

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

### Witness Statement of

GWN

Support person present: No

1. My name is GWN. My date of birth is 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh and at that time I lived with my mother, father and big brother but I also have younger brothers and sisters. There were five of us altogether and my mother also had four children from a previous marriage but they weren't with us.
3. My mother's name was and my dad was. My brothers were called, who was three years older than me, who was two years younger than me and who was three years younger than me. My sister, was five years younger than me.
4. We lived in the Niddrie area of Edinburgh. I went to Niddrie Mill Primary School and family life was pretty bad. We were a poor family with no money. Neither of my parents worked and my dad was away a lot and my mum was at home. We were never told where my dad was or what he was doing.
5. There were a lot of reasons that life wasn't good at home. Although I didn't realise it at the time, I think my mum was suffering from some sort of depression. She used to hit me a lot. Me and my wee brother, would get the worst of that.

6. I was skiving school and I think that's why I was put into care. I remember a woman social worker coming to the house but they didn't do anything to help me go back to school. I went to a children's panel with my mum and a social worker. The social worker had changed by that time to John Heywood. His name might have been John Hairwood but I think it was Heywood. I was allowed to speak at the panel but I wouldn't tell them anything.
7. After that I went to visit Calder Grove Children's Home with the social worker, John Heywood, and my mum because that's what they used to do at that time. I wasn't really bothered when I went to visit Calder Grove. I was used to staying away from home because I used to stay with aunties and uncles a lot so it didn't really bother me too much. The home took me round to familiarise myself with the school on either a Thursday or a Friday and I was to go to school on the following Monday.

#### **Calder Grove Children's Home, Edinburgh**

8. Calder Grove is in Sighthill, Edinburgh. It was just me that went. All my siblings were in care at some point but not until they were fourteen or fifteen. I was eleven or twelve years old when I first went into care. I remember that I was still at primary school and I think it was 1980.

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### **Leaving Calder Grove Children's Home, Edinburgh**

37. **Secondary Institutions -** the social worker told me then that I would only be in Calder Grove for six weeks but I was there longer than that. I was in Calder Grove for at least a couple of months.


38. I left because they thought I was back into a routine of going to school so I was allowed to go home. I was happy to go home **Secondary Institutions - to be published later**

### **Time at home after Calder Grove Children's Home, Edinburgh**

39. I'm not sure how long I was home for before going back into care. Things were still pretty bad at home. I remember the social worker coming a few times when I was at home but not very often. He tried to speak to me but it's difficult when you've been brought up being told not to tell people things and then there are lots of people asking you questions. I had been told to shut up and not to say anything to anyone. I thought that was the best thing to do and that way no one would get in to trouble.
40. I went to Castlebrae High School and I was in the annex. I went for a while but I hated school and I decided that I wasn't going. I went to panels every six months or something like that. There was another panel which I was at and I would have been asked what I thought but I never told them anything. There was no encouragement to go to school when I was at home but I was sent to Redhall because I wasn't going to school. I don't remember going to Redhall for a visit but I think that was standard procedure so I would have.

### **Redhall House Children's Home, Edinburgh**

41. Redhall was in Colinton. I was in High School when I went there and I was in first year so I would have been twelve or thirteen years old.

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**Leaving Redhall House Children's Home, Edinburgh**



81. I was in Redhall for about a year. I had been going to school so I was allowed out. There was a panel to decide that I was going home. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### **Time at home after Redhall House Children's Home, Edinburgh**

82. I don't know how long I was home for but I didn't go to school and it was a nightmare at home. I think my mum and my brothers and sisters struggled because they were used to me not being there and I was probably a nightmare.
83. There was an incident when I was at home but I don't know how old I was. I was on roller skates. There was one hill in my area that was smooth and on a bit of a hill so everyone went on their roller skates there. One laddie deliberately tripped me up when I was skating full pelt so I burst my knee wide open. I went home and patched it up. A couple of days later I saw him and I battered him so he got the police and I think I was charged but I don't think that's why I was put into care. I think I was put into care because I was skiving school.

### **Unknown home in Niddrie, Edinburgh**

84. I was placed in Niddrie, . There was a panel to decide that I was going there but I don't remember going to view the home. Secondary Institutions -

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### **Leaving Unknown home in Niddrie, Edinburgh**

96. I was kicked out of the home because I had been kicked out of school. I had been going to Castlebrae High school. It was the year when you had to pick your subjects and at Firhill I had picked metal work and woodwork but I wasn't allowed to do that at Castlebrae so I was having to do home economics instead. At first I thought it would be cooking and that would be ok but they weren't doing cooking. They were sitting

about talking about pregnancy and how to look after bairns so I asked them to take me out of that class because I didn't want to be there.

97. I still went to school but I used to carry on in that class because I didn't want to talk about pregnancy and bairns. One day I was sitting at a table in my home economics class and there was a person, who I believed was a cleaner, and the teacher nearby. I heard the cleaner asking the teacher if I was the one that she had been telling her about. I kept doing my work and then the two of them came up behind me and peered over. The teacher said something so I told her to "fuck herself". I was told to get out of class so I did.

