

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HTA

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HTA. My date of birth is 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Bellshill Maternity Hospital. I come from the North Lanarkshire area, I grew up in a place called Viewpark. I am the youngest of four. I have three older brothers, is the oldest, then and thereafter. There are two years between each brother then just over three years between and me. My dad wasn't there growing up, it was just my mum. Her name was. My dad came to the house once or twice, but he left. I did not really know him.
3. My mum struggled with the four of us, things were really difficult. There was a lot of poverty in the family. There were times when we had no electricity and no food, so it was quite hard. It was not my mum's fault, it was just the way things were. I remember a lot of dark, cold nights. The house we grew up in, in Viewpark, wasn't very nice. My gran lived in a pensioner house at the end of our road, but she died in 1974. That left my mum on her own. I cannot remember an awful lot about that. I just remember being at a neighbour's and my mum crying, and then there was a coffin in the house and I got told my granny had passed. I was quite young then. My mum used to do a lot of house cleaning for people, but she still wouldn't manage to feed us. I remember she worked somewhere in Bothwell. She used to get things on what was called 'tick'. A van came around and she would get groceries from it and pay the

next week, then she wouldn't have any money for the following week, so it was tick again. It was a vicious circle she was in, and she couldn't get us out of it. It wasn't until my brothers grew up and they had jobs that they helped get my mum out of the situation.

4. School was very difficult because I was bullied, both at primary and secondary school. This happened a lot and it wasn't by one person, there was always a number of girls. It was because of our poverty. I would do anything not to go to school. It wasn't that I didn't want to go, I wanted to learn, but I was scared because I knew that I would be bullied. I went to Burnhead Primary School and Uddingston Grammar School. The bullying just carried on from one school to the other. I did not tell anyone about the bullying, I was too scared. I never said anything, I just took it. I didn't go to school an awful lot and that is why I ended up going to Langlands Park school.
5. I remember going to see a social worker. I recall going to their office and a social worker coming to the house. I cannot remember her name. The social work office was in Birkenshaw, at a little shopping centre. They were involved because of the poverty and the fact that I wasn't going to school. I was seen as bad and punished, but if I went, I was being punished by the other kids. I went to about three children's hearings and at the third one I was told I was going to Langlands Park. I don't know where the hearings were, I just remember my mum taking me. They were scary. I was only a child. My social worker was at the hearings. It was a horrible time for me. I think I was about ten when I went to the first hearing, because I wasn't going to primary school. I only went to first year in secondary. None of my brothers were involved with the social work, only me.
6. When I was about eleven years old I was sexually abused by my brother [REDACTED]. He would have been fifteen or sixteen at the time. It happened three times over the course of about a year. It happened twice in my bedroom when I was sleeping. He would come in and I wakened up with him touching me. The other time was in the loft of the house. I can't remember why I was in the loft, but on that occasion he had sex with me. My mum was downstairs at the time this happened.

7. When I was eleven or twelve, before I went into care, a boy called [REDACTED], who was a friend of [REDACTED], saw me in the street one night and asked me if I wanted to see something in his van. I remember he had a bright orange van. He opened the back door and told me to get in. I did and the van started moving. He took me down to Strathclyde Park, laid me down on the grass, in a wooded area, and tried to have sex with me. I kept saying 'No', but he wouldn't stop. I was lying on the grass and he was touching me and forcing himself on me. People with dogs walked past us and disturbed him, so he walked away, drove off in his van and left me there. I had to walk home. I didn't tell anyone about this.
8. I fell pregnant when I was eleven or twelve. I was still at school, and it was with a boy from Viewpark. That was one of the reasons why the social worker came into my life. I remember them telling me that I had to have an abortion and my mum agreed to it. I remember the social work taking me to hospital. I remember after the abortion my mum telling me that I had to go and see the social worker, so I would walk to their offices in Birkenshaw.
9. So, I was put into Langlands Park because I wasn't going to mainstream school, and I wasn't going there because I was being bullied.

Langlands Park List D School, Port Glasgow

10. Langlands Park was in Port Glasgow. It's not there now, it was knocked down. It was a List D school, an authority school. I was told I was going at my third children's hearing. There was a panel of three people and they decided that if I wasn't going to school, then I was going to Langlands Park, where I would be kept in. My social worker took me there in her car straight from the hearing. My mother didn't come with me, she went home. I didn't take any of my clothes with me, they gave you clothes there. You were kept in the school for your first two weeks to allow you to settle in and get used to it.

