

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

■ KGN ■

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is ■ KGN ■. My date of birth is ■ ■ 1937. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background

2. I was born one of fourteen children, eight boys and six girls, two sets of twins. I had a very poor upbringing. The present generation, in my mind, have no idea as to what poor really is.
3. My only encounter with the law was with the local Justice of the Peace as a child for stealing apples and running through a farm. My mother received a fine and my father went off his head. My father belted me, and not once was I ever in trouble again after that day.
4. My first job was at thirteen years of age as a milk boy on a horse and cart. After I left school, I worked as a message boy delivering people's groceries on a penny farthing. All of my wages were given to my mum. I then worked in the ■ ■ Stevenson for seventeen years as an apprentice joiner, supervisor and then foreman. All of my family worked there. During my time at ■ ■ I also completed my two years national service in the army. I was present when two colleagues were blown up in an explosion at ■ ■ and decided to move on. There were also

discussions with the unions and two years after I left the production side of [REDACTED] shut down.

5. I worked in a car factory in Linwood as a welder and foreman for seventeen years before moving on to Kerelaw Residential School as a care worker. I left the car factory as a chargehand and senior foreman. During my time at [REDACTED] and the car factory I was qualified and fully trained in health and safety at all times.
6. I volunteered at the Boys Brigade as an adult after being in the BBs myself since the age of twelve years old. After retirement I also taught learning disabled children at our local bowling club.
7. In my first year in the army, at eighteen years old, I married my childhood sweetheart. We were married for fifty-one years until she passed away with cancer. We have five children, three boys and two girls who have all except one been university educated and lead successful lives. I am currently married to my second wife and have been for the last fourteen years.

### **Posting at Kerelaw Residential School, Ayrshire**

8. I was born [REDACTED] from where Kerelaw was built. I watched it being built [REDACTED]. Most of the people in Stevenson did not want to be part of it as it was described as the place where hooligans go. I applied for the role of care officer. I had no childcare qualifications whatsoever going into Kerelaw.
9. I don't recall how I heard about the job. I would have picked it up through word of mouth somewhere. I was never unemployed for any length of time. There would have been an application process and I remember an interview with SNR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] KAM [REDACTED] team leader and SNR [REDACTED], LEF [REDACTED] LEF [REDACTED]. I think he eventually became in charge of the secure unit when it came about.

10. The interview was strange because even then I was aware of the big change that I was going to have to make working with people of such a young age. I just went through my job history and did not have to provide any references.
11. I started at Kerelaw when I was about fifty-three years old and retired when I was sixty-three, so I was there for about ten years. I worked in the Fleming unit my whole time. I started as a day shift care worker and then quickly moved to night shift where I spent the rest of my time. I was asked to work nightshift after a few months of training on the day shift and felt more than capable so agreed. My shift was 10 p.m. until 7 a.m. and I only worked weekdays. I think the other night staff would have been the same.

### **Kerelaw Residential School, Stevenson**

12. My first perception of Kerelaw as an outsider, before I started working there, was that it was there for children who were out of control. I then realised after starting it wasn't children as you would imagine children to be, it was older children around fourteen, fifteen years old. These children had already been through the system to places like Gielisland, Beith and St Mary's, Bishopbriggs.
13. I don't think Kerelaw was ever at capacity, and I don't think they would have been able to cope with that level of childcare if it was. There was always room for another child put it that way.
14. Kerelaw was four units, and we were told at the time it would house children of an older age of the childcare system, but that did not tell you anything. It became known as a residential establishment. The units were Millerston, Fleming, Baird and Wilson. Wilson was a slightly smaller unit accommodating twelve children when the others accommodated sixteen. Millerston and Fleming were the boys' units and later Baird, and Wilson were the girls' units.

*Structure*

15. [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] throughout my time at Kerelaw. He was a good listener and always listened to my concerns. He was a doer and made some good changes to staffing levels. Mr LEF [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] and later became in charge of the secure unit so I would see him some evenings. He lived in West Kilbride, which was only ten minutes away.
16. My whole time at Kerelaw I worked within the Fleming unit with the same two women, KAM [REDACTED] and May McFarlane. At times Fleming unit was at capacity with sixteen children, and they were mostly between the ages of fourteen to sixteen years old.
17. The only time I was asked to leave my unit was to assist in another unit, assist not being my word. At no other time did I find it necessary to leave my unit during the night. My responsibility was to my kids in my unit always. Maybe just before 7 in the morning I would go along to see the other staff coming in as by that time everyone in my unit would be settled. It could sometimes take until 3, 4 in the morning to settle them.
18. The night care staff I remember working with are Tom Howe, GVL [REDACTED] and KGH [REDACTED] KGH [REDACTED]. There was someone else, but I can't remember his name right now. As far as I am aware none of the night staff were qualified to work with children. All of the day staff were qualified to work with children.
19. Each unit had 1 night care officer but when girls were introduced a floater was appointed and that was someone who would float between the units as and when required.
20. I think the secure unit opened up halfway through my tenure and was a separate entity. I was asked to work there once or twice due to absences. There would have been at least three members of qualified staff on the day shift at the secure unit and the children were all locked up along with the staff. By qualified I mean SVQ trained or social worker. There were also the teachers and the two staff team in the office

administration area during the day. In other units there were two sometimes three staff members per unit.