98. The next thing I remember was being sent to the headmaster's office. Secondary Institution  
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Headmaster got right in my face and asked me what I would do if he shouted at me so I got to my feet and I shouted right back in his face. I was kicked out of school and then the home kicked me out the following day.

99. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I was told that because I wasn't at school I could just go home. At first I thought they meant for the day but they meant forever so I didn't hesitate and just left as quickly as possible. There was no panel and I didn't see the social worker.

### **Life at home after Unknown home in Niddrie, Edinburgh**

100. I went back to my mum's and then she kicked me out the same day. I told her that I had been kicked out of the home and I don't think that she was happy about that. She told me to "fuck off" and not to come back so that's what I did. I was still fourteen. I went to a pal's house.
101. After a while word got round that my mum was looking for me so I went and spoke to her. She said that I had to go home because the social worker was starting to ask questions. I don't know if she had told the social worker that I wasn't staying at home but she probably didn't.

102. The next thing I knew, I was being taken to a children's panel. I think my mum had said that the social worker was coming to see me so I had to be there to meet him. He was going to take me to Snowdon at Stirling to view there. I went and had a look at Snowdon and I thought it was alright. I went back to where I was staying.
103. I went to the children's panel and the police were there for the first time. I asked my social worker why they were there and he said that they were there for me. The police were there to take me in case I wasn't going to go to the home. I think my mum had objected to me going to Snowdon so I was sent to Guthrie's. The social worker, John Heywood, and my mum took me straight from the panel to Doctor Guthrie's and I didn't have a visit there.

#### **Dr Guthrie's Girls' School, Edinburgh**

104. Guthrie's was an all-girls school and the girls in my house were fourteen or fifteen. The houses were Angus, Brechin and Ogilvie. I was in Angus which was in the top flat. Within that flat there was a galley kitchen for everyone in that house. There were eight or ten of us in the house and I had my own room.
105. When you were in the main building all the doors were locked. When you were in Angus house the toilets were sometimes shut and you would have to ask one of the staff members to take you over to the toilet. There were toilets in the shower room and if they were shut then there were two toilets over the landing outside the house so the staff had to lock and unlock doors to take you over to them.
106. The staff in the houses were all either turn keys or screws. Guthrie's was like a jail and the staff each had a bunch of keys that they carried about with them and every door was unlocked and locked as you went.
107. **GWR** was in charge of the house that I was in and there were some other staff. There was Frushy and she was nice. Most of the staff were alright but she was one of the

best. She was a fair person. Frushy had a long Italian surname and Frushy was a shortened version of that. Mr MTA was SNR and Miss EQE was SNR SNR. She was a right sergeant major and very strict. I certainly didn't like GWR and I didn't like EQE much either.

108. Most of the girls were from outside of Edinburgh and for a while I was the only one from Edinburgh. I remember [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a big butch lassie from Glasgow and I had a problem with her from the start. [REDACTED] always had other lassies with her but I think they were afraid of her. She tried to get me to do her chores after I had finished my own chores one morning but I refused. You had to stand up for yourself but I wasn't a fighter and I wasn't into bullying. [REDACTED] was my friend while I was in there.

### **Routine at Dr Guthrie's Girls' School, Edinburgh**

#### *First day*

109. I was taken into the office to sign some paperwork and then I was taken up to the sewing room. There were two members of staff there and one was a home economics teacher. I was measured because you had to make your own clothes. They gave me one skirt and I was to make another one. I can't remember if I was given a blouse but I was given desert docs which are Jesus sandals. That was what you had to wear and everyone wore the same clothes.
110. I was in the middle of sewing my skirt up when I was called back out. I hadn't been for a medical so my mum and social worker had come back to take me to the doctors at Craigmillar, Edinburgh. Previously, when I went to the other homes, I had been to my own GP for medicals before I went into the home. After my medical they brought me back to Guthrie's.
111. When I arrived back I was taken up the stairs and that's when I met GWR. She was a screw which means like a prison officer. I was introduced to GWR by whoever took



me up the stairs and then she asked me to make her a cup of coffee. I made her coffee and then went back to tidy any mess that I had made. She came through and was raging. She asked me what I was playing at and if I was trying to poison her. I said that I had just made her a coffee and if she didn't like it then she didn't have to drink it. I thought she was going to throw the coffee at me but she forced me to taste it and it was freezing. I apologised and said that the kettle must not have boiled but she wouldn't accept an apology. I offered to make her another one but she said that she wouldn't take coffee from me and called me a "little brat" or something like that. I turned to her and said that I wasn't there to look after her and that she was there to look after me. She stormed away and I think that was my fate sealed.