Routine at Langlands Park List D School, Port Glasgow

First day

11. Langlands Park was a big, old Victorian house. The doors were locked. You went through the doors, into a vestibule and there was another set of doors. You went through those, and they were locked behind you. When you were inside all the doors and windows were locked. You could not leave the building. That was quite scary. I met the headmaster, who spoke to me and showed me what room I would be sleeping in. I also had to strip off and go for a bath. A male member of staff ran the bath, but I took my clothes off and had the bath in private. I then had to put clothes on that they gave me to wear and I was taken up to my room. I can remember that we always had to wear black plimsols and I did not like them. I remember crying an awful lot when I was on my own. I would have been told all the staff members names when I was there, but I cannot remember any of them. I can only see their faces. I remember two older ladies who were staff there, the headmaster, the schoolteacher and a lady that ran the house at the back of the main building. This was for girls who were getting ready to leave the school.

12. Langlands Park was an all-girls List D school. The age range was from about twelve to fifteen. There were a lot of girls from Glasgow. I remember there was one girl that lived in Clydebank. Most of the girls were there for criminal stuff, like shoplifting, fighting and assaults. There were other girls there for the same reason as me, because they weren't going to school. There were maybe twelve to fifteen girls in the school. There were four rooms. Some of them only had three beds. The one I was in was a big room and it had six beds in it, but you were moved about as well. There was also the house at the back of the building, which had two rooms in it. When you went into that house you knew you were due to be released. Everybody wanted to be in that house because they knew they would be getting out soon. Next to your bed you had a bedside cabinet and a single wardrobe. I can remember going up to my room with my mum because she came to visit me once. I was getting kept in for five weeks. I had had a home visit and didn't go back, so I was being punished. My mum came to visit and I remember taking her up to my room and crying and telling

her I wanted to come home. She was upset too and told me she couldn't take me home.

13. When you entered the front doors there was a lobby, then a set of glass doors. You went through these and there was an office on the right-hand side. There was a long hallway and two sitting areas, one on the left and one on the right. Further along from the sitting rooms were the showers. Upstairs was the bedrooms. From the left of the front doors there was a big gym hall and through this hall was the dining room.
14. None of the staff lived on the premises except the lady in the house at the back of Langlands, where you went before being released. The rest of the staff would come in for a shift then go home. If they were nightshift they would come in and stay up all night, then leave in the morning.

Mornings and bedtime

15. We were up every day at six o'clock and had to do chores before getting our breakfast and getting ready for school. A bell would go off and ladies would come into the room and waken us up. We would get dressed and do cleaning. Some girls would clean the toilets and the showers, other girls would clean the sitting rooms and the dorms. Everybody got a job to do, and it would rotate. You were told what you were doing in the morning. If you didn't do it right, you were forcibly told to do it again and do it properly. You would be grabbed by the arm and told it was not done right. Once they were satisfied that everything was done well enough, we went to the dining room. We lined up and were taken there by the staff. We sat at round tables and there were four girls to a table.
16. After breakfast you went to school. You lined up and a member of staff took you up to the school, which was up at the back behind the house. There was no school uniform, you wore the same clothes all the time. The only time you put your own clothes on was at the weekend if you were getting home. I do not think there was any school on a Friday. There was an assembly and at that you would be told if you were getting home. If you weren't ^{SNR} [REDACTED] would point at you and tell you

that you were not going home and the reason for it. The girls that were getting home would leave right after the assembly in a minibus. We would be driven to Glasgow Central train station and you were given money to get the train home. I would walk from Uddingston train station home to Viewpark.