21. In the night initially there was only two people supervising the four units before I started and then it moved to four, which was one per unit. It was all males until the female unit was introduced and then there were female staff at night too. The male staff were a wee bit more vulnerable when it came to resolving issues with the girls. These female night staff were unqualified, like us and I can't remember any of their names.
22. This floater person was last to be introduced, and I pushed for that change to improve the night shift situation for me and my colleagues. That was the best decision that senior management ever made as it meant that neither me nor any of the other night staff were asked to leave our unit to go and assist elsewhere.
23. No senior management worked the nightshift, but I would see my line manager every morning before I left, and they would always be on call. I don't think there was a time the headmaster ever had to be called and maybe on the very rare occasion did the deputy have to come in. He lived the closest so was the obvious one to call as he could get there quicker.
24. There was a unit divide within Kerelaw. Every unit had its own hierarchy within the boys. That even included the girls' unit when that came along. We just had to live with that. You always knew what boy was in charge because they always had the best seat in the TV room, and they were always on the pool table with their pals. It was very easy to see.

#### *Staff Recruitment and Training*

25. I was trained by KAM who lived in Fairly and May McFarlane who lived in Dalry. Most of the staff lived within a 10-mile radius of Kerelaw. KAM was the team leader in charge of the unit and May was her assistant and qualified social worker. They were first class, and I could not fault them for anything. Their input on my early

development was excellent and I always felt supported at all times. I never felt inferior, ever.

26. My probationary period was working on the day shift with these two women. I am not sure how long that was, maybe a few months. They gave me very good advice at all times, especially when the time was to step back in any possible confrontation with the children. This was a part of your everyday life working in Kerelaw. You had to know when to step back. It was a sad job and very, very stressful. You were at your wit's end waiting for the spark that would set something off and I can assure you there were plenty of sparks. My whole experience there was a complete change to what I was used to.
27. As soon as I started, KAM and May told me that my previous skills as a supervisor would not work with children, and I had to adjust to fall into their way of working. My experience was core minded by the way I was initiated with these women in Fleming unit. There was one word I always remember being told, since I came into childcare and that was empathy. KAM and May told me I had to learn what that word meant and use it at all times with the children. I would say the staff I worked with showed empathy towards the children however I am not saying all staff did. I cannot comment on the way some members may have worked with children, but I can assure you having read some of the statements that was not the way I worked or the women that initiated me into the unit. I can't emphasise enough how well I was prepared for the job by them.
28. KAM and May stressed to me from the outset that the daybook we used for record keeping was a legal document and can and would be used if I was ever involved in anything untoward with the children. This was almost word for word what they told me.
29. The care officers did everything with the children except the gymnasium and the classroom, that was the teacher's domain, and we were not allowed to interfere. They were the qualified people.

30. Never at any time was I sent to learn with teachers who taught me anything. I was invited to go and get some qualifications, but I turned it down. No one on the nightshift took up any training. I felt at my age I didn't need any training. I had enough life experience and had excellent training from KAM and May. They were really good at their job. My training went on for months but there was no appraisal procedure for any of the night staff that I am aware of.

*Policy Making and Strategic Planning*

31. The team managers and the people at senior level would have been the only people involved in policy making and planning. I was not aware of any policy documents. It was all just word of mouth. I do remember things being scribbled down in meetings regarding changes but that is all. It was all handwritten and that was regarding the staffing levels during the nightshift and my request for more staff. It did change slowly but surely for the better.
32. I did discuss changes with managers and discussed my concerns with Mr [REDACTED] and Mr LEF [REDACTED]. In particular how we as unqualified individuals were deemed to be able to cope with the difficulties that these children had. There was another level of care that was required for these children and that was of a psychiatric nature, but that word was taboo back then in childcare. Social workers and teachers thought they did not need anyone else telling them what to do. It was frowned upon, but I made my opinions known. I know now we are looking to that because deep down in these children's minds that's where the problem was. Their behaviour only expressed what they couldn't cope with.

*Children*

33. The children that came to us were damaged. Very few children came to Kerelaw as their first choice. They were only children, not adults in the process of growing up, just children. It was a hard experience. The age group that they were in and having come through the system already meant that they were all vulnerable. Very few of them were younger than fourteen years old and if they were they didn't stay long.

34. Kerelaw was seen as a last resort I think because we had reasonable staffing levels during the day and that seemed to be working. It wasn't the be all and end all, just working reasonably well with the children of that age group.
35. I knew they were damaged from the instant I said no in any given situation. You did not say no to these children unless it was in specific terms as to why you were saying no. You always empathised and communicated with them in a way that kept them calm. It was the safest way. There had to be a safe way as this child had been abused in the family set up by poor parenting. They didn't know how to problem solve or cope with any form of discipline. Especially when they got to Kerelaw as they were older and already conditioned at fourteen, fifteen years old. I saw a change in the children coming to us over the years with more complex needs and I felt the service had to expand to provide psychiatric help.
36. Every one of these children that came in had alcohol and drug problems. You could tell from their eyes or their nose if it was glue sniffing as it would be all red. Also, by the way they staggered about. The level of coherence was worse the further up the chain you went from alcohol to drugs.
37. The main time I dealt with the children was at bedtime. I had a very good rapport with the children, especially in my unit. Most of them would call me [KGN] except for the boy in charge, he would call me "staff". That was to send a message to me and the other boys that he didn't have to call me [KGN] as we weren't friends. It didn't bother me I still called them by their first names.
38. Sometimes boys would come up to me and say, "[KGN], can you keep an eye on my dorm tonight". I was never told what was going to happen but that was their nod to me that something was by the top dog. The top dog never took part in anything, he issued his orders to the subordinates. It happened with the girls as well and was just part of the culture in the establishment. It was a dog-eat-dog atmosphere.



39. These children hated adults and you could understand why as the adults were the people who were damaging these children. It was hard to comprehend what the damage was as a grown up.