112. I was shown where I was going to sleep and then I was taken from there to the English room.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

113. The staff got you up in the morning and then you would go along and get washed and dressed. You made your bed and then you had to go and do your work.
114. You had your last fag at 8:30 pm and bedtime was at 9:00 pm or 9:30 pm.
115. There were bars on the windows of my bedroom and the window was nailed shut so that it only opened half an inch. There weren't any locks on the bedroom doors.

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

116. We were given breakfast, dinner, tea and supper. I don't think we were ever given sweets.
117. At breakfast time you could have a cup of cereal or a slice of toast and the person on breakfast duty would put all of the food out. After breakfast you were allowed a fag and then you went downstairs. You were in a class all morning and then you went back to your house for your dinner and then there would be another class after dinner.



118. After the afternoon classes, you went up the stairs to get everything ready for teatime. Maybe you had half an hour to do nothing. There was a television and dining room. If you were on kitchen duty then you had to get the table set up for dinner.
119. After tea, dishes had to be washed and dried if you were on kitchen duty. If you weren't then you had another half hour of free time. Once the dishes had been done and put away you would be given your fag.

#### *Leisure time*

120. They had a smoker's room in Angus house. It was the same routine every day and time didn't matter except for the time when you were given your fag.
121. There was no outdoor time in Guthrie's at all. They had a courtyard but you weren't allowed to use it.
122. I think there was about an hour of free time in the evening before you went back downstairs to the night classes.

#### *Trips and holidays*

123. You were kept in for four or six weeks before you were allowed out at weekends. It was even more boring at weekends than during the week and you didn't get to do anything. All we did was sit and polish cutlery. There wasn't any outdoor time so, for the first four to six weeks when you weren't allowed to go home, you had no fresh air. It was worse than a jail because in a jail you at least have a right to one hours exercise if you want it. I used to complain about it. Guthrie's is enclosed and there's all this land round about it but the only fresh air you could get was walking down to the laundry room. You were worse than a prisoner.
124. Whether you were allowed to go home or not at the weekends worked on a points system and if you didn't have enough points then you didn't get out. You lost points

for bad behaviour and for not doing as you were told but I never really understood why you lost points because there were lots of times when I thought I was getting out because I hadn't caused bother but I didn't get out and then there were times when I knew that I had caused bother but I got out. There were times when I thought that it didn't really work on that system. Whichever member of staff was on at the time could give out points.

125. There was a meeting every Thursday and Mr <sup>MTA</sup> <sup>SNR</sup> read out your points and whether you were getting out that weekend. I just blanked him, I either got out or I didn't. I never defended myself because I wouldn't be believed anyway.
126. We went on a trip to Peebles and I think we might have gone to St Mary's Loch. We went to Holy Island and members of staff took us. They were just day trips. I think we went to Long Niddrie beach one time. I enjoyed the days out.

#### *School*

127. There was a hall that the two houses, Angus and Brechin, all met up in and you were told what class to go to. After class finished you went back to the hall and waited for whatever screw was coming to take you back up to your house. I think the lassies from Ogilvie went out to school. You had classes every day.
128. I remember the English class, the art class, the sewing class and I remember cooking once or twice. There were classes in the morning and afternoon but there were also night classes that lasted an hour or an hour and a half. I was always stuck in the sewing classes at night time where they tried to teach you to knit but I wasn't into that.
129. There was a home economics teacher who was nice, an art teacher and an English teacher. They came in from outside of the home.
130. On my first day I was taken to the English room where I sat down and asked what I was to do. Although I hated school, I had been going so I thought I knew what it was supposed to be like. I was expecting to do some work. The English teacher told me to

take a book and sit down. I asked her what I was meant to do with it and another girl told me to take a book and not to be cheeky. I took a book and it was all about cultivating drugs so I sat and wrote word for word what it said in that book into my jotter. I thought I would see what kind of teacher she was. That's what always happened in the English class and I don't remember ever doing work in that class. We might have done a bit of spelling once.

### *Work*

131. My first job was to clean the corridor, I had to sweep mop and buff it. Breakfast was about eight o'clock and the time that you began your cleaning duties depended on what you were doing. If you were on shower duty then you would have to wait until everyone had been in and washed before you would do that. If you were on breakfast duty then you would have to run round asking everyone what they wanted for breakfast while they were doing their work. Once your work was done you had breakfast. The rota was changed so that everyone had a shot of each duty. If you were mopping the floors in the morning one week then the following week you might be doing the toilets, or breakfast duty or the lounge.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

132. Everyone went home for Christmas itself but we had a Christmas dinner in Guthrie's. The dinner was alright but GWR wasn't. We all went into the big hall and sat down for dinner and then we were all given a present and each person opened their present one at a time. I had no clothes and I used to have to borrow everyone else's so I thought this was brilliant and I was hoping for jeans. They were handing the presents round and it got to me. I started opening the present and everyone started laughing. It was a hideous skirt, the shape and colour of it were rotten. GWR was sitting right next to me and she asked me if I liked it so I told her it was rotten. She said that she had picked it for me and I told her that I could have guessed that. I told her to keep it.
133. She was being sarcastic when she asked me if I liked it. There was one other lassie who got something similar to me. The wee lassie sitting next to me was trying to make

me feel better and said that it was quite nice and I should wait until I tried it on so I said she could have it.

