

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED]  
BFI

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] BFI [REDACTED]. I was born [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh. I have one brother called [REDACTED]. He is ten years older than me. I have two sisters [REDACTED] who is three years older than me and [REDACTED] BFC [REDACTED] who is five years older than me. My mother's name was [REDACTED] and my father's name was [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
3. My mother had severe mental health difficulties. She was in and out of hospital all the time. She wanted to look after us but wasn't capable. We lived together at home sometimes but my sisters and I were fostered out to other families regularly. I have a vague memory of being in a home at some stage as well. I can't remember the details as I was so young. My father worked as a baker and then as a labourer. We were very poor with lots of debts. My father couldn't cope with looking after little girls. My parents were stretched beyond their limits. They didn't have the capacity to look after us.
4. I can't remember there being any contact with social work during my time at home but I suppose there must have been. There were social workers involved with my mother due to her mental health.

**Glasclune House (Barnado's), North Berwick**

5. I remember being left with my sisters at Glasclune. My brother wasn't with us. Glasclune was a children's home in North Berwick. My father took us. He told us it was just for a weekend and he would be back to get us. I was hysterical and crying. I was put in the TV room and my sister [REDACTED] BFC [REDACTED] cuddled me and told me it was going to be okay. We had our photograph taken and were booked in.
6. Glasclune was a huge beautiful house. It was on three floors. It had large bay windows and a big main door. Through the main door was the hallway and a huge staircase that led up to the dormitories. There was a gong in the hallway that the staff used to gather us. Glasclune had self-contained grounds. There was an outhouse for the laundry and there were tennis courts with a fence around them. There was a big park outside the grounds where we used to go to play on the swings sometimes.
7. The boys and girls were kept separate and had different sections of the house. We didn't mix. There were four or five girls in each dormitory. I had a friend called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in my room and there was another girl called [REDACTED]. I can't remember the names of any others. There must have been maybe twenty girls at Glasclune when I was there. There were approximately thirty to forty children at Glasclune in total.
8. I was one of the youngest children at Glasclune at age four. I know they did take in younger children as [REDACTED] had been there since she was a baby. I think the oldest children were aged fifteen or sixteen.
9. Mr Mace was the man in charge. I can only remember three staff but I know there were more. I remember [REDACTED] BFJ [REDACTED]. There was also Mrs Sutherland who was kind and wore glasses.

## Routine

### *Morning routine*

10. We would get up and make our bed. We had to have perfect hospital corners on our sheets. They had to be smooth and really precise. The beds would be checked. If they were not perfect the sheets would be stripped off and we would have to re-do them. I can still do perfect hospital corners even today.
11. After making our beds we would then do chores. My chore was to sweep the large staircase. I had a hand brush and shovel for the sweeping. There was a landing with a curtain area that I had to sweep too. It was all checked and if I missed anything I would be sent back to do it again.
12. We would then get washed and the gong would go off. We would all go downstairs to the large hallway. We all had to stand in the hall and recite the Lord's Prayer. I still don't know the words to the Lord's Prayer. I just used to move my mouth. We would then have breakfast in the dining room and then walk to school. We went to North Berwick Primary school. We did not come back to Glasclune for lunch. When we came back to Glasclune after school the staff would organise games or film shows or mini events.
13. I can't remember what time bedtime was. I just remember we would all still be awake and talk in our beds.

### *Washing*

14. We had a communal girl's bathroom. There was a communal bathroom for the boys in the boys section. There were four baths in the one room. We would have to get undressed and line up naked. There would normally be four or five of us in each line. We all used the same water. Bath-time was supervised by a member of staff. It was normally Mrs BFJ

*Food*

15. The food was really good. We always felt that we were well fed and there was food available. For breakfast we would have toast with lime marmalade. I remember the lime marmalade because I liked it and I had never had it before. We always had lunch at school. I was always in trouble so I would miss dinner. I would stay in my room and be given bread and butter and a glass of milk as a punishment. My friend [REDACTED] used to sneak biscuits and food from dinner for me.