#### *Living Arrangements*

40. The children slept upstairs where there were either four or five large rooms that could accommodate three children in each room and two single rooms that could accommodate one child in each. The rooms were all situated down one long corridor with the toilets and office in-between. In the rooms were a bed and a cupboard for each boy. Very rarely were three in the one room as two in a room was more than enough to handle.
41. One of the upstairs bedrooms was eventually used for the night care staff as an office. The reason for that was that the office and phone were always downstairs and if you left to answer the phone you were leaving your job upstairs. Invariably something else would then go on.
42. In the very early years of Kerelaw they also had what they called house parents who stayed off the side of each building unit. They were people from outside and I don't know if they were parents themselves or in the process of becoming parents, but that was done away with before I went into Kerelaw. No members of staff stayed at Kerelaw while I was there.
43. These buildings to the side were still there and later in my time they were used for children who were deemed responsible enough to live on their own independently. We were told as night staff not to supervise them like we would the other children as they were being prepared for outside living.

#### *Mealtimes*

44. The kitchen and dining areas were between the units so you could walk through the kitchen area to get to another unit. I think the food was nutritious. There was one or

two choices, and it was the kind of food I could eat. There was nothing stale, mouldy or untasty. There will always be things we all don't like so to the children it may have been horrible. Sometimes plates were thrown and that had to be controlled at the table. There was always the potential for something to happen and when it did the kitchen staff put the shutters down and we dealt with it. The disputes were never about what they were eating it was about what was going on outside prior to them coming in.

#### *Washing and Bathing*

45. There were toilets and washing facilities upstairs in each unit, but the shower rooms were all opposite the office downstairs. The boys showered every day in the morning. Some did it twice a day if they had been on an outing or were outside playing in the fields.
46. I would supervise showers at night. I don't think there was any more than three showers, maybe four. They had privacy by way of a swing door that shut on the shower cubicle, but some children were vulnerable to each other, and they had to be watched.

#### *Leisure Time*

47. I was totally focused on my responsibilities to the children in my unit. I did not go out on outings in the minibus but there were staff who did. It was mainly the teachers who were happy to do the overtime that took them. I was just more comfortable in the environment of the unit where I was used to. Having the units mixing meant there was always the potential for trouble, and it would happen in an instant. They were taken to swimming in Prestwick and Irvine and recreational facilities in Ayr.
48. Downstairs in the units were a television room and snooker room. There was also the red tile area outside the office where the children met if they were going to classes or outside activities. The staff then took them to where they needed to be.
49. I was aware of teachers and social workers taking children away to their own homes. It happened on more than one occasion, and I felt that was absolutely wrong. Matthew

George is [REDACTED] and I told him I knew he was a professional, but he should not be taking these children into the environment of his own home where his own children were. It was left at that as I had no authority. I did not think it was a reasonable assessment to think this was ok. If anything got out of hand and this staff member was with three or four children, what chance did they have. I felt like they were being pushed by lack of resources to do this and it was just asking for something to go wrong.

#### *Trips and Holidays*

50. I think initially some trips were arranged by the day staff, but I was never involved. Unfortunately, with the children being the way they were, because of their disruptive nature, I don't think there was an area within 20 miles of Kerelaw where we could take them. It was sad but the nature of the beast. It got to the stage where we were not allowed into any establishment because of the potential for their behaviour. Some of them were proper nuisances.

#### *Schooling*

51. I think there were four teachers, history, English, arithmetic and science. There were at least five classes in the main unit and the main big building was used for P.E. I was never involved, and the girls never mixed with the boys.
52. My impression was that the children didn't go to class to be taught anything. I think the teachers tried to work with them, but they decided they were not going to be taught anything.

#### *Healthcare*

53. There was no nurse in Kerelaw but there was an emergency local doctor we could call if we needed to. There was more than one surgery we could call. We were reasonably educated individuals to put a plaster or bandage on someone if need be. If more was needed, we would notify the doctor.

### *Family*

54. Family visits were encouraged at all times but very rarely ever used. I could probably count on one hand the number of times a parent came to Kerelaw to visit their child. They didn't want to know them it was as simple as that. They were ostracised even from their own family. Even the children that could go on home visits refused to go back to that environment. That's how difficult it was for them.
55. The only experience I ever had with a child's family member was when I had an altercation with a boy that I will explain later. That was a meeting with social work, management and the child and it was well and truly documented in the unit diary. That was the way I handled it in that diary. The office should also have an insight in their records as to how it was handled.

### *External Inspections*

56. I never saw any external inspectors on night shift. I take it it was routine on dayshift, but I never saw it.

### *Review of Care*

57. Social workers who were attached to a particular child made frequent visits. I did not see much of it, but I was aware of it. Whether it was adequate was not for me to judge but that was always there. The headmaster and senior members of staff would also review their care. That was a kid's right, and he or she got that when I was there.

### *Discharge*

58. The only time children moved out of Kerelaw was to move on to a secure unit or a so-called home environment. They moved on to places like Longriggend and Polmont. I felt sorry for them, of course I did. I still do as they all went on to go through the whole penal system. They were damaged from birth onwards.

59. Most of the children were at Kerelaw until they were asked or forced to move on. On rare occasions the units outside of Kerelaw could be used to establish independent living but it had to be financed and resourced by a different type of person, a person who was flexible and more able to adapt. These buildings at either side of the units were nearly always empty though. It could only be because of finance. When it was eventually introduced to Millerston and Fleming unit I was advised to have little communication with the children unless they were initiating it. They were unsupervised at night unless an incident arose.
60. The children would have gone into the independent living at sixteen years old if not to another establishment. There was an age limit by the establishment for them to move on and that was sixteen. Unless the situation improved at home then they would go there, that was the only exception. Sometimes they were not happy about that as they knew the threat from outside sources as well as the fact, they might have found it impossible to go home to their parents. It was difficult to prepare children to go back to a broken a home.
61. If the situation ever broke down at home after they were discharged the social worker or even the child themselves could come back to Kerelaw. There was a taxi available for that and the staff would pay for that when they arrived back. It happened when I was working and I would just get the kid in, get them settled and pass it on to management the next day. Generally, it would just be because they couldn't cope with their parents. What happened to this child next was the big question. I have no idea. That was the responsibility of the qualified people.