134. At the end of the dinner Frushy took some of the lassies aside and she shouted on me. I was quite surprised but I think she was asking the girls who she thought had a harder time in there. She said we were going to do some dishes but she was actually giving us an extra fag. There were four of us and when we got upstairs she gave us fags and told us to get them smoked. We said we didn't want them because we knew that she would get into trouble if we were caught. Then we decided that if we got caught then one of the lassies would say that she had sneaked them in. I said that we would get caught because I was there and that was how it was but Frushy told us to hurry up and get them smoked. We went in and started smoking and we didn't even get them finished before we were caught. Frushy told them that it was nothing to do with us and that she had given us them. We told her that we were going to say that it was one us but she insisted that she was responsible. I don't know what kind of punishment she was given but she was still there after that.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

135. You weren't allowed visitors but I saw my social worker, John Heywood, once and I saw my mum once. I don't remember how long I had been in when I saw my mum.
136. I was in the English room and <sup>HSB</sup> came to get me and told me that my mum was there so I was wondering what I had done wrong. My mum had my wee sister with her and they gave me ten minutes to talk to her. During those ten minutes she told me that my dad had been taken to hospital and he wasn't expected to live.
137. I can't remember if it was after I had seen my mum or if it was after class had finished but I was taken to the office and they said that they would let me go and see my dad that night. They were focussed on whether they could trust be to come back because I was a runner. I went by myself to the old Royal Infirmary and when I arrived I met my mum and went in to see my dad. I think he had taken a heart attack.



138. After the visit I went back to Guthrie's but there was a hold up on the bus and it was running late. My mum stood with me but I told her to go back into the hospital because I wasn't going to run. I was late getting back and when I got inside they were on the phone to the police. I was searched by GWR. Normally when I was searched I had something to say but on this day I didn't say anything and I just let her get her search done but she wasn't satisfied so I was accused of drinking. I kicked off because I had been at the hospital and it wasn't my fault that the bus was late. I think GWR wanted me to be put in the cells but the other member of staff who was there said that she couldn't smell alcohol. If it wasn't for that other member of staff then I would have been put in the cells. She asked me to breathe on her and I refused so GWR said that was because I had been drinking. I told them that I hadn't been drinking and that I thought it was disgusting to breathe right in someone's face. I didn't find out how my dad was until the next weekend that I went home.

*Family contact*

139. There was no access to a phone and my mum never had a phone anyway.

*Personal possessions*

140. You were given a bus fare when you went home but I don't remember if you were given pocket money. They allowed you a certain amount of money to buy your fags. When you had been out you could bring fags back into the home but you weren't allowed to keep them. I used to buy twenty fags and they would keep them and give me four a day at set times. You weren't allowed matches or cigarettes either. You went to the smoking room and they came round with a lighter or a match to light your fag and then they collected all the dog ends at the end of it.

*Running away*

141. Guthrie's was all locked and you couldn't get out so I stole keys from the art teacher. The staff weren't allowed to put the keys down and she was the only one that used to leave them on her desk. I asked one of the lassies to distract her and I stole what I

thought was the front door key. There were four doors to get through before you were in the main bit to go into the hall. I'd misjudged it by one key and I became stuck in the corridor. I gave the key back and I don't think that I got in to trouble. I was glad because the art teacher would have been in trouble for losing her keys and she was nice.

142. The reason that I stole the keys was that I had been told to pick a picture and draw it which I did. As far as I was concerned I did a brilliant job but the following week the teacher said she wanted me to paint it. I refused and I said that would destroy it because I couldn't paint. The art teacher came along and started painting it and I was absolutely raging. I think I stole the key for a bit of revenge.
143. We would get to go home at weekends and I went back to Guthrie's the first couple of times. You all had to be back at a set time to be searched and the search was done in front of other people. When you were searched it was a general pat down and they checked inside your bra and then checked your hair and your feet. You had to take your socks and shoes off in case you had anything taped to them. There were always two people there when you were searched and it was always women who searched you.
144. I didn't like being touched and it was worse when the other lassies were there. It made it more uncomfortable so I wouldn't go back. I knew the police would be out looking for me so I would go to my mums and be taken back from there but at least when I got back to Guthrie's it was quick because it was late and there were no other lassies there. The more often I did that, the longer I would stay out each time. I then wouldn't be allowed out the following weekend because I hadn't gone back the weekend before. There was one police officer that asked me if I didn't like it there. I said no and that was it.

### *Discipline*

145. They had cells and on the first day that was the first thing that they showed me so I was warned. I was told that if I got out of hand then that was where I would be put but I can't remember who said that to me. They were proper cells like the ones you would

find in a police station. They were just along from the sewing room and there were two of them. There was a bed built in to each cell with a mattress on it and that was it. Each cell had a metal door. When we were going to the sewing room we would shout in and see if anyone was in there. I don't know which members of staff were allowed to put you in a cell.

