

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of:

MHS

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is MHS. My date of birth is the 1967 and I am 51 years old. When I was in care I was known as MHS. I have also been known as MHS which is the surname of my birth father and MHS which was the maiden name of my mother. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

2. The institutions where I was in care and I want to tell you about were as follows. I cannot be exact about the dates. (1) 1973 – 1976 on two occasions – Wallhouse Children's Home, Torphichen, West Lothian. (2) 1977 – Caldergrove Children's Home, Sighthill, Edinburgh. (3) 1978 – 1979, Bathgate Children's Home, Bathgate, West Lothian. (4) 1980 – 1981 – Howdenhall Assessment Centre, Howdenhall Road, Edinburgh. (5) 1981 – 1983 – St Ninian's Children's Residential School, Falkland, Fife

Life before going into care

3. I can't recall much of my early life. My mother split up with my birth father who was of Polish extract and was called . I have little or no memory of him. I do recall that my mother had a few boyfriends and at one stage we might have emigrated to New Zealand. I also recall that I spent a bit of time living with my grandparents. I had a brother who was two years older than me.

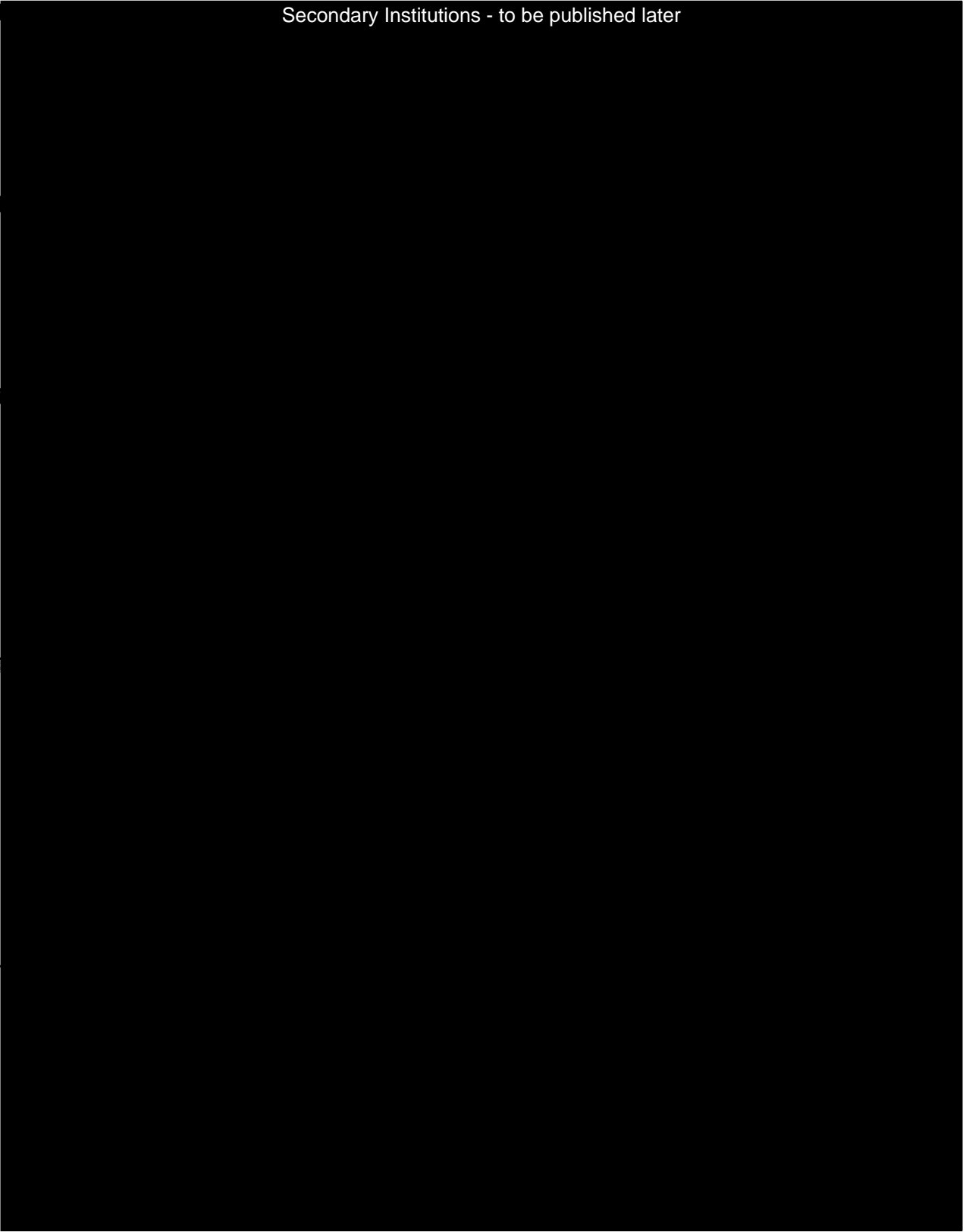
4. My mother met my stepfather [REDACTED] and they got married. [REDACTED] was from Scotland. I began life as a Protestant but became a Catholic under the influence of my stepfather.
5. My stepfather was always getting into trouble with the Police and spent a bit of time in jail. He was not liked by any of my mother's family. When they first met my mother was advised by her family not to have anything to do with him. I think that I would be about five or six years old when he first entered my life.
6. My stepfather started being abusive towards us. He would get drunk and hit us for no apparent reason. I was living in the house where there was always a fear that we were going to be assaulted by him. We were assaulted on a regular basis. At this time I was attending Boghall Primary School.
7. I lost contact with my mother's family who did not like my stepfather. On the odd occasion a cousin or it may have been an aunty of mine would babysit for my mother. She was very good to us. One day, when she was babysitting and was leaving she heard my stepfather "setting about" my brother and me. I think she was so appalled with what she heard she reported my father to my step Uncle [REDACTED]. He in turn told my stepfather that he was taking [REDACTED] and me for the weekend to prevent any further abuse. The Social Services and the Social Work Department became involved.
8. I can't recall the names of the Social Workers I was dealing with. I was about seven or eight years of age and it was decided that my brother and I should be taken from the house and put into a place of safety. The Social Work Department sent me to a local children's home in Torphichen in West Lothian. It was called Wallhouse Children's Home.
9. I was to spend two periods of time at Wallhouse. The first occasion I was taken there by the Police and the I think that the second time was when a family member reported my stepfather to the social work department. On the first occasion I would estimate I was at Wallhouse for eighteen months and about a year the second time.