#### *Discipline and Punishment*

62. Punishment to me means you are meting out something. If I had a problem with a child, they were sent to a senior member of staff for counsel. On some occasions the morning after any incident, the child would be woken up by the senior member of staff, brought down to the office and we would discuss what happened. They would be at liberty to deny it and it would always be settled there and then as I always had that rapport with boys. If the boy was to be disciplined it could be losing something like his

home leave or privileges within the unit like going to play football. There was never any corporal punishment. To me if it got to that stage then the system itself should be stopped. I was not aware of any discipline policy, but I would have recorded incidences in the unit diary.

63. There were times when I thought staff in other units weren't handling situations in a way I would. An example would be the use of hoses. Hoses were not there for use on the children of any description and was not my idea of childcare. It said on the notice "to be used only in the event of a fire" and being health and safety minded that is the only time I would use them. I did say to the staff involved that was not the way I wanted to be asked to come and assist them in handling a situation that they created. I made my opinions known that I would not be involved in that.
64. I don't know why they were used, as I never saw them being used, I only knew as I saw the water all over the floor and there was no fire. The staff I am talking about are Thomas Howe and KGH who also worked nightshift with me in the other units. I saw this water when I was called over to assist them and I made my views known. We all carried walkie talkies and could use them to call for assistance.
65. There were two incidences where I was involved as a standby person for the cells that were located in the admin area. One was with a girl from Baird unit on the day shift. She was totally out of control. I don't know if it was through drugs or drink or a mixture. The first thing we have to do in this situation is to find a way to defuse it and get it under control without hurting the girl. There were four or five of us who were not able to do that in the unit, so we got her to the cell in the admin block. She was put in the cell with two members of staff inside and two members of staff outside at all times. I was outside the cell, and it was never locked. She would never be left in a situation where she could self-harm.
66. The second incident was with a boy, and it was a confrontation that was dealt with right away. There were three members of staff involved and again I was a standby person as the boy was from another unit. I don't recall the other members of staff involved I just remember the boy was removed from the unit to the cell and one

member of staff stayed in the cell with him and I was outside with another staff member. It would only have been for half an hour to calm the situation down and the headmaster or deputy headmaster were notified. They would be called at home if it was during the night and the individual in charge of the unit would also take it up with the headmaster in the morning. The cells were only used if there was a real potential for harm to the staff and child. It was taken very seriously.

67. I don't recall any boy in Fleming unit being moved on for behaviour. In the main Kerelaw did reasonably well with handling these kids. The main sanctions for behaviour were to prevent them going on home leave or on any outings. It was for things like misbehaving on an outing as if they could not behave then they could not be trusted to go home.

*Restraint*

68. We did have to call the police on the rare occasion that things got out of hand. This became less as the staffing levels improved. If a child had to be restrained, they would be put in the cell area to calm down and it would be recorded in the diary for that unit. I am not sure if the admin area had their own recording system where the cells were, but they had secretaries to do these things.
69. Some of the children were physically the same size as you, even the girls. Physical restraint was part of the job whether we liked it or not. It should never have been done by one person and there was a specific way of handling it. There should always be another person there when you were applying restraints and as I have said on more than one occasion, I was present as a standby person. I was one of the smaller night care staff and restraint was very hands on.
70. I would always remove myself first and get help if physical restraint was required. The boys would say "there's KGN away for help". I was more than capable of handling these children myself, but I would never restrain unless there was another member of staff present. The only time I had to do it alone was an incident with one boy and a chair, which we will come to.

71. Restraint would normally happen if the child was out of control. They may have come back to the unit intoxicated through alcohol or drugs. They could be spitting on or hitting staff. They would have to move towards someone first. They would be placed on the ground, and we would restrain their arms and legs, never their head and never would we sit on them. It lasted as long as the boy decided and could be for a couple of minutes or half an hour. It ended when they had had enough and calmed down. It was our job to try and empathise and turn it around. They would eventually go back to bed in my case.
72. I never received any training in restraint at Kerelaw but I had training from my time in the army. I wasn't prepared for finding my way through that minefield, but I think I did that reasonably successfully. There was the brutal way and the self-defence way, but I was aware how to handle children. I can't speak for other staff, and I wasn't aware of the training of other staff. I never saw any excessive use of restraint. It was always necessary.

### *Bullying*

73. The younger children that came into the system suffered more from their peers than they did from any member of staff. There were bad apples in every establishment. It was sad but you had to learn to cope with that.
74. I knew it was happening as boys would come to me with sore arms and they didn't have a sore arm the day before. I would ask how it happened but be told it was nothing. I would maybe just give them an ointment or a paracetamol. I am not saying this to blow my own trumpet, but this type of thing didn't really happen in my unit. If there was a certain dorm that I had to watch in an evening, then I watched it.
75. The boy in charge of each unit was the delegator. He would get other boys to do his work for him. I always made them aware that I knew what their standing was within the group and took a more authoritarian approach with the boys in charge. I was more to the point. If I didn't do that, they would have picked on me as another boy and I wasn't there for that. I was there to make sure they did not pick on anyone else.



