

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCQ

Support person present: No

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

Life before going into care

2. My parents were and . Both are now deceased. There were eight kids in my family. My sister was the oldest. She died in 2003. My mum was pregnant with when she met my dad. was about four years older than me.
3. My brother is about fifty-five, is fifty-four and is forty-nine. My sister is fifty-five, is fifty and is forty-seven or forty-eight.
4. I remember living with my family in in the Gallowgate, Glasgow. My mum and dad were alcoholics, and I remember lots of people coming round to the house to drink. My mum went out and did cleaning jobs, but my dad never worked. I remember going with my mum to clean at the car wash. My sister worked from about the age of twelve. I would say she was the breadwinner in the family.
5. We moved to Castlemilk at some point after I made my Holy Communion. We lived at . My life there was horrendous. The old ladies used to throw cakes and stuff on top of the dyke where the bins were kept at the back of the house,

and I would climb up and eat the food. I also have memories of going to St Bartholomew's Primary School stinking of urine.

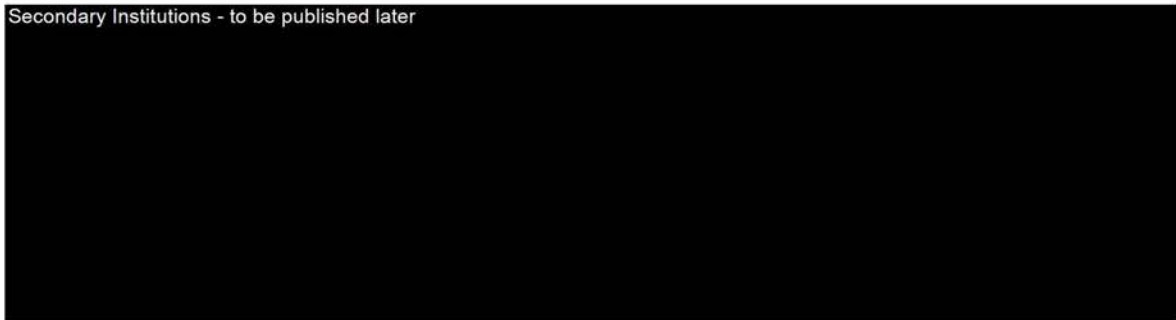
6. The house in Castlemilk used to be full of drunks when I came home from school. My dad would give us kids little glasses of his Eldorado wine, which he laced with Valium. As we got older, he encouraged us to take things like acid tabs and would take us to the Plaza Ballroom to pick up men. I was quite fat and chunky and probably looked older than I was. He also took us to his Alcoholics Anonymous meetings to meet other vulnerable people. My dad was a sadist and a paedophile.
7. My mum was a physical abuser and my dad was a sexual abuser. My dad hit my mum but not us. I think I was about four or five when I first noticed that my father was picking me up and rubbing himself against me. It got worse and went on to full penetration. I think my mum knew what my dad was doing to me. I hated her with a vengeance because she never did anything to protect us.
8. My brother [REDACTED] was one of the most sadistic people I have ever met. He was in and out of borstals and approved schools as a teenager. He tied me up one time, gagged me and attempted to rape me. He was disturbed by [REDACTED] and she told my mum, but my mum wasn't bothered. My relationship with my mother was terrible.
9. I used to run away a lot and was brought back by people in the local community. I ended up in care when I was about eleven. I wasn't allowed to go to school one day and my mother had withdrawn my shoes from me. I went into the cupboard and managed to find a pair of sandshoes. My mum knew I was up to something and shouted on me from the top of the stairs. I looked up at her and she threw a clock at me, which smacked me on the face. I opened the front door and ran all the way to St Margaret Mary's Secondary School. I hadn't long started at the school.
10. A guidance teacher at the school questioned me when she saw my face. I don't remember her name. I told her I had banged into the door. She said she didn't believe me and then checked me for marks. She would have seen the welts on my body from my mother's previous beatings. I think she must have called the social

services. The social services office was just across the road from the school on Dougrie Road, so I didn't have to wait long for a social worker to come across.