*Clothing / uniform*

16. We were always well clothed. I think they were donations. For school I wore a grey pinafore.

*School*

17. We went to North Berwick Primary school which was situated within walking distance from Glasclune. I don't have many memories of being at school. I remember washing my pants in the sinks at school so that I wouldn't have to go back to Glasclune with dirty pants. I remember sitting in class with soaking wet pants on.

*Trips / Holidays*

18. We were taken to the Tattoo in Edinburgh as a trip. We also went on a school camp to Aberfoyle. I remember the bunk-beds.
19. At the weekends we would go down to the beach at North Berwick or to the open air swimming pool. Sometimes we would climb Berwick Law. There was Sunday school on a Sunday at Blackadder Church in North Berwick.

*Christmas and Easter*

20. At Christmas time we used to get a sack of toys put at the end of our beds. Some things were from my mum and some things had been donated. We would feel them with our feet in the night. Christmas was definitely celebrated and it was exciting.
21. At Easter time there was a basket of hard boiled eggs. We would take them to roll down the hill.

*Visits*

22. My mother and father came to visit us as often as they could. They lived in Edinburgh so it would take an hour and a half to get to us on the bus. They had no money so they couldn't visit us very often. We would see them every couple of months. It was normally a Saturday or Sunday. They would take us to the tea room in North Berwick for cakes on a tiered plate. They would always take me and my two sisters out.
23. There were no visits from officials or the social work that I remember.

*Healthcare*

24. I do remember seeing a dentist. I was also referred to see a doctor about my bedwetting and toilet habits. I'm sure I got some medication.

*Sibling contact*

25. I would only see my sisters at Church on a Sunday. I felt very segregated from them. We were in different dorms and in different sections of the home. I was in the babies and toddler section.

*Personal possessions/pocket money*

26. We got pocket money of about sixpence or thrupence. We would line up to see Mr Mace and he would write it in his little book. I remember buying sweets with it. My mum used to bring us Rolo's or sweeties and I was allowed to eat them. We were not allowed to gorge on them all at once but we were allowed them. She also brought me comics. I think I also had a watch.
27. There were dolls in my dormitory that belonged to another girl. Her parents brought them in for her. I used to play with them.

*Religion*

28. Glasclune was Church of Scotland. It was very keen on prayers. We had to recite the Lord's Prayer first thing in the morning. We prayed at the table and we had to kneel down to pray before going to bed. We always went to Sunday school and church on Sunday.

**Abuse at Glasclune House***Emotional abuse**Bed Wetting*

29. I wet the bed a couple of times a week. I remember staying awake at night as I was so scared of wetting the bed. In the morning I had to wash my sheets in a giant old fashioned tub. Sometimes I didn't wash the sheets. I was told that I would have to go back into nappies and rubber pants. Sometimes they did put me in nappies. I remember feeling so humiliated and hurt. It was awful.

30. I would also wet myself during the day. When that happened I would be sent to sit on the tennis court outside in my pants. It was always very public. Mrs [BFJ] would send me there as a punishment.
31. I think that is when they took me to see the doctor. I was biting my nails to nothing, wetting the bed and wetting myself in the day. Sometimes I soiled myself. I can't remember what the doctor said. Mrs [BFJ] said that the doctor thought I was lazy and dirty.
32. There was no physical punishment for wetting the bed that I remember. It was just the emotional abuse and humiliation.

*Bath-time*

33. At bath-time there was a basket where we had to put our pants. Mrs [BFJ] would inspect them. All of our pants had our names on so she could tell whose were whose. She would stand and hold a pair of pants and shout out your name if there was anything on them.
34. I had to stand at the top of the stairs holding a pair of my soiled pants for everyone to see. It was in front of every boy or girl that walked past. It was deliberately to shame you. The main memory I have is of feeling absolute embarrassment and shame.
35. I remember one bath-time when I was second in the queue. I needed to go to the toilet. I told Mrs [BFJ] and she said I had to wait because I was next in line for the bath. I was doing a little dance trying to hold it in but I wet myself. Mrs [BFJ] got everybody to look and she said "Oh look at little [BFI] wetting the floor". She got me a cloth and I had to go on my hands and knees to clean it up.