10. I recall at this time being reintroduced to my birth father [REDACTED]. I think that I met him at Wallhouse. The Social Workers realised that going to stay with him was not an option so instead I was to remain at Wallhouse Children's Home. I think that the decision to send me to Wallhouse might have been the result of a Children's Panel but I had no say or input into where I was going.

Wallhouse Children's Home, Torphichen, West Lothian 1973 - 1975

11. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
12. [REDACTED]
13. [REDACTED]
14. [REDACTED]

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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St Ninian's Children's Residential School, Falkland, Fife 1982

81. The Children's Panel had deemed that I should be sent to St Ninian's in Falkland. It was a children's residential school run by the Christian Brothers. I was now about fourteen years of age and yet again I had no say in where I was going or what was happening to me. I was known as **MHS** when I was in care at St Ninian's.

First day at St Ninian's

82. I was taken there by my social worker Eleanor. I remember that when I arrived I thought it was just like Wallhouse Children's Home where I had been previously. It was a huge house in its own grounds. I remember the first persons I met were Brother Farrell who was the headmaster and Brother Kelly who was his assistant.

83. The Brothers explained the routine of the home to me. They told me what they expected of me and where to go to school. What time to get up and what the meal times were. The place just didn't feel right to me.
84. There was a basement, the main floor and an upstairs. The basement had the kitchens, the ground floor had the television room, a gymnasium and there were some classrooms. The dormitories were upstairs and Brother Farrell had his bedroom up there. Brother Kelly also slept on the upper floor near to the dormitories. There were three other Brothers who lived on the first floor.
85. There were about thirty boys at the school ranging in age between twelve and sixteen. There were dormitories with four boys per room. The only boys I can remember are [REDACTED] from Perth, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] MCU, [REDACTED] wee [REDACTED] whose surname I can't remember and [REDACTED], so called because every game we played he always got hurt. There was also a boy called [REDACTED] who lived in Edinburgh. Some weekends I went home and stayed with him and his family in Edinburgh.