11. I will always remember getting linked up with this social worker and will never forget her name. She was called Maggie Mearns. She was my saviour. She got married soon afterwards and her name changed to Mrs Bates. She was young and hippy-like. She smoked roll-ups and had a lovely little Beetle car. To me, she was just cool.
12. I didn't tell Maggie what was going on at home. She took me down to my mum's house and told me to wait in the car while she spoke to my mum. I don't know what went on in the house, but I imagine there was some discussion about the marks on me. Maggie Mearns came out of my mother's house with an attitude that told me there was no way I was going back in there. I thought she was phenomenal for standing up to my mum. She then took me to Eversley Children's Home in Pollokshields, Glasgow. I was the only kid in my family taken into care. I was shocked that they never took the others.
13. I think there might have been some social work involvement in our family before I was taken into care. I remember we were all taken up to a refuge in Dundee one time. That's where [REDACTED] was born. I think social services arranged for us to go there, or maybe it was through women's aid as my dad used to batter my mum. I don't remember ever meeting a social worker before Maggie Mearns.

Eversley Children's Home, Pollokshields, Glasgow

14. Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Eversley Children's Home

23. From Eversley I went straight to Tollcross, Glasgow. I can't remember who took me there, but I remember being chauffeur-driven in one of those big, Black Mariah council cars.

Beechwood Remand Home, Tollcross, Glasgow

24. My understanding was that Beechwood was an assessment centre, but I have no idea what kind of assessments were being done. I knew that my situation was to be reviewed after three months, and I would either go home or back into the care system. I knew that I wasn't meant to be there long-term. I think Maggie Mearns explained this to me. I ended up staying in Beechwood for around a year.
25. I don't have many memories from Beechwood. It wasn't a bad place. I think there just wasn't much emphasis on care-giving. Some staff gave a toss and others didn't. The place was out of control, so maybe there weren't enough staff members for them to be able to do the job properly.
26. I was probably one of the younger kids in Beechwood. It was a place for boys and girls. I couldn't say how many kids were there. There was a flow of traffic, with kids coming and going all the time. I can't remember the names of any of the other kids.
27. There was no structure to your day. The place was chaotic. I think I got more out of control when I was there. I remember running about the place and doing somersaults off the old, fancy radiators.
28. We slept in shared bedrooms. We were allowed to have the run of the place and it was just a free for all, so we were all in each other's rooms. I didn't need to worry about personal belongings, as I had none. I arrived with nothing and left with nothing, except some bits of clothing. I remember some people took me out and got me some

clothing while I was in there. I even remember the guidance teacher from St Margaret Mary's bringing me some shoes.

29. We got four meals a day and some of the kids smoked, so they were allowed four cigarettes a day at specific times. I remember those sort of regimes being in place. I think they had to get permission from the kids' parents to let them smoke. I don't think I was a smoker then.

Schooling

30. I think we got home-schooled in Beechwood. I remember tutors coming in and getting little classes. It was really just people talking to us and trying to do things with us, but even that was chaotic. We didn't actually have to go to school. Nobody forced us to go.

Birthdays and Christmas

31. I can't remember any birthday or Christmas as a child, neither at home or in the care system. The first birthday cake that I remember getting was when I was thirty-nine years of age.

Leisure time

32. You could come and go as you pleased. There were no restrictions. We used to run about the streets. I remember little gangs of us running about doing our own thing. I used to go up to Castlemilk with other kids from the home to see my friends. I took the girls from the home up to my house as well.
33. I started drinking alcohol and dabbling in some drugs. We'd get alcohol from adults. It's easy to get what you want when you're a kid. Looking back now, I realise that I was putting myself in vulnerable positions. We'd go to some old men's houses and they would give us drink, chocolates and money. That's just the way it was back then.

34. There wasn't a lot of supervision at Beechwood. It wasn't until I went on to the next place, Dr Guthrie's, that I got proper care. I noticed the difference straight away.
35. I got pocket money and we had tuck tins where we kept our sweeties. The staff kept the sweetie tins and we were allowed to get them out if we'd been good. I remember this quite clearly, so there were actually some rules in the place.