17. We were at school from nine o'clock until three o'clock. It was normal school hours. We were taken back down to the dining room at lunch time. After lunch we were taken back to school until three o'clock. The schoolteacher was a nice person. He wasn't like the staff there, he was only there to teach us, but he didn't do an awful lot. We would have our tea at five o'clock.
18. After tea we would be taken back to the sitting rooms and sit about, maybe watch a bit of TV. There were two sitting rooms, but only one had a TV in it. I think the girls chose what to watch. Most of the time I was up in my room because I would rather avoid the other girls. I do not know if the staff knew I was being bullied by the other girls. If they did know they didn't say anything. It was never spoken about. I can remember lying in my bed and I was crying as I'd had enough and I just wanted to go home. I remember one of the ladies coming into my room and asking why I was crying. I told her why and she told me I was there for a reason and I was to get out of bed and stop crying.
19. We would go for a shower in the evening then get ready for bed. We would then sit in the sitting rooms and get a drink and a biscuit before going up to bed about nine o'clock. We got another ten minutes or so and then it was lights out. That was our day.

Mealtimes / Food

20. For breakfast you would get cereal and then toast and tea. There were two ladies that did all the cooking. One of the girls helped in the kitchen. You always ate the food because you were always hungry, you didn't get anything in between meals. There was breakfast, lunch, and teatime at about five o'clock, when you would get a bigger meal. Just before bed you would get a cup of tea and a biscuit. If you didn't

like the food, you didn't have to eat it. I always ate mine. You sat at the same seat, at the same table for every meal.

21. At lunch time we would get a sandwich or something like that. They fed us well, we didn't starve. We had quite a good meal at lunch time then at five o'clock we would have another good meal, like fish and chips or mince and potatoes, things like that. Sometimes you would get a sweet with it like apple pie and custard. We would have a glass of water to drink. Some of the food was made in the kitchen and some would be brought in.

Washing / bathing

22. The showers were downstairs along from the sitting rooms. You walked in and the sinks were on the right and I think the showers were in front of you. There were three or four showers. They were single cubicles, so you had some privacy. We had one every night, then we would brush our teeth. Sometimes the showers were supervised by female staff, but not all the time. If there was only one member of staff on duty, they couldn't be there all the time. If they had to be at another room that would be when the bullying started.

Clothing / uniform

23. They took us shopping when we first went there and got us a pair of shoes, a skirt, or a pair of trousers, a top and a jacket. We wore the same clothes all the time and they were laundered by the school. We would wear our own clothes if we were going home for the weekend.

School

24. There was a building up the back and that was where the school was. It was not much of a school. It was one room and one teacher. I cannot remember the teacher's name, but I can see him. He was local and he didn't teach us much. There

wasn't much schoolwork getting done. We just sat around most of the day. I can't remember him trying to teach us anything.

25. All the girls were taught together, it did not matter how old you were, you were in the same class. There wasn't much teaching going on. We would draw or play games or just sit and talk. Now and again, he would teach a bit of English or maths, but that was it. There was nothing else, no history or geography that you would get at other secondary schools. It was very boring.
26. If I wasn't doing maths or English, I would just sit and draw shapes on a piece of paper and colour them in. I was there for three and a half years, and it was the same teacher all the way through. He supported Morton football team and played a lot of Dire Straits music in the classroom.

Trips / Holidays

27. The teacher took us into Greenock or Gourock to go running along the pier. It was just something for us to do. I could not do it. I must have had fibromyalgia when I was young because I remember that my legs were always sore. I could walk, it was just when I exerted myself, they would get sore. The teacher wasn't very happy that I couldn't do it. I always remember him saying that he tried to do something nice for me and I couldn't be bothered doing it. That stuck in my head because I always remember thinking it is not that I don't want to do it, it's that my legs are sore.
28. There were good times at the school and on one occasion they took us to France. This was near the time for me to be released, so I must have been fifteen. We were meant to be there for a month, but we were only there for three weeks. Some of the girls flew over but another group of girls, including myself, were driven all the way down to Southampton and we got the ferry over. I remember the headmaster was in the minibus with us and he made a detour into Wales to see his parents. There were about seven of us in the minibus. I was fine when we initially got there, but I began fainting all the time because of the heat. Everywhere we went after that I had to have an umbrella. The girls that flew there had been there for a week when we got there.

They left before us, and we were meant to stay longer but it rained for two days, and the staff decided to take us home. There were two girls and a disabled person they were looking after came with us. I did not understand why they came with us. I didn't know them, and they weren't anything to do with the school.

Birthdays and Christmas

29. Birthdays were not celebrated at the school. I cannot remember Christmas ever being celebrated either, but we would go home over Christmas anyway.