Routine at St Ninian's

86. We got up about eight in the morning and then went for breakfast. You took turns to do the dishes and wash up. You would then get ready for classes. You had the classes in the morning and afternoon with lunch in between.
87. There was a lot of physical exercise. You would do cross country running and had to run to the top of Lomond Hill. I always remember coming down was the most dangerous because some of the boys would roll down and knock you over if you got in the way. Some of the boys would shout "look out it's a roller".
88. At night time I would play in the grounds or watch television. I think that you had to be in bed by nine and lights off at ten. You did get a cup of tea and a biscuit before you went to bed. I remember one of the Brothers would sneak about the dormitories touching up the boys. I was a bed wetter still so I was left alone.

89. After you had been at St Ninian's for a few months you were able to go home every second weekend although I didn't bother. I sometimes went and stayed with the family of one of the other boys but I didn't want to go back home. I had to occasionally go home.

Food

90. The food was very good and there was plenty of choice. There were there different cooks. There was set meals for each day of the week. Friday was always fish but because I didn't like it they would give me something else. I can't remember anyone being punished for not eating their food.

Staff

91. Brother **MBS** had a room on the first floor. Everybody liked Brother **MBS** Brother **MHG** was another Brother and Brother **MBV** was only there now and again. **MCG** was a teacher at the school. Mr **MIK** was a teacher. The teachers did not live at the school but the Brothers all had their own rooms.

School

92. The classes were held in the grounds of the home. They were quite relaxed. You were taught by lay people who lived nearby. You did not have a lot of contact with them because after school was over they went home. I had no issues with the teachers. It was at the time of the Falklands war. I can recall going into Kirkcaldy when I was about fifteen and I tried to join the army. They found out I was only fifteen and I was too young to join.

Leisure/trips and sport

93. I loved the cross country and all the football we played. We used to play five a side football and I became the goalkeeper because people couldn't get the ball past me. I had told the previous goalie that he was useless and so took over the position.
94. I was also remember we used to on army camps run by the army cadets although I was not a member of the army corps. Sometimes the Brothers came with us. We used to go to Glenshee skiing with the army cadets.
95. We went on summer camps. I can't remember where but we would do rock climbing and abseiling. I didn't enjoy that because I was afraid of heights. I remember one year in the summer we went to Liverpool to another home run by the Christian Brothers. It was open to the boys who did not go home during the summer holidays.
96. I recall on the trip to Liverpool one of the boys called [REDACTED] was a very bad snorer. We got up in the night and carried his bed outside and set him up in the grounds where he woke in the morning.
97. The Brothers always accompanied us on these trips during the summer and winter.

Discipline/punishment

98. The Christian Brothers had organised the older boys to keep us in line. The Brothers didn't have to punish you because they used the older boys to hand out any beatings. It was deliberately planned by the Brothers.
99. You could be sent to the office of Brother Farrell who was the headmaster. He would give you the belt if you misbehaved. The teachers at school didn't belt you but they sent to you to Brother Farrell and he would be the one that belted you. I don't think

that I was punished in front of the other children. You were always hit on the hand with a school belt.

Washing and bathing

100. There were set nights for showers and baths. You were bathed according to your age. Every month you also had what we referred to as "jungle juice" poured over your head. I think that is was for nits and was a soapy mixture. Some of the older boys would touch you up on the instructions of the Brothers. I can't re-call the names of those boys.

Chores

101. I did do some cleaning but not very much. The older boys did most of the cleaning because they would be paid for it. I did do altar boy duties on occasion at the chapel in the home or the local church in Falkland. I was now a Roman Catholic.

Religion

102. You had to say prayers and also attend mass in the chapel attached to the home. In fact I was banned from being an altar boy because my friend [MCU] and I got caught drinking the communion wine. The Priest went mad at us and we were punished but I can't recall what the punishment was.

Bed wetting

103. If I wet the bed I just changed the sheets and took them to the laundry. All the other boys knew that you wet the bed because you had plastic sheets on it. You weren't punished for bed wetting. I was too scared to get up to the toilet because I didn't want to encounter any of the Brothers. They stopped giving me drinks after a certain time at night and the problem eventually went away.

Running away

104. The first night I was there I ran away after the boys had touched me up in the shower. I made my way to the town and got into an orchard. The police found me there eating apples and took me back to St Ninian's. I didn't tell the police why I ran away.
105. I think that it was Brother Farrell who met me when I was brought back by the police. He didn't punish me but sat down with me and explained that a lot of boys are unsettled when they first come to the home but in the course of time I will get used to it. I didn't tell him what had happened. I knew how to survive in children's homes.
106. I did run away on another occasion but I didn't know where I was going and went round in a big circle until I was back at the home. I ran away on that occasion because I was upset and had had enough of the routine at St Ninian's.