Visits

36. I saw the social worker Maggie Mearns a few times after I moved to Beechwood. She came for some visits and meetings. I don't remember what was discussed. She went off and got married, and I got passed from pillar to post by social services. I can't remember any other specific social worker on my case after that. I never built up any kind of relationship with any social worker.
37. I was sent home for overnight visits at the weekends to see my parents and brothers and sisters. I was taken there in the council car. These were unsupervised visits. Things were still the same at home. None of my family visited me at Beechwood.

Discipline

38. We got disciplined when we had been really disruptive. We were put in what was called the 'quiet room'. The staff didn't do anything untoward to us in Beechwood. There just wasn't much care.

Downcraig Children's Home, Castlemilk, Glasgow

39. I don't know if I was ever a resident in Downcraig or whether I just went there sometimes when I was in Beechwood and was running about Castlemilk, or when I used to run away from home. I remember being there, but I have no memories of staff or anything else. I do remember stealing clothes off the washing line.

Abuse at Beechwood

40. Beechwood was quite a good place, other than not being very well controlled. I never had any issues except for when I got sent home.
41. My father carried on sexually abusing me when I went home on overnight stays. By that time, I thought this was normal and was just something adults did, so I didn't think about saying anything about it. I don't know what the social services knew about my life at home. I do remember having time with Maggie Mearns on my own sometimes, and I wish that I had told her about my home life before I was taken to Eversley. I saw her as my saviour and I thought because she had removed me from my house, that she knew what was happening to me there.

Leaving Beechwood

42. I ended up staying in Beechwood longer than was initially intended. I think reviews took place and they were trying to send me home most of the time. I don't know if my behaviour was such that they decided against this. I was moved on to Dr Guthrie's in Edinburgh. I don't know the reasons for any of the decisions made about me.

Dr Guthrie's Girls' School, Edinburgh

43. Dr Guthrie's was a secure place. The doors were all locked and we weren't allowed to go out without a staff member. I don't know why I was put into a locked place. I didn't question anything back then. Because of where I had come from, I was just glad to be put in there. I felt safe, probably because it was locked and nobody could get in and touch me.
44. There were a number of small houses, each of which had a housemother responsible for the girls. My house was called 'Ogilvie'. I think there were only about four to six girls in each house. All of the girls were of secondary school age.

45. The staff were so warm, friendly and caring. The only staff name I remember is Miss Frujay. I think that was her name. She was the housemother. I also remember a male member of staff who had a massive, curly, old-fashioned moustache. He was really nice. Everything was nice there. It was how a family should be.
46. Dr Guthrie's was a very, very strict place, but in a good way. There was a structure to your day. They had a points system to earn privileges for good behaviour.

Mornings

47. We were up early in the morning for classes. It was just like a normal house. The housemother would come in and say something like, "Morning ladies, time to get up. You've got class in half an hour and you need to get up for breakfast". It was done in a very nice way. It was a very nurturing place.

Food/healthcare

48. The food was lovely. It was all prepared for us, but sometimes we would make our own pizzas on a Friday night. We all ate together. I actually started to lose a bit of weight because I was getting proper nutrition. Our health was really looked after in Dr Guthrie's. We got taken to a local doctor whenever needed.

Schooling

49. All the girls in the place would meet up at school time. We would come out of our different houses and go downstairs to the school classrooms. We had a full day at school. We had different teachers coming in for different subjects. I remember we had a Miss Aitken or Aitkenson for art. She taught us how to do charcoal drawings.
50. There was a more holistic approach at Dr Guthrie's. We helped tend to the rose garden. We went out and about and learned about nature. We did crafts and had sewing classes. The education was totally different. I got taught things there that I

wouldn't have got at mainstream school. Even although I don't know how to do maths and English now, I loved the schooling there.

Leisure time/trips

51. We got taken out to the cinema, swimming baths, and lots of other places. We'd go to North Berwick and go on the rapids.
52. The staff member with the curly moustache used to take us to his house, and we'd have lunch there. We'd go in a group. There was always more than one person there, maybe four or five of us. We'd go out in the minibus to places. We'd get taken into the city centre in Edinburgh, and we'd go to C & A and get our clothes. I remember getting our big, long coats. We always got to choose our own clothes
53. When out on trips we always had two staff members with us, one for driving and one in the back with us. There was a minibus and we went out in cars sometimes too. We were never allowed out alone. There were always staff and other girls there. There was never a time when you were taken out on your own with another member of staff. Dr Guthrie's was totally strict and above board.
54. There was a Dr Guthrie's school for boys. We used to get together for discos. It was a time for us teenagers to dance and mix with the boys. That was the only time we were allowed to mix.
55. You were allowed to smoke, but you had to earn cigarettes in the points system. I had started smoking by this time. We also got an allowance. You weren't allowed to have cash on you, so your allowance was kept in your box. You could take it out if you needed anything.