*Lack of care or emotional support*

36. I used to feel so unimportant. A number. A nothing. There was no caring in my life. We had no one. There was no one to talk to. The only person I had any fondness for

was my friend [REDACTED]. We used to look after each other. She used to steal food from dinner and bring it up to me when I had been sent to bed for being naughty.

37. It was very regimental. It felt like we were all little soldiers. We all had a way to act, things to do. There was a very strict routine that we all had to follow. There was no happiness.

### *Discipline*

38. I felt that the discipline was very harsh. I remember sitting in the bath and calling one of the other girls a "get". I must have heard it somewhere but I didn't even know what a "get" was. It was overheard by the staff supervisor and my mouth was washed out with carbolic soap.

### *Physical abuse*

39. I have no memories of getting the cane. We would get the slipper for talking after bed-time. It was sore and made me cry. It was Mrs [REDACTED] BFJ who hit us with the slipper. That was the only physical discipline we received. The emotional abuse was far worse than any physical discipline we received.
40. One of the children at Glasclune was called [REDACTED]. She was Mrs [REDACTED] BFJ ten year old daughter. She was older than me by a few years. [REDACTED] would use her power and say things like "If you don't do this I will tell my mum and you'll know what will happen to you". She used to get people to pull their own hair out. She used to say "If you don't pull your hair out now I will tell my mum and you will get punished".

### **Leaving Glasclune House**

41. On one occasion when my mum had come to visit us I told her about what was going on. I was six years old. I needed the toilet so my mum had taken me. There was a



tiny yellow mark on my pants and I went hysterical. My mum asked me what was wrong. She said there was nothing wrong with having a tiny yellow mark. I told her that I would get really punished for having dirty pants. My pants didn't need to be wet or soiled. If there was any mark on them at all I would get punished. My mother said "Right that's it, I can't leave you here". She took me out of Glasclune that day. She went to speak to Mrs BFJ or Mr Mace and said "I'm taking BFI home now. This is not happening to her. I am taking BFI out". They said that she couldn't take just one and not the others. My mum said "You are absolutely right. [REDACTED], BFC, pack your bags you are coming with me". We were told to go upstairs and get our things. This was in 1965 or 1966. I think I had been at Glasclune for just over two years.

42. My mum took us home that day and I was the happiest little girl in the world. It wasn't an easy life we were going home to but I was just so happy to be leaving. I went home to my brother, mum, dad and two sisters. We never went back into a home although I think we still had a few short term foster placements.
43. We went to the local school but I was always different. I felt different. I didn't feel the same as other children. I felt ugly. Horrible. Who would want to know me? Who would want anything to do with me? I used to have this razor cut hair. All the other children had lovely long hair with ribbons. I wore a lot of black. I was very badly bullied at school.

### **Life after being in care/Impact**

44. I was taken to a child psychologist at the age of ten. I wouldn't go to school. All of my sisters had been to see psychologists for their issues. I think I went two or three times. I wouldn't go to school because I was being bullied. I didn't understand. I remember drawing a picture of my friend in a red dress. They said that I must be really angry because it was red. I just thought I was drawing the dress. I became angry at my mother as I got older. I was perhaps age ten, eleven, twelve when I got angry.

45. Family life was very difficult and we were very poor. We had very little to eat. Sometimes we had nothing to eat. We had to use our coats on our bed for warmth. Our father was alcohol dependent so what little money we had went on alcohol.
46. I left home just after I turned sixteen. I was rebelling a bit. I started sleeping rough at Waverley station. I also slept in a squat in Muirhouse for six months. I didn't want to live with my mum. I wasn't happy. I used to wish that I was dead. During this time I met a guy who was a biker. I married him when I was 19 and I became part of the biker group. For the first time in my life I felt like I belonged to something. I had always felt loved by my mum and dad. I never doubted their love but this was different.
47. I married very young because I wanted someone to love me. I accepted people into my life that treated me very badly because I thought that was just what life was. My husband left me with three children under the age of three. I was a single mum aged 23. After a while I met someone else and married him. He treated me very badly but I was just used to people treating me badly. I didn't value myself. I did a lot of self-reflection asking why people treated me like that. I really looked at myself and I did recognise that I didn't love myself. I didn't care for myself. I was letting people into my life and making bad decisions because I didn't value myself and didn't understand what my own worth was.
48. I worked in various jobs as a cleaner, in a shop, as a cook and I looked after somebody's kids. When I reached age 39 I started to go through some changes in my mind-set and my views on life. I started to look online for things like interview skills and self-help books. I made a pact with myself that I can't change my past but I can change my future. I decided that I would learn to live on my own and learn to look after me and love me. I learned to be comfortable with myself for the first time in my life. I learned to never look back. I say to myself "I'm not going that way". I very rarely look back at my past. I am disassociated from it almost. I almost don't think of what happened to me as abuse any more.