Pocket money

107. You got so much pocket money a week depending on your behaviour and you could spend that money on sweeties from the tuck shop.

Clothing

108. St Ninian's provided clothing for you. You were able to pick stuff that had been handed in by different people. It was obviously done by size. You had a wardrobe that you could store your clothes in.

Healthcare

109. The local doctor would come to the home. Once or twice I went visit the dentist in Markinch. I can't recall ever having to see the doctor.

Visits/inspections

110. After I had been at St Ninian's for a year I was allowed to go back home at weekends. I would get a taxi to Markinch and then the train to Edinburgh and onward to Bathgate. My family had moved house but I stayed with them on occasional weekends. There was still a problem with my stepfather but I was older now.
111. I was still receiving regular visits from my social worker about every three months. I couldn't tell the social worker what was going on.

Birthdays/Christmas

112. Your birthday was celebrated and you used to get "the dumps", thumps on the back, from the other boys. I was there for two birthdays and two Christmases. Christmas was alright I got presents and I also think that I went home for a while. The social worker also gave you a present.

Work experience

113. When I was at St Ninian's and getting near leaving time I was sent to a bakery in Kirkcaldy to gain some work experience. I really enjoyed that apart from getting locked in the van one day and nearly being taken in the back to Glasgow. I would always bring back leftover cakes back to St Ninian's for the other boys.

Abuse at St Ninian's

114. The abuse started the first night I was there. After one of the boys had shown me round I was told by either Brother Farrell or Brother Kelly to go and have a shower. A group of the boys came into the bathroom and started to touch me up when I was naked. I heard a member of staff coming who asked what was going on. On reflection, I suspect now Brother Kelly knew what was happening and orchestrated it. The boys ran off. I felt so bad about what had happened I ran away that night.

115. During the night I could see one of the Brothers, I am not sure which one, sneaking about the dormitories. He would be putting his hands under the bed sheets and touching up the boys. I would hear the boys telling him to get off them. I was never bothered by this because I was a bed wetter and the abusers didn't like that. I still lay in bed terrified that he would come to me. The boys in the home just never talked with each other about what was happening in the night. It was never mentioned.
116. You couldn't tell anyone what was happening through the night. One of the boys, whose name I can't remember, told his social worker what had happened. He was made to sleep outside in just his pyjamas for the next few nights. One of the other boys who tried to get a blanket to him was also punished by being made to sleep outside in just his pyjamas. I had my persona from the years in care and knew to keep my head down and say nothing.
117. When you were bathing, some of the older boys would "touch you up" in a sexual manner. I can't be sure but I think they were doing it on the orders of Brothers Kelly and Farrell. I went to Brother Farrell and told him that this was happening to me. At that moment I became one of Farrell's favourites. He gave me cuddles and reassured me that everything would be alright. I had only been there about three weeks. This meant that I would go to his room and eat sweeties with the other younger boys. We would all be touching each other and Brother Farrell. We would engage in sex acts with each other. Brother Farrell would masturbate and I would have to masturbate him. We would act as a group. I can't remember the other boys' names. The sex always happened at the weekend when the "coast was clear" and there were no other staff to disturb you.
118. There were two different "camps" in the school. You were either in Brother Kelly's camp or Brother Farrell's camp. Because I was in with Brother Farrell I would often pass Brother Kelly in the corridor and he would hit me with his hand for no reason. He also sexually assaulted me by grabbing my private parts. This happened to me on a few occasions.