Pocket money

30. You would be given your train fare or bus fare on a Friday, that is all you were given. I would get about three or four pounds. It was to take me home and bring me back to the school. If you spent that you knew you couldn't get back and you would be 'lifted' by the social worker or the police.

Leisure time/Personal possessions

31. There were magazines in one of the sitting rooms and a record player. There was an incident when my mum brought me in some LP records and one of the girls stole them from me. I cannot remember her name. She was in a different room and I knew it was her. I went into her room when she wasn't there and I took them back and I hid them. She knew that I got them back, so there was a fight, but I wasn't a fighter. I was getting home that weekend and I took the records and put them up my jumper, then I put my coat on and I was going to take them home. She knew I had them, so she took them from me and smashed them, broke them all. We were just about to go into the minibus to be taken to Glasgow Central.
32. If you were kept at the school over the weekend, you were there as a punishment, so there were no niceties. You didn't get to go out or do anything, you were being taught a lesson. When you did get home, we got the minibus to Glasgow Central on the Friday afternoon, and you had to be back for five o'clock on the Sunday night. I

got the train from Uddingston to Glasgow then a train from Glasgow to Langlands. The school wasn't far from the train station.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

33. I do not know of anyone coming to Langlands to inspect the place. There was a man came in who worked for IBM in Greenock and he spoke to us about employment on leaving school. I think he was giving the school money. He gave us notepads and pens that had IBM on them.
34. When I was at Langlands Park I was allowed to go home at weekends, but on one occasion I didn't want to go back to the school and the social worker came and picked me up and took me to a police station. I was put in a cell until a police officer was free to take me back. I was twelve or thirteen when this happened. The school was about forty miles away from my house.
35. I would see my brothers when I went home at weekends as they were still at my mums, but they never came to visit me at the school.

Healthcare

36. If you were ill, you just saw a member of staff, there wasn't a nurse or a medical person in the school. I cannot recall any medical emergencies while I was there. I was never taken to see a dentist while I was at Langlands Park.

Religious Instruction

37. Langlands Park was run by the Church of Scotland. We didn't go to church, but a minister would come in and speak to us in the gym hall and we would sing hymns. We would all sit in a big circle. There was a religious element to the school, we had to say Grace before meals. Every girl had a bible in her cabinet next to her bed. I remember sitting with one of the female staff members trying to read the bible, but to

me it was really difficult. My family were not religious. I didn't know it was run by the church while I was there.

Running away/discipline

38. I was not allowed home for weeks one time and I was that desperate that I ran away. I didn't get far before they caught me. I was taken up to see SNR and I was given the belt, like the school belt, over my hands. I was hit three or four times with the belt. All I wanted was to go home and go to a normal school. It really stung. I went to my room and I just stayed there. I didn't want to come out. This was over a weekend.

Abuse at Langlands Park List D School, Port Glasgow

39. Sometimes I wouldn't go back to the school on the Sunday. The punishment for that was being singled out in assembly, pulled to the front by the ear and being hit on the legs with a cane by SNR. This was like a brown stick and quite long. Anywhere he went he had his cane with him. He was a small man, but quite large. He was bald at the front, with hair at the back. I did not like him. I was afraid of him. Every time he came into a room I was scared. He would smack you two or three times with the cane, but all the time he was talking to you he would have a hold of your ear. He wouldn't let go. It was really sore. You would be crying but he wouldn't let go until he had finished what he was saying. This was in front of other staff members as well as the other girls. It happened to me a few times and I saw him doing it to other girls. As well as the punishment, you wouldn't be allowed home for three or four weekends. SNR was the one who did most of the hitting and the bullying.
40. If you were bad, you were given a nylon overall to wear over your bra and pants, and a pair of plimsols. You were left wearing these for a week to two weeks. This was to make sure that you would not run away. The overall was long sleeved and buttoned up the front. It came down to your knees. I tried to run away quite a lot, so that happened to me on a few occasions. You would be made an example of down in

assembly, then when you went to your room the overall was left there for you to put on.

41. The two older females were quite strict and firm with you. They would push and pull you about and things like that if you did not do what you were told. They would firmly push you down on a seat if you were doing something they didn't like. I would say they were both in their fifties or sixties. Most of the staff were local people from Port Glasgow and Greenock.