Chores

56. We all had tasks to do. A list of cleaning tasks was made up and everybody had to do something. This was part of the house rules. There was a proper regime in there.

Visits

57. I used to play up at first so that I wouldn't get sent home. You could earn weekend home visits in the points system. I didn't want to go home, so I would smash a window on the Friday and run away. I would only stay away for about half an hour, just long enough to be reported as an abscondee, and then I'd go back to the home and have a lovely weekend. I would behave well all week and do this at the end of the week.
58. Nobody ever asked me why I didn't seem to want my weekend visits home. Nobody spoke to me about my behaviour. I don't think they understood me. They didn't know why I was running away. I probably didn't know myself then. I just know there was this fear of getting sent home.
59. I never had any visitors from home. I think I was meant to write letters home but I couldn't really read or write, so I didn't.

Peers

60. A lot of us young girls in Dr Guthrie's talked privately to each other about the abuse we had suffered. We could tell when someone had been abused. Some of the girls had been abused in other care homes, which continued my belief that that was just what adults did.
61. A lot of us were self-harming. I think I hid it from the staff. The only girl's name I remember from my time in Dr Guthrie's is [REDACTED]. She was in my house. She was about thirteen or fourteen, the same age as me. She was a really troubled girl, much worse than the rest of us. She played the guitar. She used to [REDACTED] really badly. She would sit there and [REDACTED] while singing Jesus Loves Me. Looking back, it should have been obvious to people that us kids had been through hell and were damaged goods. That girl gave me a bit of inspiration to stop self-harming. It was horrendous what she did to herself.

62. We had privacy to get a shower, but we girls used to go in together sometimes and help to clean each other up after self-harming. There were a lot of things we did for each other. We'd always back one another up.

Discipline

63. We had a quiet room, similar to what we had in Beechwood. We called it the 'padded room', because the walls were padded to prevent the ones that self-harmed from harming themselves in there. People were put in the padded room for their own safety, not for punishment. I was put in for my own safety. I can't remember what sort of behaviour resulted in me being disciplined. I presume it was when I was running away.

Children's panels

64. I remember going to a few children's panels. I can't remember much about them or when I went. I think there was a big panel place in Glasgow. I just remember there were quite a lot of people there and I always felt intimidated. There were all these adults on one side of the table, and I was sat there with a social worker on the other side. The social worker would put my case across and these strangers made decisions about me.
65. I did speak at some panels, but I don't think I got a chance to speak that often. The people on the other side of the table asked questions, but they were mostly directed at the social worker or whoever was with me. The odd person would ask me a question.
66. I don't remember anything getting explained to me beforehand about why I was going to a panel. I imagine it would have been explained, but I have no recollection of that. I just remember getting picked up, taken there, and dropped back off again. I don't think I was ever given much information. I still don't even know to this day why I was taken into care. I have just assumed it was because marks on me were noticed

and then Maggie Mearns heard something from my mum that she didn't like when she went to my house, but I have never actually been told.

Leaving Dr Guthrie's

67. I think it was my own doing that I ended up out of the care system. I was about fourteen or fifteen at that point. I thought I knew it all at that age. Dr Guthrie's was strict, and I suppose I started to want more freedom as I was getting older. There were older people than me in there, and I started running away properly, not just for that half an hour when I was trying to get out of going home at the weekend.
68. Also, I had started to go back to my dad's at weekends, which was the worst mistake I ever made. My mum and dad had separated by then and he was living in Govan. I think it was because I was a teenager and I wanted freedom. I knew I could get away with a lot at his house. There were no boundaries and he didn't care. And, I had come from a chaotic family so chaos was my normality.
69. When I started to move away from Dr Guthrie's there was no social work discussion or anything like that with me. I think I was off social services' radar by that time. In my experience, social services are not interested in you after the age of twelve. They don't care for you, you're simply accommodated. I think it's the same today as it was forty years ago.