119. One of the weekends I was at the St Ninian's I was invited to Brother Kelly's room along with the other boys. After a while some of the boys grabbed me and took down my trousers. They pinned me to the bed. I could feel Brother Kelly rubbing his penis against me. At that moment one of the boys who was pinning me down called **MCU** who I became very friendly with whispered in my ear don't struggle because he likes it when you struggle. I managed to take my mind out of the room while Brother Kelly raped me.
120. After this happened I sat down with **MCU** and we talked about what had happened. He didn't want to speak to me in the school so we went to a place in the grounds. **MCU** told me that this had been happening to him for six years since he went to the school. He told me that I couldn't tell anyone because the Brothers had the backing of the Catholic Church and were too powerful. No one would believe us.
121. I found out that some of the boys were sleeping in Brother Kelly's room. They boys would get sweets and juice. I think that **MCU** and **MCU** were both Kelly's favourites.
122. **MHG** arrived at St Ninian's about six months before I left. He tried to be affectionate towards me but I pushed him away. I told Brother Farrell what happened and he had a word with him and told him to leave me alone.
123. I looked up to Brother Farrell as a "father figure" and I became so used to being abused I would have been upset if he stopped treating me as one of his favourites. I coped with what was happening because I pretended that it was happening to someone else. I thought that I was receiving attention and love that I hadn't had that growing up. I needed that attention.
124. Just before the residential school closed down all the boys were taken individually to see Brother Farrell and Brother Kelly. We were told in no uncertain terms that there were three reasons that we could not tell anyone what had happened at St Ninian's. They told us no one would believe us, they knew where our families lived and that they had the backing of the Catholic Church. We were too frightened to say anything.

Leaving St Ninian's Residential Children's Home, Falkland, Fife 1983

125. After I left St Ninian's, within a few months I went back to visit Brother Farrell who was still there but the feeling of love and affection had gone. It was just not the same and that affected me badly because of the feelings I thought I had for him and him for me.
126. When I went back on that visit to St Ninian's I was treated differently. I think that they were trying to raise money to keep the school open. I think that I was too old for Brother Farrell so I was of no interest to him. It made me feel angry and let down.
127. When I left the school I was sixteen and had to go home. I was still under the care of the social work department and would remain under their care for a further few months. When I got home my stepfather was still there along with my half-sisters. My brother [REDACTED] was still in care somewhere.

Life after being in care

128. I went on Youth Training Schemes but I couldn't hack it. I left home and lived on the street for a while. My brother got married and I lived with him for a while. I was living in Edinburgh and my stepfather wouldn't let me in the house because he was afraid that I had contacted AID's when I was living in Edinburgh. I was now about nineteen and on my own.
129. When I was sixteen I think that there was a meeting with my social worker when I was finally discharged from their care but I can't remember the details. I had lived in various hostels and also stayed with different family members until I finally ended up with [REDACTED].
130. I met [REDACTED] through the Pentecostal Church on George IVth Bridge in Edinburgh. I went to stay with them and they treated me like their son. I

called them mum and dad. There was never any official relationship with them. They lived in Edinburgh.

131. I moved out from their house just before I got married when I was 23 years old. My mum advised me against marriage but I suppose love was blind. I had been working for a removal company.
132. In 1990 I got married to my wife [REDACTED] I was married for 24 years. My daughter was born in 1991. I had another child in 1993. My wife and I had difficulties in our marriage and although we split up we still lived together. I moved back to Bathgate and my wife [REDACTED] got a job. She had been suffering from post-natal depression just after the birth of our first child. I then move to Whitburn. I was working six days a week [REDACTED] and so life was not easy as all my wages went on the household bills. [REDACTED] thought that because she was working the wages she earned were hers.
133. My marriage did eventually break up. I suffered from two strokes and was off sick for a long period. I was being pressurised by the [REDACTED] I worked for to get back to work. I was not functioning properly and couldn't think straight.
134. About five years ago I was found guilty of sexual abuse on a [REDACTED] that I had shown affection to. At that time I was going through hell and had tried to take my life. All the memories of my childhood came flooding back. I was charged with sexual assault. I pled guilty and was sentenced to four and a half months in Barlinnie Prison. I was also placed on the sexual offender's register for ten years.
135. I looked at that period of imprisonment as a spell in hospital where I could get some help. I did get help but I couldn't at first see what the connection was between what I had done and what had happened to me. It was explained to me that one of the problems I had was not identifying boundaries of behaviour.
136. When I was released from prison I stayed in secure hostels in Edinburgh. It was through this network that I met with Future Pathways and my supporter Gary. They

have been supporting me with the help I need. I was always suspicious of people who were trying to help. I would always think that they had an ulterior motive.

137. Whilst I was in prison I got help from counsellors and the social work department. I remember a social worker called Brendon Barnett who managed to get me into a hostel in Edinburgh called [REDACTED]. I was also assigned a police officer from the Offenders Liaison Unit called Mike Smith. I was then passed over to Julie Stevenson. They would supervise the Sex Offenders Order that I was subject to.