146. During the week you were locked inside on a daily basis and there was no outdoor time. The points system was so that you could get out at the weekend and most people behaved so that they could get out at the weekend.

### **Abuse at Dr Guthrie's Girls' School, Edinburgh**

147. [GWR] had ginger hair and glasses. She was short with big hips and she had big straight legs with varicose veins.
148. There was an incident the first time I was put on kitchen duty. There was a cooker and a sink with no draining board. One lassie would be washing and the other would be drying. If you were drying then you would stack the dishes on a tray and then bring them to the dining room and, when you came back, you put the tray back on the cooker. After breakfast we went downstairs and the fire alarm went off so [GWR] accused me of trying to burn the building down. Someone had turned the cooker on and burnt the bottom of the tray but it wasn't me.
149. Initially I tried to suss everyone out and I asked the girls who to look out for. [GWR] wasn't their favourite but I wouldn't say that she was particularly disliked. The staff would do room checks. When Frushy was doing the night checks, she would come along open the door, check you were in your room and then shut the door back over. However, [GWR] was coming into my room. I would always catch her at the side of my bed but I don't know what she was doing. I know what I felt.
150. I think there were always two members of staff on duty in our house and then there were staff downstairs which was either [EQL] or [HSB]. I think they were only there in



case you stepped out of line too much. It was only one member of staff who would do the night checks.

151. I thought I was going mad sometimes and that it was all in my head. I asked some of the other lassies if GWR went into their room when the room checks were done. I remember one of the other lassies laughing nervously and from the way that she reacted I thought that GWR must be going into her room as well.
152. The first time that GWR came into my room I thought I was imagining it Secondary Instit  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later but it continued and continued. I don't know how long it had been going on for but one day I pulled GWR up about it and I asked her why she was coming into my room at night. She said it was to do my room check and to make sure I was in my bed. I told her that I had realised that the other staff members weren't coming into my room and they weren't at the side of my bed. GWR turned round and said that it was to make sure that there were no other lassies in my bed. I didn't know how to take that. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I didn't say anything, I just left it.
153. Sometimes GWR was alright with me but the minute I dropped my guard she would turn on me. I remember one time when she had been in my bedroom during the day and I can't remember why she had been in my room but maybe I had been in trouble or something like that. When she left my room I ran out after her and I asked her if I had done anything outside of Guthrie's to someone related to her. I mentioned the home economics teacher from Castlebrae and I asked if she was her sister. GWR just stood there. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I was just trying to think of a reason. Then she started banging on about her son but I wasn't interested and I was just trying to block out what she was saying.
154. On Thursdays we used to have a house meeting and you could use the meeting to get out any problems that you had with any of the other lassies. Either the same night or the night before I had confronted GWR, we were speaking about what you wanted



to be when you were older and I had always wanted to be a long distance lorry driver. My uncle was one and I remember being in his cab. Out of the blue GWR said that her son's girlfriend was a trucker. She said that she had long beautiful blonde hair and you should see the looks she gets when she gets out of the cab. I asked what her son did and she said that he was a painter and decorator. I know I was probably barking up the wrong tree but I thought there had to be a reason for her being so horrible to me Secondary Institutions - to be published later. That's how she made me feel. I've never felt hatred like that from anyone.

155. There was one time when we were on a trip and we ended up outside GWR's house. It was a bottom flat in Craigentenny, . I knew she hated me and she knew I hated her. I asked her what she was trying to achieve by showing me where she lived. I asked her what was to stop me going to her door when I got out of Guthrie's and she replied that she was sure that her son would be more than happy to take care of me.
156. GWR was a horrible person but she could be alright so I don't understand where her hatred came from but it was there from the minute I walked into Guthrie's. There had to be something. I can't accept that there wasn't a reason.
157. Sometimes I didn't want to go out at the weekend because I didn't want to come back and be touched during the search. It was easier to be in than to go out. There was one occasion when I didn't go back and I ended up in some guy's house. The door went and I said that's the police so just tell them that I'm here but he told me to hide in the cupboard. He flung me in the cupboard in the kitchen and put the washing machine in front of it but it had slats in the door. When the police came in I stuck my fingers through the slats so they could find me.
158. The police told me to get out but I couldn't open it so I had to ask them to and then when I got out I saw that they weren't uniform police and I panicked that they weren't real police. I got out of there and I was standing in the lift with the police officer and I felt like he was treating me like he thought I was a wee cow. He said that when I was twenty one I would have five bairns. I got really cheeky with him and said that as long

as I didn't have the bairns with him then I didn't have anything to worry about. I got in the car and they took me to the old Craigmillar police station.