Life after being in care

70. I ended up living at my dad's. I had nowhere else to go, but I think that, even although I knew what he was capable of and I knew it was wrong, it was the only place I was getting love. I certainly wasn't getting any from my mum. I suppose I also thought that because I was older, my father wouldn't touch me again.

71. My father's home was just a vipers' nest. All sorts of people were coming and going. It was a 'free-for-all'. It wasn't just me my father raped. He did it to friends of mine too. I felt responsible for that. I feel that if I hadn't gone back, certain things wouldn't have happened.
72. My dad sold me and my sister [REDACTED] to a local councillor for a bottle of wine one time. This was when we were teenagers. The councillor's name was [REDACTED]. The name has stuck in my head all these years. He came to the door and we thought he wanted to come in and wait for my father. He then said to us that he had paid our dad for us. [REDACTED] says that she can remember me chasing this guy down the street with a shovel. I've got a sketchy memory of this happening, but I can't remember the timeframe.
73. The last time my father abused me is when I think I got pregnant with my first son [REDACTED]. I never let it happen to me again after that. I was with my friend [REDACTED] at my dad's house. [REDACTED] and I had been drinking and had probably taken acid tabs as well. I suppose I was just doing what I had been programmed to do back then.
74. I woke up in bed with my dad behind me and I was wet down below. He pretended to be drunk. I freaked out, got out of the bed and went to clean myself in the bathroom. I then got my friend and got out of that house.
75. I must have been fifteen when I got pregnant with [REDACTED] as I was sixteen when I had him. I was seventeen when I got pregnant with my second son [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s dad, [REDACTED] was five years older than me. He was an alcoholic and he battered me about.
76. When I was pregnant with [REDACTED], I was staying at my dad's sometimes and sleeping rough on the streets. I remember sleeping outside Arnotts in St Enoch Square, Glasgow, and a male police officer kicked me on the back and shouted at me to move on. I think he was shocked when I stood up and he saw my belly. He took me to Govan police station and gave me a cup of tea, a bacon roll and a bed for the

night. I was always a tomboy and didn't wear skirts or dresses, so I don't think he knew I was female when he kicked me. But that's how you were treated by coppers in those days anyway.

77. I sat outside Govan police station [REDACTED] one time in the hope that the police would come out and take notice, but they didn't. I was pregnant with [REDACTED] It was a cry for help.
78. I ended up going to the Innocence Project in Bothwell when I was pregnant with [REDACTED]. This was a place run by nuns for unmarried, pregnant women. It was one of those places where women were sent to have a baby and could then return to society without anyone knowing that they had been pregnant. I went there because I was going to give up my child for adoption. I hadn't disclosed anything about my father to anybody at this time. I don't know who made the arrangements for me to go there.
79. I was in Bothwell for a few months. It was a very good experience with the nuns. I had good healthcare and got everything I needed. I had six weeks after my baby was born to decide whether to keep him or give him up. I was selfish and decided to keep him. I thought I was doing the right thing. I didn't know the responses I was going to have every time I looked at him. I was only sixteen and was stupid and naïve. The nuns got me a big layette for the baby, and I was returned back to my dad's house with [REDACTED]
80. There was no support put in place for me when I returned to my dad's. I only lasted the week there. I think the fear kicked in. I just knew I had to get my baby out of there.
81. I think I went to a homeless unit and then I got my first house in Ibrox. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] came back on the scene and assumed [REDACTED] was his. He was still drinking, taking drugs and was good with his fists. As soon as I got pregnant with [REDACTED], he dumped me again and went off with a new girlfriend. Social services were involved with me at this time.

82. I was severely battered in my house in Govan by people my dad associated with. They held my two sons against a wall with samurai swords at their throats. I was left unconscious and my two kids were thrown on top of my body.
83. I moved from Ibrox to Pollok and I realised that I was going to get involved with the same kind of people that had beaten me up, so I decided to move away from Glasgow. My two kids were in care and I got up one morning and went to the train station, looked at all the stops on the route to London, and decided to go to Nottingham.