Reporting of Abuse and High Court Trial

138. Sometime about five years ago I was contacted by the Police from Leven and Kirkcaldy who had been trying to locate me. They wanted to take a statement from me regarding what had happened at St Ninian's. They came to see me at the house but it wasn't easy as I was being constantly interrupted by phone calls. I had never told my wife [REDACTED] what had happened and she was very angry with me because of that. The only person I could speak to was a mate of mine I worked with on the [REDACTED] and I would meet him for coffee.
139. I then arranged to speak to the police in a location in Edinburgh where it was easier to speak. I think that I gave a lengthy statement just before I was sentenced to four months in prison for assault. I was quite relieved to go to jail because it released the pressure that I was under.
140. When I was at [REDACTED] I contacted the police officer called Robbie who was dealing with enquiries into St Ninian's. I had more evidence that I had to tell him about and he came to see me and took a further statement. I think this was in the summer of 2015 that I went to give evidence at the trial of Brothers Kelly, Farrell, MHG, and MCG and MIK. I was terrified about giving evidence. The result was Brother Kelly got ten years in prison and Brother Farrell got five years. [REDACTED]

141. I would not have been able to provide this evidence and get through the trial without the support of Gary from Future Pathways, [REDACTED] who is my Community Psychiatric Nurse, [REDACTED] from my church, my friend [REDACTED] from my time on the buses and [REDACTED] who I call my mother and father.

Records

142. I know that there are social work records about my time in care and at some time I would like to recover them. I think that the Christian Brother's may also have paper records but I have not tried to get them.

Impact

143. I suffered from two strokes which I was told were as a result of the stress I was under in my marriage. I was constantly trying to make ends meet. I was also caught up in the past and thought all the time about my time in care. My ability to function properly and identify boundaries was badly impaired. I had been told by Brother Farrell that I couldn't tell anyone what had happened or I would feel the weight of the Catholic Church come down on me.

144. I attempted suicide on a few occasions and ended up in The Royal Edinburgh Hospital. I liked being there because I was locked in and felt safe. My wife came to visit me on a few occasions and took me to the café in the hospital. I felt very uncomfortable as I didn't feel safe.

145. I have since learned that my daughter has had a baby. I was keen to contact her but the advice I got from my circle of friends was to leave it at this time and see how things developed. Since my trial I have had no contact with my birth family.

146. When I was giving evidence at the St Ninian's trial I was handed my social work records. While I was looking at them I noted that my mother had recommended that I go to St Ninian's. I always thought that it was the social work Department and was

very upset to learn that my birth mother had a lot of influence. I felt like Peter Pan being rejected by his family. When I read it I swore in the court and had to apologise to the judge. I never felt part of my birth family.

147. When I gave evidence at the trial I had prepared an impact statement which was read out when the judge was summing up. I didn't want revenge I just wanted justice. I think that when the jurors looked at the persons giving evidence they couldn't picture them as a children. I was quite angry for the witnesses that didn't get justice because a lot of the charges were found not proven.
148. I have always had trust issues and find it hard to form relationships. I can't shake off the memories of my time at St Ninian's and I am still angry at the outcome of the trial although there is some release of pressure now the trial is over.
149. I now have to be very cautious with what I am allowed to do through the church and in normal life because I am on the Sex Offenders Register. I have started to write down my experiences in care to enable me to help with the anger that I feel. I have been advised that when you write them down you can focus your anger on the events that happened.

Lessons to be learned

150. I don't think we should let the "sweep under the carpet" generation win. The Catholic Church have a huge say in what happened to me. I do believe that the present Pope is starting to address these issues. There needs to be more thought for the people in care.
151. I don't think any of this would have happened to me if my mother had not married my stepfather. A child needs to have some say in their future. I attended all the children's panel meetings about me but I didn't open my mouth.
152. I think that children should be more involved in their futures. Things should be more transparent. Children should be listened to. The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry needs

to probe more into what went on and come up with suggestions for the way forward. They need to invoke the child and seek their opinion. I just want the truth.

Other information

- 153. I have a legal action ongoing against the Christian Brothers and Friends of St Ninian's School. The action is being taken by my lawyer [REDACTED] from the law firm [REDACTED] based in Edinburgh.

- 154. 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.. [REDACTED] MHS

Dated..... 30/1/2019