49. During this period of self-reflection, I went for a job in a call centre and it was the first interview for a proper job I'd ever had. I got the job. I had really bad social anxiety to the point where I literally couldn't look at anyone in the face. I used to hide away from everybody. I found it really hard to speak to anyone. I decided then that I had to battle my demons. I had to force myself into situations that I would rather run away from.
50. After a short period in the job I was put in charge of a training bay. I had to train people and give training presentations. It was agony for me. I wouldn't sleep for a week and felt sick worrying about it. I didn't let it stop me. I knew that I had to do it. I knew that nothing would be as bad as what I envisaged in my mind. I started looking into it and went on a course with Work Medical Direct. I did training for managing stress in the workplace. I started looking after mental health in the workplace doing stress assessments and helping people with stress and anxiety.
51. I was the point of contact for anyone with mental health issues in the workplace. That was seventeen or eighteen years ago. It was the biggest confidence boost that someone would trust me with a job to help other people. I became a manager and sat my financial services exams. It was a big thing for me. I started working as a manager in corporate and financial services. For the last six years I have been studying all different types of therapies. That is what I do now. I work with people who have problems in their life and have been through trauma.
52. I have contact with my brother once a year. He is not in the UK very often. I didn't speak to him for a period of seventeen or eighteen years. I don't see my sister [REDACTED] very often. I am hoping to see her in August. I have seen her perhaps ten times in the last thirty years. I have contact with [REDACTED] BFC [REDACTED] but not often.
53. I tried to contact [REDACTED] through Barnado's recently. I had met up with her once after Glasclune when I was fourteen or fifteen years old. She had been moved to another home called The Tower in Murrayfield and then on to another place in Alloa. I couldn't see her on my last attempt to visit. She said that she didn't want any contact because of her carer. She is obviously not in a good place. I know that she

had been in care since she was a baby. I can imagine she had a hell of a life. She had to leave Glasclune when she was sixteen with no preparation for life. She would have been completely institutionalised. She had no one in the world.

54. I have three wonderful grown up children and eight grandchildren. I have a very loving and caring family. Material things mean nothing to me. Peace of mind is the most important thing. I feel absolutely blessed with the love that I have from my family.

### **Impact**

55. It took me a long time for me to like myself. It took until I was aged forty. Prior to that no one could even mention the home without me bursting out crying. The memories have tortured me for years. My experiences at Glasclune damaged me. I have a good life, a happy life but deep down it's still there.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

56. I have not reported the abuse to the police or any other agency.

### **Treatment / Support**

57. I have not received any treatment for anything relating to my experiences at Glasclune.

### **Records**

58. I have got all of my records from Glasclune. I got them fourteen years ago. It was part of a puzzle. I wanted to see if the records had documented the same things that

I remember. That is where I got the photo of me that they took on my first day. I had never seen that photograph before then.

**Lessons to be learned**

- 59. For me the biggest thing to learn would be that whilst it is good to put food on the table and be clothed, people need to remember that they are dealing with children. They are human beings and need care. They need to show personal attention. Children have hearts and feelings. They are not mini-robots.

**Hopes for the Inquiry**

- 60. There will always be children in need. I hope that the Inquiry will make them feel safe and secure.

**Other information**

- 61. I would be willing to give live evidence. In my head it would be like putting things right.
- 62. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..  .....

Dated... 10.7.18 .....