42. A lot of the girls were not very nice. They would swear a lot or make fun of you. There were a lot of girls there that I was frightened of. I was bullied in there too. I was always quite quiet because of my upbringing, so I was a big target to bullies. It was mostly in the showers. They would come in when I was in the shower and turn on the cold water and hold me and force me to stay under it, or they would just push me around. My life from the age of five to fifteen was the most horrific time in my life. It was really difficult. That is why I can't remember a lot of it. I want to block it all away. I didn't want to think about those people, so over the years I just tried to forget about them. When I thought about it years later, why put someone in a place like that just for not going to school? It does not seem fair.

Reporting of abuse at Langland Park List D School, Port Glasgow

43. I told my mum what it was like at the school while I was there. She was the only person I told. There was not much she could do except console me. She couldn't change anything. I knew she couldn't change it. I am not saying my mum didn't love us, she did, but it was difficult for her doing everything on her own. She had her own issues.

Leaving Langland Park List D School, Port Glasgow

44. I was told I was leaving the school a few weeks before my sixteenth birthday. It was the best day of my life. I was told that due to my age I didn't have to go to mainstream school anymore and as such there was no reason for me to stay at

Langlands. I was living in the house at the back of the school at the time. It was much easier when you were up there. The lady that ran the house was a lot nicer. I remember us being taken into Greenock, taken to a building at the shipyard and helping with meals on wheels. We helped deliver the meals to the elderly. I did this twice a week. Before we went out with the meals we always got fed at the shipyard. Things were a lot better and easier at this point, I hardly saw SNR. Being in the house was more like a family. It was a normal house with a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and the bedrooms upstairs. Three girls were in it at any one time and the lady stayed there too.

45. I went home when I left the school. I think my mum came and got me and took me home. It was weeks until my sixteenth birthday. Legally I hadn't finished school, but I wasn't going to learn anything in two weeks. I remember thinking I had better go to school, because I didn't want them to come and pick me up and take me back to Langlands. During those couple of weeks, I was very anxious that they were going to take me away again. When I turned sixteen, I didn't see the social work again.

Life after being in care

46. I really wanted to work for the RSPCA, however other things in my life stopped me from going down that route. I did not have a very good education. In a way I always brought myself down and thought I was not really good enough to do that job. I tried to further my education, but life just kept on getting in the way of it.
47. I stayed with my mum up until I was sixteen then I left and went to stay with a friend in Bellshill. I lived there for a while, but it was just crazy. We were only teenagers, and I was just getting drunk all the time. I went a bit too far with it. I was out of control. I ended up in all sorts of relationships and every one of them was bad.
48. I went to stay with my mum for a short while at some point, but she had moved from Viewpark to Douglas. I moved there with her because I wanted away from where I was because my life was just spiralling out of control.

49. I used to work in a [REDACTED] factory, which was in Wishaw. It's on the site of where the hospital is now. It used to be [REDACTED] Industrial Estate at the time. It was just all factories then. I was there for about six months before leaving and getting a job somewhere else. At night when I wasn't working, I was drinking. There was a lot of alcohol, there were a lot of parties. There was a lot of just being out of control. So, when my mum moved up to Douglas, I told her I would go with her and try to settle down a bit, but I just went from one bad relationship to another.
50. I got into a violent relationship with someone called [REDACTED]. I had a son to him, [REDACTED]. He hit me constantly. I met him when I was about twenty-one and I had my son when I was twenty-four. But he was regularly violent. He used to sit on me, on my shoulders and slap me. I went from being bullied as a child to still being bullied as an adult.
51. [REDACTED] dad was particularly violent towards me when he was drunk. He would come into the house and just start hitting me. He tried to rape me. I left him after that. He wanted to have sex and I didn't, but he was forcing himself on me. I didn't know how to stop getting into these relationships. There was no-one to sit me down and speak to me, advise me. I have a daughter called [REDACTED], who is twenty-three. There are ten years between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
52. Getting into bad relationships continued throughout my life until I met my present partner, [REDACTED]. We have been together sixteen years. When I met [REDACTED], my life just settled down. After we were together a few weeks I told him we would have to split up because he was too good for me, too nice a person to be in a relationship with me. I had no confidence. I didn't have the ability to believe that I should be happy with someone.
53. When we met, I actually went on a computer course and it's the first thing I have completed in my whole life. I have a certificate for it. It is called a driver's licence to use a computer. It was an introduction to Excel spreadsheets and things like that.