76. As I have said there were numerous occasions where a boy would come up to me in the evening and ask me to keep an eye on his dorm that night. They would never tell me why. That was to make me aware something was going to happen to him, but nothing did happen to him that night as I made sure of it and did watch his dorm. I would stand on that landing with my torch listening and watching for however long it took to make sure the kids were ok. The next day they would come to me and say, "thanks for a good night sleep, KGN". That's the boys I could build up a good rapport with not the hardcore ones. Those are the boys I could get through to, not the ones who caused all the trouble.
77. Dealing with bullying was entrusted to me by senior management and more importantly the boy. I had to make sure that when I was communicating to the bully boys, I did not mention the other boys' name. I did not need to, I just made him aware that I was aware.
78. The benches in the red tile area had to be removed at one point as they were either being thrown at one another or through a window to prove a point. The chairs were used as a means of defence and a show of authority. The busiest person in Stevenson was the glazier, Mr Gough. Kerelaw was a goldmine to him.

#### *Running away*

79. If a child had absconded, we had to call the local constabulary once we realised they were gone. The police were more than happy to help to keep the local citizens protected as the children could be up to all sorts, breaking into shops and garages. That was the only time I would have been in touch with the police, and it was properly handled in my opinion. The headmaster and deputy head would also be notified.
80. There was no security in the unit, none of the doors were locked. Only the office was locked because of the legal information that was in there. The cells in the admin area weren't even locked. There was one occasion a boy was kept in the cell overnight because of how disruptive he was. It was all about containment.

*Concerns about Kerelaw*

81. The introduction of the girls' unit was probably in my mind one of the worst moves that was ever made. Here we had boys with their own problems with sexuality and then the girls came along with their problems. It was in no way a success as far as us on the nightshift were concerned as it may have worked during the day with all the staff available then but at night with less staff it didn't. The boys just could not handle it. Unfortunately, the way they perceived it was that they were slags and whores ready for what they wanted.
82. I witnessed an incident with a girl in the independent living area. I could see her from my unit. The girls should not have been in there at all as two boys were placed in there. There were boys waiting outside the unit and excuse my expression, but they were waiting their turn. The girl being in there gave me reason to go over and ask the girl to leave. I think the two boys involved were threatened with being moved on.
83. Another time some boys had some so-called pals in the independent living area who had brought into the unit cigarettes and alcohol. That was taken off them because things got rather noisy. I got assistance from another unit, and they were told they would be reported, in my case to **KAM** and May. I then passed over the reins of that situation and it did not happen again in fairness to them. The independent area was locked but we had a pass key if there was an incident. That was the only two incidences of concern to my knowledge.
84. When management asked us how we could make things safer I told them a spare person to help on the nightshift would help. That was a godsend to the staff working nightshift.
85. As an ordinary person off the street, I muted my concerns about the lack of psychiatric care for the children at Kerelaw. I think even at management level finance dictated that whether we liked it or not. As an establishment they had to break it down to get to the root cause as to how we could help these children.

### *Reporting of Complaints*

86. There was a process in place for a child to make a complaint with the staff in his or her unit. I would listen to that with an open mind, and it would go in the unit diary. I would then discuss it with another member of staff in the unit.
87. If a child came to me from another unit, I would listen to them and make them aware that any discussion we had, I would have to report to the staff in their unit. That wasn't a problem. If it was about the staff at the unit, it wasn't really for me to make any voiced opinion or criticism. It is up to the staff in that unit to do things differently not for me to tell them. I would not always put that in the diary if it was another unit as it was for that unit to put it in their diary. I would not take it to management unless it was something in my diary.
88. If it was a complaint in my unit, it would go in the diary and if the staff deemed it necessary the young boy would be brought down in the morning to discuss it with senior management. It was then up to senior management to record their response. I can only assume they had their own recording as they had a secretary.
89. As far as I was aware the only other person a boy could go to with complaints, other than their parent, was their social worker. He was entitled to that contact, but whether he got it or not, I don't know. That was his right as far as I was aware.

### *Abuse*

90. I never received any complaints of abuse. There was only one incident with a chair I was involved in, and we will come to that. I never had kids complain to me about abuse from other staff just other children, who I termed "the bully boys". That was complaints of physical and emotional abuse and I had to settle that child down. If there was an injury or bruising to the boy, I would write it in the diary, but it wasn't for me to take the child's clothes off and examine them in that situation.

91. I don't recall any definition of abuse written anywhere in Kerelaw. No one ever gave me a definition. I was told not to be physically involved with any child unless they made it necessary by instigating it. That was drilled into me from day one and I would like to think it was to other staff as it was so important. My understanding was that there could be verbal or physical abuse, but I never saw it, even when I was asked to assist in another unit. When I was asked to assist in another unit, as soon as that child saw the other person arrive, it settled down, don't ask me why. That can only be perceived in the mind of the child, maybe because they had two against them now.
92. When I came on the scene after being asked to assist at another unit, there would only have been one staff member dealing with that child at that stage, so there was a certain level where that staff member could be more physically involved in restraining that child until I came on the scene. That had to be there as that child wasn't always going to stop at you and could be prepared to inflict behaviour on another child. You had to weigh up the situation when it happened and sometimes it could only be dealt with at that time not in hindsight.
93. Abuse could have happened and gone undetected. If the children are saying it and it is proved that it was happening, then it happened. It is hard for me to describe abuse as it was never part of my make up. These things were a part of your everyday job, and it was how you handled it and went about doing it when you were interacting with the children. This is where the empathy and the empathising came in. Your persona had to change to cope. You never knew what was going on in the child's mind, it could have been what his pals were going to do or what the boss in the unit was going to do. It was absolutely shocking what a child had to do just to get peace and quiet in that place. It was hard for them.