Impact

84. The impact abuse in childhood has on the rest of your life is massive. It not only affects you as a child, it continues to affect you in so many ways as an adult.
85. I comfort ate as a child and dabbled in alcohol and drugs as a teenager. I haven't touched alcohol since I was seventeen. The only drug I have used since then is cannabis, which I used for pain relief only.
86. I had no social skills and didn't know how to be normal. I didn't actually know what normal was. I didn't know what proper love was or how to express or show feelings properly. When I lived on the streets most men used me for sex. I thought that every man that wanted to touch me, was going to love me. I'm older now and realise that that's not the case, but I've had to live through those mistakes.
87. I didn't know how to feel when I had my first two children. I wasn't able to parent properly. That's why I went to social services looking for help. I believe that if I had got the right care at that point, my life and my first two children's lives would have been different. I wasn't neglecting or hurting my children, I just wasn't coping. I asked social services for help because I was starting to get these feelings that I wanted to harm my first son. I just didn't understand why I wanted to harm him. I couldn't bond

with him. Instead of help, they took my kids into care and let me go off and do what I wanted.

88. [REDACTED] ended up in and out of the care system because I had fears about his paternity coming out, and I couldn't connect with him. It must have been horrendous for [REDACTED] not to be loved and cared for in the same way as [REDACTED].
89. All of my relationships with partners were abusive, apart from a short relationship with my third son's dad. That's what was familiar to me. A lot of people who've been through what I've been through end up in abusive relationships, and, although we don't always see it, our kids sometimes grow up thinking that it's okay to be bashed about and abused. It becomes normal for them.
90. I met my daughter's dad, [REDACTED], in 1997. I was with him for seventeen years. He was the first person I fully disclosed everything to. I felt safe with him, and I thought that our relationship managed to last for seventeen years because I had disclosed everything. There wasn't this dirty little secret there, as there had been in my other relationships.
91. The abuse impacted on my ability to have physical relationships. Sex is painful and feels dirty. That's one of the things that really upsets me. I was so psychologically damaged that I couldn't have a normal relationship. I couldn't fully trust or let someone be close to me or touch me. I found out in 2013 that [REDACTED] had a mistress. He raped me soon after I found out about the affair. He said to me afterwards that I should have been grateful it was him and not my dad. I thought I had done the right thing being open and honest with him and he used it all against me. He put all these seeds into my head that I was inadequate, that I couldn't do what his mistress could do, and that it was my fault he had done what he did to me.
92. I was so upset about what [REDACTED] said and did to me, I put a note up outside his work making reference to what he had said to me about my father. That was my cry for help. I got charged with harassment and was later convicted and fined. [REDACTED] made me look like the bad person in court. He actually used what my dad had done

to me to get away with what he did to me. I didn't have the physical or emotional strength to fight anybody in court, so I ended up with a criminal record. I was failed all over again by the system. Yet another man got away with violating me.

93. It makes me so angry that the only criminal proceedings that ever arose were against me. We survivors are not able to communicate effectively. We go into distress mode when things happen and can't explain things properly. I didn't get a chance to tell the court why I put that note up. Because of how we communicate, we are often not treated properly by the police or taken seriously when we want to make complaints about others' criminal conduct.
94. When [REDACTED] did that to me, I lost a soulmate, best friend and source of emotional support. I tried to escape the pain by [REDACTED]
95. I try to rescue others and do my utmost to protect people from being victims like me. You find a lot of people who've suffered abuse are quite good at that. That's what stops me from feeling like a victim and helps me to avoid dealing with my own emotional hurt about my lost childhood. I feel loss and grief about this, but I pretend there's nothing wrong with me. I internalise the emotional pain, which then converts into psychological symptoms.
96. I have suffered from depression, sleeplessness, anxiety and panic attacks from early on in life. I have felt so unhappy, lonely, scared and fragile. I feel that it is so important to point out that the majority of us survivors suffer from the exact same things. And there is this feeling that you won't be believed, that you're not trusted. We all have the same gut feeling for some reason.
97. People don't know how depressed I really feel at times. On the outside, it looks like I can cope with anything. I learnt ways of coping for survival. I would wear a defensive suit of armour, a mask to cover up what was really going on with me. I think that's how we survivors programme ourselves to keep ourselves safe. We think we're keeping ourselves safe this way, but we're not. We're actually doing more damage to ourselves.