54. I never revisited Langlands. I looked it up online and then tried to find it on Google Earth, but it is all houses now. It has been demolished. I am not aware of any survivors group or ex-residents' groups for Langlands.
55. I have had counselling in the past, but not regarding my time at the school. I have been depressed most of my life. I have even attempted suicide. Right now, there is no such thing in my area. I have asked my GP about it. When I met [REDACTED], I was really happy for the first time in my life and then five or six years later I fell ill. Both of us were working and life was good. Overnight my life changed. I had to mourn the person that I was because that person was gone now. I was no longer that person because I couldn't do now what I could do then, go out and work or go for walks, go on a night out. I was working in a café in Lanark that was run by a charity. It was called the [REDACTED] Things like that all stopped because I suddenly got this pain in my back. It started with a jerking. I didn't know what it was, then one night it was like something in my back snapped and ever since then I have been in pain. I feel like I desperately want to speak to someone about having this illness, to try to come to terms with it. However, there is nothing in my area, so I have been left in limbo. I must deal with it in my own head, on my own, which is difficult.
56. I do not speak to any of my brothers now. I see them at funerals or weddings and that's all. They all still speak to each other, but we don't have any kind of relationship.

Impact

57. For years and years, I used to have nightmares that I was taken back to Langlands Park. They were horrible nightmares. This happened right into my twenties. When I came out of Langlands Park I was always nervous and scared around regular people. Big rooms full of people scared me. I couldn't speak for fear of making a fool of myself, so I didn't say anything. Then people got the wrong impression of me, thinking I was quite aloof and stand offish and didn't want to know people, but I did. I just didn't know how to break that barrier of talking to people.

58. The impact on my education was huge. When I was thirty and living in Douglas a company called Healthy Valleys organised tutoring for me, that was paid for by the council. The tutor would come to the St Bride's Centre in Douglas every Thursday and teach me a little bit of maths and English. He said that I could do it, I just didn't have the confidence to do it.
59. This is the first time I have managed to speak about everything. The worry for me was I finally managed to put it away, behind me and now that I have brought it all up, I will have to try and put it behind me again.

Reporting of Abuse

60. I reported the attempted rape by [REDACTED] to the police, but I was told there was nothing they could do as it was a domestic situation. On the night it happened, he physically threw me out of the house, and my dog came out after me. It was up in [REDACTED] in Scotland. When it snows there, it can be up to your knees. This incident happened in the winter, and it was bitterly cold. I went to the telephone box, and I called the police. They came and got me and went to the door and he was so drunk he wouldn't answer it. They took me to [REDACTED] Police Station, from there I ended up in a room in a pub in [REDACTED]. The Women's Aid organisation helped me. The police went to see him the next day and questioned him. They came to me and told me that because it was a domestic matter there wasn't anymore they could do. This happened in 1994. My son [REDACTED] was three at the time. He took [REDACTED] from me, and I had to fight to get him back through the court.

Records

61. I have never made any attempt to have a look at my records from Langlands Park.

Lessons to be Learned

62. Nobody should be treated how I was, especially if it is going to have a profound effect on the rest of their life. Living with that is not a nice thing. Lessons should be learned from it. Locking the doors and windows made you feel like a prisoner. Being told that you cannot go out for a bit of fresh air is a bit ridiculous. It should have been a bit more relaxed. When SNR [redacted] was hitting me or one of the other girls, the other staff knew about it but did nothing. What he was doing wasn't right, he was bullying girls. Someone like me should never have been in the school in the first place. I wasn't in gangs, I wasn't a criminal. All I was doing was not going to school because I was scared. I knew if I went to school, I would get another beating from the girls in my class.

Hopes for the Inquiry

63. I hope that nobody is treated the way that I was in the school and in places like that, and that the staff and the organisation look out for bullying from the other boys and girls. I hope that is addressed because it has had an effect on me for a long time.

Other information

64. 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..... HTA [redacted]

Dated..... 17/2/23