#### *Child Protection*

94. The only reason I would expect to use child protection is outside of my job when it comes to the legal framework. That is when it is out of my control and in the hands of the lawyers and the courts.

95. From a staff point of view, we would discuss it and for the qualified staff it was part of their training. They did a very good job as far as I was concerned with the limited expertise they had. There was one area of care to the child that was missing and that was psychiatric care for whatever reason. That was out of my hands.

*Record Keeping*

96. The daybook was an official diary used to record in daily. I was always in at least fifteen minutes before starting my shift for a handover as to how the children were behaving during the day. At the end of a shift, I would hand over to my line manager and sometimes I could be sat there for half an hour going over an incident. Management was always fully aware of what had happened, and I made sure it coincided with what I had written in the diary.
97. The only level of trust that was put on me was my experience of what a particular issue was and putting it in the diary. Most of the time when I realised an issue was getting out of control I stepped away. If they were trying to apply verbal or physical harm on another child that went in the diary. There was more than one occasion where I would bring the child down to see what I had written about them in the diary, and they would just say "aye that's ok KGN".
98. There was no other record keeping that I was aware of other than the unit diaries and that was in place when I started at Kerelaw. It was always the system me and the other staff were working to, and the children knew of it. It was kept in the unit office locked up. It was the same diary used by everyone in that unit and we were legally responsible for recording incidences in that diary. It was certainly adequate from a starting off point of view. We were responsible for reporting the way a situation happened and if there was a difference in what was put down on paper that is up to the individual. It certainly wasn't the case for me. I would go into the main office in the morning, and they would say to me "how many pages is it today KGN". To me that was me doing my job.

## **Leaving Kerelaw**

99. When I left Kerelaw there were deals being offered to people who felt like they had been in the job long enough from the local authority. With the length of time and experience I had I knew I had had long enough. Especially with the things that were coming to light with other establishments and the staff's relationship with the children, which eventually came to Kerelaw itself and was the root cause of it closing down. I had left Kerelaw two or three years before it closed down and my wife and I retired to Dumfries. I lost my wife down in Dumfries and moved to Inverclyde to be near my son and that is when I met my current wife.

## **Police Investigations/Criminal Procedures**

100. Two members of staff were convicted of abuse at Kerelaw. I was not aware of this when I was working there and got on with these individuals very well. Matt George [REDACTED] and John Muldoon. Matthew was one of the teachers at the school. I was totally unaware of any of that. The only time I got involved was as I said when I found out he was taking children to his house when his own children were there and he just said it was ok, he can deal with it. That was always going to be a problem when it came to the verifying of information. I could see the warning signs, but I was not witness to any of this. I did not work with these men as I was night shift, I only heard about it.
101. Police came to my door about fourteen years ago and asked me about three or four children. They were in plain clothes and said they were investigating incidences that took place in Kerelaw. I asked them about the unit diaries, which to me were recognised as a legal document. As they did not have that diary, which in my mind was a legal requirement I told them to leave my house. I said if they wanted to come back, I wanted to make sure I had my lawyer present and I would then discuss anything.

102. I was then called as a witness at a criminal trial concerning these two men. The incidences I believe were involving girls at the unit. If there was such a thing going on these men deserve what they got but that is not part of me.

### **Convicted abusers**

103. I am aware of Matthew George and John Muldoon being convicted from Kerelaw. To me it was a lot of nonsense until they were convicted. Afterwards I met a couple of boys from the unit, and they told me that Matt and John were stitched up. I don't know who these boys were. They said it was because the police said to the girls if Matt and John got convicted, they would get compensation. I just told them I didn't want to know.

104. I don't know anything about Matt and John's recruitment as they were both there long before me. John was a team leader and Matt was an art teacher. As far as I knew John was a qualified social worker and Matt was a qualified teacher, but I wasn't aware of any previous experience. The children used to tell me Matt's class was the best as they could do what they wanted.

### **Other staff**

KBE

105. KBE did not work with me, but I remember his name. What his capacity was I don't know. I am assuming he was either a trainee or qualified social worker or teacher as he did not work at night to my knowledge. I never saw him with children.

LEJ

106. The name LEJ does not mean anything to me. I must have known him if he was at Kerelaw the first few years I was, but I don't recall him.

FSR

107. I remember FSR as a name. I think he was a teacher, but I don't recall what he taught. Teachers were teachers to me. I would only have seen him if he was involved in Fleming unit at any time, but I definitely would not have seen him at night.

KBS and FSL

108. I don't recall the names KBS or FSL.

*Tom Howe*

109. Tom was an ex-police officer and had a slightly different way of working with the children. His training in restraint was totally different to the rest of us care staff and I did not get involved with that. I told him they were children and not members of the public. The experiences I heard from some of the children with Tom are their interpretations and not mine, but I would say to him if I heard anything about him being heavy handed that it was not the way we should be working with children. The view I was getting was second hand from the child, I didn't see it.

KGH

110. I remember KGH as I worked with him on nightshift, and he was one of the night staff. From an educational point of view, I would say he did not have a high IQ. As a person he was an everyday ok guy. He may have been heavy handed with the children. I never witnessed anything, but I did hear children talk about him and I would ask him if he maybe went a bit too far. If I saw it going on I would say that is not the way things should be done, in particular using the hose. If it was self-defence that's ok but anything that was too hands on, I would say. You have got to be hands on to a certain extent and I could not tell him how to handle things. How many times that happened I don't know. I would only talk to him in general about what the kids were doing. I never saw him interact with children. These people handled it in the way they felt they were competent to do it, but it wasn't always the way I would.