98. I have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. There can be a number of different triggers for one person depending on the scale of abuse. A trigger for me was the bedroom and the smell of sex, which made me scrub myself down below. A trigger is like a pilot light going on. You don't feel it happening and you don't see it coming. It just happens. My triggers were mainly the smells, even the smell of alcohol makes me think of my father.

99. Secondary Institutions - to be published later



100. The emotional triggers still happen even now. My emotions just kick in, and I start crying for no apparent reason. This is part of the impact, and I think it will always be there.

101. There is physical damage as well as psychological. Everything interlinks. I have been registered disabled for a number of years but have managed to work. I was persuaded by [REDACTED] to give up work for health reasons in 2012. I had cancer in the head and other health problems. My disabilities started with gynaecological problems and stomach issues. I suffer from unexplained lower abdominal pain. I have been in and out of hospital for years with respiratory problems. I started off with asthma and then was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. I ended up in hospital last year and was told I have emphysema, so I am now on a Glycerol Trinitrate spray.

102. I also suffer from a condition called Pachyonychia congenita, which is a rare disease that causes blistering on my feet and hands. I believe this is because of neglect when I was a child, having to wear ill-fitting shoes. I have special orthotic shoes to wear now. A lot of my physical health problems are as a result of what happened to me in childhood.
103. I had very little traditional education in care. I found it difficult in education because I am dyslexic and can't spell. The only place I felt educated in any capacity was at Dr Guthrie's. There were good teachers there and they spent time with you, but I didn't get the opportunity to sit O-levels or get any qualifications. Other than Dr Guthrie's, there was no push to have me educated in the care system. My lack of education has made me feel stupid and inadequate, like I don't matter. My sister [REDACTED] recognised the value of education and she threw herself into it as a way of getting away from the family. I felt the rest of us were too thick for that.
104. For a long time I felt I was stupid and everything was my fault. It's only recently that I have learned to give the guilt and shame back to where it belongs. I didn't tell people what had happened to me because I carried the guilt and shame for years. I felt it was my fault that I had let everything happen to me. I know now that I couldn't have stopped it. I was only a child and I was programmed to think it was all normal.
105. I struggle with authority figures. I believe 99% of survivors do. There's a lack of trust because we've not been believed or the authority figure has been the abuser. I know from my own experience and from talking to other survivors that we have massive trust issues, especially with social services, the prosecution service and the police.
106. The abuse has affected how I think of people generally. I always see them as being either good or bad. There is no in-between.

Treatment and support

107. I have been prescribed medication such as Amitriptyline, Citalopram and Tramadol in the past. Medications haven't worked for me. All they're doing is suppressing things, masking the issues for a bit longer.
108. I am involved with a survivor group charity in Nottingham called Support for Survivors. It's run by survivors for survivors. We've all been through the same sort of stuff. That's why we've all connected. I have been with this survivor group for about two years.
109. I was with the Recovery College in Nottingham before joining Support for Survivors. When my dad died in 2012, all of a sudden I had these overwhelming feelings that I just didn't understand. I had a feeling that the sickness had finally lifted from the pit of my stomach. I didn't have to go and scrub down below any more. For the first time in years, I didn't have that smell I associated with the abuse. There were a lot of things happening to me. I even started to feel like a woman for the first time in my life. Even though I had given birth to four children, feeling like a woman was something I had never felt before. I had never been able to show flesh before. I suppose I was hiding myself for all these years. All of a sudden I was starting to wear clothes that didn't cover my arms, and I could even have a bit of cleavage showing.
110. I thought that I needed to go and get myself help because I didn't understand all these feelings that were coming, so I went for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). That was basically my first contact with services. I went to my GP and told him what had happened and how I was feeling. I then went for CBT.
111. I've had to go through a lot of psychological therapy. This has involved looking at all the influences and reasons for the anxiety, depression and behaviour issues. I learnt that everything came back to childhood trauma. Everything I was doing or going through was linked to my childhood trauma. Even the domestic abuse in later relationships, it was all interlinked. Before I had the skills and tools to understand this, I just felt that I was here to be used and abused. I didn't feel like I had any

purpose. Learning to understand the impact on me of childhood trauma and that the guilt and shame is not mine to own, has allowed me now to feel that I've got a purpose.