159. There were three doors at the entrance to the police station and then the main door. They sat me in a room and then they came back on the phone to Guthrie's. They said that I shouldn't go back to Guthrie's and that I should go to an assessment centre but I had something to say about that because, as much as I didn't want to go back to Guthrie's, I didn't want to go anywhere else either. He then told me that I was going back and that I didn't need to worry.
160. I realised there were three doors to get through and then I would be out of the police station and I could make a run for it. I had my hand on the last handle and the police pulled me back by my hair into the back of the room and told me that he was going to handcuff me to the radiator. I told him to go ahead and then he could watch what happened to his radiator because it would come off the wall.
161. The next thing I remember, is getting into the car to go back to Guthrie's. Normally we would go over Castlebrae and past the high flats onto Gilmerton Road but they went straight up Dalkeith Road and panic set in. I kicked the back of his chair and I think I kicked his hand off of the steering wheel. I asked him to stop the car and let me out. There is a wee house at the top of Dalkeith Road and they pulled in there. The other guy was in the back and I was under restraint. The police officer who had been driving told the other one to sit me up and hold my head and then he punched me clean in the face. I asked him if that was all he had and I got really cheeky with him. I think he was going to punch me again but the police officer who had been holding me pushed me back down.
162. I'm not bothered about the punch in the face because I was kicking his chair so it was fair enough but when we got to Guthrie's he got out of the car and a couple of steps up the stairs he slammed my face into them. Then I remember hearing one of the staff opening the door and asking what was going on. The police accused me of trying to run away but she asked me what was going on and I told her that they were trying to break my arm. I think they asked where I was going to be put. She said that I would

be put in the cells which I thought was fair enough but the police wanted to put me in the cells themselves and she wouldn't let them. I don't think she realised how much that meant to me.

163. She took me up to the cells. I asked for a shower. She put me in the cells and came back a while later with some jammies for me. The police said they weren't leaving until she came down the stairs safely.
164. I spent the night in the cells and someone brought me breakfast in the morning. I heard the lassies going to the sewing room but I never let them know I was there. A member of staff came after everyone was in their lessons and I was taken to the house to have a shower. On the way over I was pulled up about dirty underwear that had been found under my mattress during a search of my room but I couldn't remember putting them there.
165. I was asked when my last period was but I didn't know and I didn't even know how long I had been away from Guthrie's before the police found me at the man's house. GWR questioned me and asked if I had consented to sex. I remember acting stupid like I didn't know what she was talking about but then I just said yes because I didn't want to be pregnant so I needed checked. To me this was another thing for GWR to use against me no matter what I said. I was taken to a doctor's surgery across the road from Guthrie's and luckily I wasn't pregnant.
166. There was a wee lassie who had been put in my room and she should not have been in Guthrie's. She had been skiving school but she had never been in a home. We were all a bit hardened up so it was easier for us to manage but this wee lassie should never have been there. We all voiced our concerns to the staff.
167. I remember that during her first night in my room I woke up and she had peed in the corner of the room. I remember GWR coming in that morning and I woke up screaming because I didn't know what she was doing to the wee lassie but she was just stripping the bed.



168. After her first night bed wetting, they would come in and get her up an hour before everyone else. I told the wee lassie to waken me up and I would take her to the toilets but then the staff started coming in through the night to wake her up and take her to the toilet however she was still bed wetting. It made it worse and I asked to be moved rooms. I had GWR coming in during the night, then the staff came in to deal with her and then she would get up in the night and pee in the corner. I told the staff that she should be in a room on her own because there were spare rooms.
169. When I was asked about the dirty underwear I thought that it had been her trying to hide things. There was one lassie, [REDACTED], from Glasgow who was a right bully and when I came back the wee lassie who shared my room had made friends with her so I thought that if it wasn't the wee lassie who had hidden them then it would have been the bully.
170. I was sitting at the supper table the night after I had been in the cells. I liked a laugh and a joke so I was sitting telling jokes. I was doing a tongue twister when GWR walked in and told me to shut my mouth. I told her that I would in a minute, once I had finished. I carried on and she told me to shut my "dirty filthy mouth". I refused. There were a few other things said and then she slammed both of her fists on the table and screamed at me that she couldn't stand me anymore. I told her that I knew she wished that I'd never been found. GWR stormed off crying and saying that she couldn't stand me anymore. I told her she should "fuck off" because I couldn't leave. I couldn't help my mouth sometimes.
171. Another panic mode hit me and I wanted out of there. I used the wee lassie that was wetting the bed as an excuse but it wasn't an excuse because I had asked loads of times for her to be moved because I didn't know if she was seeing anything when GWR was coming into my room at night. That night I didn't want to be there so I asked them to move me and they wouldn't move me so I started chucking everything out of my room. They sent for EQL to deal with me and I told them to put me in the cells but you never get what you want. EQL refused to put me in the cells. The reason I wanted to go back to the cells was that you would hear the cell door opening. In your own

bedroom you would be lying in your bed and someone would come in and you wouldn't hear them. I felt the safest in the cells.