GVL

111. GVL was a big strapping guy and just had to look at the boys and they would behave. There was no way he would have needed to get physical. He would have his usual "verbals", we all had to put up with that. I did not see him work with children really. I can count on one hand the number of times I was asked to assist him. Anytime I was involved with any of the staff it was in the diary. If you can get access to them, you will see that. That would be the only time I saw him interacting with children.

GVM

112. GVM came from Stevenson. He was a big, tall chap and had two children. I remember that as when I worked in the BBs his children were there. I only knew them because they were local. GVM was easy-psy but I am not saying no one can have a temper. We can all have a temper sometimes. I would never be there to get involved in any nonsense. If I was asked to assist in another unit, it would just be to observe. If I had to get involved, it would be together. GVM was a gentle giant and very calm. He was not involved in any nonsense as far as I am aware. Any time I saw him with children there was maybe a bit of verbal from the child but nothing more.

FRB

113. FRB, I recall as part of the staff framework of the school. Again, he could only be a social worker or a teacher because he wasn't night shift. He must not have been in my unit as I don't recall working with him. To my knowledge I did not have much contact with him or see him interacting with children.
114. The only time I was made aware of any nonsense was from the kids afterwards. Most of the time it was flippant and how they perceived it. The boy was there to boast about what it was he was involved in with the staff. We were all wankers to them.

## Specific allegations against me that have been made to the Inquiry

GDD

115. GDD has given a statement to the Inquiry. At paragraph 49 of his statement he states, *"The nightshift were always doing things. There was a big long corridor, and half way along there was a big fire hose, the type you would get in a school or something. Every third or fourth night shift you would be woken up by somebody squirting the fire hose at you at three in the morning. This was the staff who were doing this, not the kids. There was GVL Tam Howe, KGH, KGN KGN and GVM They were doing this to entertain themselves, it wasn't done as a punishment. They would do it to everybody in your unit, all thirteen of you. It would be different ones who got it each night. They would stand there laughing and soaking you, then just leave you because the mattresses were waterproof but you would have wet bedclothes. I remember one time I had wet bedclothes, so I just had a duvet cover to sleep under. The day shift staff did know that this was going on, they just didn't do anything about it. It was common knowledge that we were there for the entertainment of the night shift. They would get you up in the middle of the night and you would have to fetch a cup of water from the burn in the grounds, sometimes racing against another boy, sometimes just time-trials. They made you do challenges on the assault course, made you eat an apple, just bizarre things at two, three in the morning. The other kids would be taken out to watch, even if they weren't being made to do anything. Some of the kids liked it."*
116. I am sure GDD was in Kerelaw. I don't recall him in my unit so he could only have been in Millerston unit. It is a name that does ring a bell. If we were going to describe a young laddie that needed psychiatric help it would be GDD and if I was to nominate a ringleader in a unit, it would be him. He would not do anything but make sure his pals did. He has a vivid imagination. One of the things we have to appreciate when listening to these stories is that they were children. He has had time to reflect now and articulate, be more coherent.

117. The incident itself, I did not and never was involved in incidents with other units. There is one part of this statement where he talks about going to the burn. The burn was the dividing line between the school and the housing estate. Mr GDD must have been in Millerston as the only unit close to the burn was Millerston.
118. He is talking about half the staff in the school being there watching and I can't believe that for one minute. The fact that a hose was used I don't doubt but the fact that all night officers were present I am sorry I can't agree to that at all. Why my name was brought in I don't know. I was not interested in using fire hoses. If these staff were using them in bedrooms all the boys in the room must be wet. I think he just has a vivid imagination. There was no way I was there. I would not leave my unit to watch a boy being hosed.
119. I did not punish children in such away. If the night staff were recording in the diary like they should have then the day staff would be aware of it. If they didn't write it in the diary, then they are at fault. The passage of time may have affected my memory it was thirty odd years ago, I can only remember so much. The staff are wrong if they did it. Nothing like that should be for fun. The team leader in charge of them should have reported them to the headmaster and told them it is not acceptable. I accept if a child was treated like this it would have been abusive.
120. GDD then goes on to say at paragraph 50 of his statement, *"There was a staff member we called KGN. His real name was KGN. He believed we were all contaminated with something and wouldn't touch us, or door handles and things, . He wasn't a nice man. He was a strange guy, not well. He once accused me of being outside smoking. I said that I hadn't been. He took me to the red tile area, an unheated conservatory type room, and made me sit down on an upturned bin wearing just my boxer shorts, until the day shift arrived in the morning. The day shift just sent me to my bed, they didn't bat an eyelid."*
121. The simple answer is no I did not sanction children in this way. The bedroom area is upstairs, not downstairs and if you are smoking in that area, where you were not

allowed to then yes, I would bring them downstairs because that boy is doing something he knows he should not. I would have smelt it before I accused anyone.

122. Almost in every case these boys were into smoking. It must have been the very early hours in the morning if I brought him down the stairs just before the morning staff came in. Smoking is a hazard in any shape or form. The reason the bin was the only thing that was there is the two benches had to be removed as they were used as weapons as I said before. I would have been trying to make him aware that what he was doing was wrong and if that is seen as a source of punishment then I accept that. He would only have been there for half an hour or so.
123. The [REDACTED] is to do with me doing my rounds with the torch. To go in and out of the unit and rooms I have to touch the door handles. When the boys came back from leave the handles would have glue substances on them that they brought back to the unit to help them get to sleep. On a different dorm one night I opened a door with the handle and there was excrement on it. This was just a prank, and I did not go into the dorm screaming and shouting I just [REDACTED] after it. I just got on with my job and totally ignored it.
124. I had a good working relationship with most of the boys in my unit. I would check every door handle with my torch before going into the dorm. I never shined the torch on the boy's faces, only on the roof to check that they were ok. After a couple of weeks, they got the message, and I did not need [REDACTED] There were at least four or five boys came up to me laughing afterwards and said, "oh no [REDACTED] tonight, KGN [REDACTED] that was great fun". To them it was great fun, to me it was anything but. Mr GDD [REDACTED] interpretation of what happened is totally different to mine and if you want to believe him then that is fine. I am sure other boys would have a different opinion.
125. The passage of time has not affected my memory of this incident and I don't think the way I handled this problem was abusive. He is talking a pack of lies and to me it was trivial. If he was smoking, he would have been removed from the dorm as I have to protect the other children in the unit from fire.

