together as a proper family. We were never in the same place together. We never really settled together. My brothers visited when I was in the home and I have kept in contact with them since but we are not close. I used to worry when [REDACTED] visited in adult life because he could just snap. I was worried about him around my children. I wanted to protect them. Because of that I am not in contact with him much now. I don't think that we're very close.
97. I've never thought about whether I would've liked to have been kept together with my brothers when I was placed into care. There were other children in the home that had their siblings there. Ronnie had several brothers and sisters in Balcary. I think there was about four or five of the [REDACTED] family there. There was another family of three that went by the family of [REDACTED]. I understand why I wasn't kept together with [REDACTED] because he was in a special school. However, I don't know why I wasn't kept together with [REDACTED]. Maybe it was because he had to go and do his carpentry trade in William Goldings.
98. I think I have protected my children too much. I am really protective of my children. I wish I hadn't been so protective. I've wrapped them up in cotton wool. I worry about anyone hurting my kids. I have stopped my kids doing things because I get worried about them. I think the way I have been brought up has led to me being too protective. Sometimes I think I've brought my children up in a bit of a bubble.

Breakdown, treatment and coping with anxiety

99. My husband was friendly with a man who he ran children's football with. The man was married to a woman who was a little bit withdrawn. For some reason we decided to go on holiday to France as a family with them. I went along with it but I felt uneasy about it.
100. We discovered whilst we were in France that the wife was a drinker and that they were having problems in their marriage. One rainy day my husband mentioned that we should have gone further South because the weather was better down there. The wife then started going off on one. She was being horrible and nasty to everybody. My kids were there. They were about nine and eleven. They had never ever seen anyone behaving like that. The wife was just really horrible and drunk. We were frightened. The following day we decided to go our own way and leave. The husband was apologetic about his wife. We ended up staying in another campsite elsewhere.
101. After we got back I started to become anxious about seeing the wife at the football again. I had a sick feeling in my stomach about it all. I eventually went to the football to see the kids play. The first time she wasn't there. After a few times of going the wife eventually turned up. I ended up marching down the touchline and going to grab her. Two of my husband's friends had to hold me off. I don't know why I did it. I don't like confrontation. I always try to avoid it. It was awful.
102. After that incident I began to go downhill. For some reason it all really got to me. I didn't want to see or talk to anyone. I couldn't stop crying. I went to see my doctor and told him what had happened. In the end I had to see a psychiatrist at the hospital because I was having a bit of breakdown. I talked about my childhood and what had happened with mum. I got put on tablets for anxiety and depression. I ended up going for cognitive behavioural therapy. I don't think it worked. I don't think any of it, if I am honest, really helped. The anxiety is implanted in my brain. Maybe I'll never ever change.

103. There's so many people out there with anxiety. It is difficult for people who don't suffer from it to understand what it's like. They'll say "oh just pull yourself together." They don't quite understand it. It's a horrible thing to go through. In hindsight, I think I've had anxiety all of my adult life. I could have got that from my mother and my childhood. I'm better now but I'm on medication. I take citalopram. It keeps me calm. I think it just covers up the anxiety which is always there. If I don't take my tablets I get really worried and anxious. It's really silly because I have my family and a good life but some days I think that I have got nothing to look forward to. I just feel that way and I can't stop it.

Records and making contact with friends from Balcary

104. About six or seven years ago I started wondering whether Barnardos had any records concerning me. I think I rang up their office in London. I said I had been in Balcary and asked them if they had any information about me as a child. They told me that they had my records. I thought to myself "why the bloody hell didn't they tell me that in the past?" I had to be the one who called them to ask whether there were records. They didn't contact me. They'd been holding all these files for all these years and never ever thought to get in contact. Surely nowadays they can find out where people are? I am glad that I rang and got hold of my records. I am pleased that I have got them. However, I wish Barnados had let me know earlier that they had them.
105. Barnardos posted the records to me. I sat down with my daughter and read them. We both cried as we read through them. It all came flooding back. It was like a little can of worms. That was my life in there. There was no support from Barnardos with me looking through those records. I was left to look through them on my own.
106. For years and years I lost touch with people who had been in the home with me. When Facebook came along it all seemed to happen quickly. We all got in contact with one another. We were then speaking on the phone together and talking about

what we remembered. I ended up finding Ronnie and going to see her in Cornwall. I met up with her. We talked about our time in Balcary.

Lessons to be Learned

107. Going into care is heart breaking but sometimes it just can't be helped. As a child I thought that my mother didn't care. Now I am older I have learnt more about how my mother was suffering. I understand more what she was going through.
108. All these things happened in my childhood and I had nobody to turn to. I couldn't turn to my mum because of her problems. Your mother is supposed to be the closest person in your life. However, if you can't trust your mother then who can you trust? I had to be tough as a child because I had no other choice. I had to get on with things.
109. I had no one to ask questions. I don't think I would've even been able to know the questions to ask when I was a kid. I can't remember anyone ever sitting me down and saying "look **BHG** your mum is really suffering and she has got to go away to try to sort herself out. In the meantime we are going to take care of you." I had to cope with things myself. I had to try and jolly myself up and carry on.
110. I think that if I had had somebody to sit down with and talk about things with it would have helped. You never ever got any counselling. Nowadays you would see a counsellor and get some help. Back then you had to cope with everything on your own. I found that quite difficult. There should be someone available now for kids to speak to. There should have been someone who could have talked to me and helped me understand what was going on a little better.
111. As a child you don't always understand things as clearly as you do when you are an adult. However, they could have even sat you down every few years and had a talk with you. I think that kids in care definitely need someone to talk to.

112. I think that when children leave care there should be someone who keeps a check on how they are getting on. I never had anyone like that. I can't remember having any support from anyone or anywhere after I left care. All I had was my mum to turn to.
113. The reason I am speaking to the Inquiry is because I want to help. I think the Inquiry is important. I know it is all in the past but I want to help children who are in care now. I don't know what has happened in everybody else's lives but I hope that people get something out of the Inquiry. I just hope that out of all of this comes some happiness.
114. 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 BHG

Dated 29/8/18.