172. The wee lassie's parents appealed the decision and she got out. She had been in for skiving school. She was going to Castlebrae and there were a lot of bullies in there and that's why she wasn't going to school.
173. There was one time that we went swimming. I remember going swimming three times, two times to Newtongrange and once to the laddies' Guthrie's. I refused to go to the laddies' Guthrie's. GWR had told all of the lassies that they might get boyfriends so I told her that I didn't want a boyfriend and that we were supposed to be going swimming. She asked what was wrong with me and then said at least it will be boys not men.
174. My social worker, John Heywood, came to Guthrie's once and they all had a meeting about me while I waited outside in the corridor. I didn't know when I was going to be allowed in but I was sitting there for a long time and all I could hear were muffles through the door. I heard something about a psychiatrist and then someone saying that I had tried to burn the building down. I kicked the door and told them to open it and let me in so I could tell them what was going on but they wouldn't let me in. I don't know who was in the room.
175. John Heywood, the social worker, came out and said I needed to go on the pill. He made me feel like he thought that I was nothing but a wee fucking cow. He said that if I wanted out then I would need to go into foster care. I told him to "fuck off" and then that's when he went on about the pill. I remember saying that I wouldn't go on the pill and I knew that he would need to ask my mums permission anyway. Heywood made me feel that if I didn't agree to foster care and the pill then I wouldn't be getting out. I agreed to the pill but my mum wouldn't allow it anyway. John Heywood never asked me what was going on and they all assumed I was just a wee cow.
176. I was told I was heading for jail by one of the staff on another occasion. I couldn't figure out why.

177. When you did your night classes you put your hand up, hoping that you would be picked to go to the class that you wanted to go to but I was never picked. I was always put where they wanted me to go. One night I put my hand up a few time but I was never picked so when everyone's classes had been decided I stood up and said that it was bad enough that GWR hated me but do they all hate me. The whole room fell silent because I was challenging them all, not just GWR. EQL said come with me and I got to go to the class that I wanted because I had put them on the spot. I got to go to gym hall. Before that I had been going to sewing all of the time and I didn't like that.
178. On another occasion we were sitting in the hall before our night classes and EQE and GWR came marching in. There was a smug look on GWR's face. EQE told everyone that if I didn't behave then everyone would have points knocked off. I don't know what I had done for EQE to have said that. I don't know what GWR had said to her but I was being held responsible for the entire school. GWR was playing mind games as she always did. I stood up and I said that I would kiss ass if I had to and I wouldn't let anyone lose points. I had the whole school against me.
179. There was a lassie in Brechin House who had been in Cornton Vale. The courts had decided to hold her on remand in Guthrie's and she was screaming to get back to Cornton Vale. She thought it was torture in Guthrie's.

#### **Leaving Dr Guthrie's Girls' School, Edinburgh**

180. There was nothing being done to prepare us for leaving and I didn't know when I was getting out. I think the panel was sooner than I thought it was going to be. Normally you knew that you had a panel coming up but this came out of the blue. I expected a panel after my sixteenth birthday but it happened six weeks before my birthday. I went to the panel and I remember the social worker and my mum being there. I was released from the panel and I really didn't expect to be getting out. I think they had had enough of me. I never saw my social worker again.

### **Life after being in care**

181. I stayed with my mum for a few weeks but I couldn't hack it so I went from place to place. During the first few years after I left Guthrie's I had a care free life. I stayed in a few places but I never really settled anywhere. I never had any money or clothes, I had nothing. I think I was sixteen when I managed to sign on. I was given my own tenancy when I was about eighteen and it was supposed to be a long-term tenancy but there were too many idiots coming to my door.
182. I became pregnant at nineteen and went back to stay with my mum for a few months and then I went into a hostel for a while. I was staying here and there. I took up with another idiot then I was given another tenancy and I had another bairn. The father of my second bairn hit my oldest laddie and we got into a big fight. After that he wouldn't leave me alone even though I had made it plain that we were over. I ended up moving to England and I was back and forth between England and Scotland for a while before living in Wales for a short time but I was very unsettled. I've been in Edinburgh for about thirty years. I was back up and down so I never really left Edinburgh.
183. I first took up with my current partner when I was seventeen but I didn't want restrictions or rules so we had a back and forth relationship. He ended up with another lassie and I didn't care because I wasn't the settling down type. Later he would turn up at my door and I would take him back but then he would leave again and I would get on with my own life. He came back again but this time he had four bairns and they all had social workers. I had three children so we had seven kids all together. I had stopped jumping about from place to place. I took his kids on as my own and brought them up.
184. All seven of my children have kids now. I have a busy household. I tried to warn my children that their kids could end up in care but I don't think they believed me. I was there for my children so they didn't think that their children could go into care.