LZA

126. LZA has given a statement to the Inquiry and states at paragraph 46, *"There were staff on duty at the home twenty four hours a day. The night shift staff were called Tam, KGH and KGN. They were scary people and you didn't want to fall out with them. They came to you and explained that they would not be happy if you ran away on their shift as they had to fill in lots of paperwork."*
127. He then goes on to say at paragraph 56, *"I must have been there for three weeks when I went home to my mother's on weekend leave. My mother noted that there were a lot of bruises on my back. She asked me what had happened and I told her that one of the night shift staff called KGN had attacked me with a chair for calling him KGN. It turned out that it was a nickname he had been given by the boys and he did not like it. He would be doing his rounds at night checking the doors. The boys knew this and used to put things on the door handles. To avoid this KGN. He did not like the nickname but I didn't know that and thought it was his surname."*
128. *My mother reported this to the authorities. She felt that she had been charged for something similar and why should the school staff get away with it. It resulted in my social worker stopping me from going back to the home that weekend and then accompanying me and mother up to the home to lodge an official complaint.*
129. *I was returned to the home. The investigation of the complaint went on for some time and I don't think anything happened to KGN as he continued to work. KGN didn't speak to me. I was approached by KGN's colleagues called Tam and KGH. They told in no uncertain terms that making complaints and telling tales was not a sensible thing to do. They also told me that running away was not allowed as they didn't like doing paperwork. These were scary guys. They told me that it was not because of the complaint I had made they said that everyone in the home got a talking to from them.*

130. *They finally got me, my mother and my social worker Josephine MacDonald into the office to say that the complaint had been investigated but it was his word against mine and no further action was to be taken. KGN started speaking to me again and he still gave me the odd dig."*
131. When these children lifted a chair, it was either for their self-defence or for who they were going to be using it against amongst the group. It was used if they had a grievance against someone and it happened in an instant. I always had to be ready for this.
132. The only time I was involved in an incident with a chair was when I was in the television room, which was one of only two places that had chairs in the whole school. The other was the snooker room.
133. On this occasion a chair was presented by an individual and I confronted them. He was in the process of confronting another child. Nothing was said it just happened instantly and that is what started it. We were tussling about with the chair in-between us bumping into other chairs. Eventually we have ended up on the floor and he may have picked up bruises. I don't deny that fact. If we are landing on other chairs or a concrete floor of course there would have been. A couple of other boys went to the office and got help and it was over. It would either have been May or KAM and this was when I was working day shift.
134. That's the only scary physical altercation I had with one of the boys and it was the other boys that got me out of it. They saw the potential because of the person I was involved with. This incident, as were all incidences involving me were recorded in the diary. Even when I went to visit other units to assist, I recorded it in the diary.
135. The children didn't want us in the television room or the snooker room but there was a glass partition for us to see inside when we were waiting outside, or we could tell by the noise if we had to intervene. This particular incident was recorded, the social worker and the boy and his mum came to Kerelaw and we all had a meeting. During that conversation I can clearly remember asking one question and that was for the

diary in the unit to be looked at. The headmaster read the diary and asked me if it was a true account and I said yes. It was shown to the social worker, mother, and child. I was then asked to leave and learnt later on down the line that I had been completely exonerated. Nothing else was said about it.

136. LZA's interpretation of this event is haywire. There are no chairs in the dormitories. The only place there are chairs are in the TV room or the pool room. That incident did not happen in a dormitory, and you can see where the fabrication starts to take place. The investigation was fully investigated, and I can assure you that. I said my peace and it was all recorded at the office with LZA mum, the social worker, KAM and the headmaster. The diary was read through by the headmaster and social worker. My interpretation is written down in the diary and you should refer to that. I was completely exonerated based on my interpretation.

137. The passage of time has not affected my memory of this incident. I would only describe this as abuse if there was more than one person involved. If someone is coming at me with a chair, I am not going to stand there and let that happen. It is not just me, there were other children there and it was them that reported to the office that I was in trouble. I then got assistance.

138. These are two classic examples of two disturbed children and bares no relation to me. This is just a child's imagination running wild and they are completely unsubstantiated.

### **Helping the Inquiry**

139. The root cause of these children's problems has to go back to the parenting. I am not here to appoint blame, but it has to go back to the start and poor parenting. I tried to express my concerns about the children when I worked at Kerelaw but I totally failed. It was another level of management and expense. We needed proper assessments and investigations into what was going on with them. We should have faced up to the fact that there had to be some sort of psychiatric input from some body or individual. Now what we need is not social work, not children's homes, but psychiatric care. I was

reading the other day there is a huge waiting list of children waiting on psychiatric care now and teachers are saying that they are out of control.

140. Even today local authority cutbacks are everywhere. Leaving Kerelaw I was offered a deal to retire early, and I took it at the age of sixty-three. I was happy that two or three years later Kerelaw shutdown. Of all the jobs I had in my life Kerelaw was the most stressful. I hope I have given the Inquiry an insight as to how it has affected me. Every child in care needs help and they need it now. I have been more than happy to talk.

**Other information**

141. 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.

KGK

Signed. ....

Dated.....

27.03.2024