185. There was a panel for my grandchildren and I thought that they might come to me for a year but it was clear from the outset that they weren't returning to their mother. In a way it's probably for the best because sending children back and forth wouldn't work. Initially I took the two laddies on voluntarily and at that time my daughter was pregnant so I wanted her to buck her ideas up and I told her what she needed to fix. They were meant to be with me for eight weeks and that became four months because she didn't want to take them back yet. I told her the social workers were looking at her but she wouldn't listen. I took the children back to her the day before they went back to school after the summer holidays but not long after that we went to "at risk" meetings and the two boys and my granddaughter were placed into my care. She hadn't been to stay with me at that point. They're my step-grandchildren but I treat them as my own.

### **Impact**

186. When my children had grown up I had to start thinking about work but how do you fill in a form and tell them what your last school was? That won't look good. I have no qualifications that I can put down on an application so that has had an impact. I was never going to achieve anything other than dead end jobs. Working in a café was about my limit but even they want O-Grades now.
187. I had no qualifications but I wouldn't say I was bright and I always had a problem at school so I'm not going to blame anyone for that.
188. I'm not blaming Guthrie's for everything that went wrong in my life because there was a lot wrong before it and it's hard to say if my life would have been different if I hadn't been in Guthrie's.
189. I got a wee cleaning job at one point but that didn't last long because I didn't like people telling me what to do. I didn't like taking orders because of my time in Guthrie's. People think they can speak to you however they want to so I would tell them not to speak to me like that. It was easier to not have a job and be poor than to try and change.



190. My GP diagnosed me with stress and panic attacks years ago and asked me if I wanted help but I said no. Then I was in hospital, not that long ago, and one of the doctors told me that I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I thought I've not got PTSD but I know that I do. I just deal with it myself. I don't touch medication. I've never had counselling and I find it easier not to speak about things.
191. I don't trust anyone and that's the truth of the matter.
192. I try and put my time in care to the back of my mind and not talk about it but things can happen to trigger it. My oldest grandson [REDACTED] was getting into trouble at school so I try and tell him to avoid that situation and that he needs to be careful who he hangs about with. I try and explain to him that the child in care gets the blame but I don't put it like that to him. You can only try and guide them but all of my grandchildren are doing alright.
193. I try and deny it but I know that it had a massive impact on my life. It has allowed me to be pushed around. I do anything for a peaceful life. When I sit in company people tell me that they wouldn't put up with things in my life but that's just the way that it is.
194. I don't socialise with people because everyone wants to talk about their past experiences and their childhood but I can't do that. The easiest way to deal with that is to avoid it. I don't like to lie so even if family members start talking about that kind of thing then I will get up and walk away. My own children don't know that I was in care. I don't let anyone know. My partner found out through a family member.
195. If I died tomorrow then my bairns know nothing about my life.

## **Records**

196. I asked the social worker, John Heywood, about my records but I was told that they would all be destroyed when I was sixteen. In the back of my mind I wanted to do something about what had happened. I think John Heywood thought that I was worried

about what was in them so I let him think that but I wasn't bothered about that and I'm not embarrassed about what might be in them. They can say what they want about me. Once I was told they weren't there I just got on with things and then things happened later in life that made me realise that my records do still exist.

197. My grandchildren's social worker told me that there were records. She told me that they are all kept and she told me where they would be. I had to go through a kinship assessment when I was looking after my grandchildren. I didn't realise how much they knew until then. I think I asked if she had looked at my records because when they did the kinship assessment they asked about children's panels. The next week when the kinship assessor came round I was meant to have filled in the forms but I didn't fill them in because I thought it wouldn't happen but she said that it wasn't about what I had done as a child, it was about what I had learnt and who I was now. My children's social worker was a good social worker, she was straight to the point and she never left a stone unturned.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

198. I think they could have listened more and been more understanding. When children are kicking off there is a reason for it. It's not that they are horrible wee people. People shouldn't assume that, because children are in care or from a difficult background, they're likely to be going out causing trouble. It's always the kids in care that get the blame.
199. Assessment Centres shouldn't be open. Unless they have done something criminal, children shouldn't be in these places. A wee lassie skiving school shouldn't be in Guthrie's.
200. Social workers should be held accountable. It's not right that children are shoved into these places and forgotten about. The bairns put themselves there in a sense but all these people make decisions for these children so they shouldn't be left there for the staff to deal with. The social workers need to do their jobs.

201. For children to speak up there would need to be someone that they get along with there. If my grandchildren weren't happy then they wouldn't need to stay with me. They know that they have that choice. I try and make them feel like they can come to me with anything but kids are kids so they won't always want to come to me. I tell them they can speak to someone in the school if they're not happy.
202. I think that there should be more encouragement for Kinship Orders. If there is a possibility that children are going to be put in care and the social worker knows that there is a family member that can help then they should be able to approach them without the permission of the parents.
203. I think that if children are in care then there should be after care until they are twenty one years old.
204. I think that panel members should do more than consider recommendations by the social work department. They don't always consider what the parents are saying. I do think the panels have improved but they could do better.
205. Once the Kinship order is in place then there is not a lot of support there, even financially. Social workers should make sure that everything is done properly rather than hand the children over and then walk away.

**Other information**

206. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... .....

Dated..... 26/2/20.....