112. I am strong enough now to accept that these things happened, but I am not going to let it destroy the next part of my life. I let it destroy me for forty-eight years of my life, without even being aware of the destruction it was doing. The most important thing for me now is letting it go and pushing it all back to the people that deserve it, not me and not my children. I know now that the more I carry that guilt and shame, the more I'm damaging my kids, and if I don't push it back, I'm going to keep carrying it forever.
113. In the survivor group we talk about 'fight and flight'. When you've been through so much trauma, there's no self-belief. There is mainly fear. When we're in the fight bit, we are kept locked down. We put ourselves in a box. We are unsure about finding our wings because we are unsure what might happen to us, as we've never been given the opportunity to progress or be valued. Now that I am actually finding my wings, I am in fact starting to realise that I wasn't that thick after all, that I'm actually quite a clever person. I am just so sad that the government didn't help me realise this all those years ago in care. I wouldn't have missed out on opportunities to take a different path and have a different life. My sister [REDACTED] achieved so much early on, and I think I might have been capable of having a different life too.
114. I've been to domestic abuse forums, have done several domestic abuse courses and I've talked to Rape Crisis. I have actually tooled myself up with as much information as possible to make sure I'm more aware of everything. I have also made myself more aware of legal procedures and processes.
115. Everything that I have done, I have basically accessed for myself. I found all the mental health facilities myself. I found the right things to suit my healthcare needs. I think it's important to do that.

116. I also think it's vitally important that survivors get together with other survivors. This has helped me. I would like to see more survivor groups being run so that everyone can access this. In my experience, survivors should be supporting survivors because they are the only people who really get it. I've only recognised this in the last year through working in survivor groups.
117. I think the police, counsellors and social workers should involve survivor groups when making plans and programmes. We know best what suits us. I developed my own programme for the Support for Survivors charity. The lady who set it up took us into her group and made us all feel welcome. We are all one big family. She has given us the chance to do things for ourselves. She agreed that I could develop and deliver a course to help survivors understand the influences and impact of our childhood trauma and to make people aware of the long-term benefits of understanding ourselves better.
118. I have put together a six-week course which I am now delivering. I found it hard in education because I am dyslexic and can't spell, but when I'm writing on the flipchart I just ask the people on the course if any of them can help me spell. The fact that I'm one of them makes a massive difference to me and them.
119. Each and every person is different in how they recover. In my survivor group we work with the individual to make up their own action plan, one that is specific to them. This has been very well received. They think it's brilliant. We've taken out the jargon and are pitching it a level that we understand.
120. I feel that through working with survivor groups, I have found my purpose. I have gone through my own recovery and I am able to use what happened to me to help others. I will continue to educate myself and make progress in my life. My sister [REDACTED] used to say that education was key and that it can get you out of any situation you are in. She is my inspiration.

Reporting of Abuse

121. I disclosed the abuse to my family around 1990. My sister [REDACTED] came to live in Nottingham with her baby girl. She was talking about getting my dad down for a week's holiday and that's when it all came out. I told her she couldn't let our dad near the baby. I think that's the only reason I disclosed it. I had told people here in Nottingham about it, because there was no family connection and they didn't know my dad, but this was the first time I had spoken to any family member about it.
122. [REDACTED] didn't believe me and spoke to my sister [REDACTED] who confirmed that she too had been abused by my dad. I wasn't aware of that. [REDACTED] had already dealt with her own issues. [REDACTED] told me that she reported the abuse to my mum when she was four years old. She was taken to the police station and because there was no full penetration, she was sent home and told to stop telling lies about her daddy. It makes me mad that there was an opportunity to stop it way back then.
123. [REDACTED] got me to come up to Glasgow, and I told her all about the abuse and how I believed that [REDACTED] was my father's son. She encouraged me to get a DNA test done. [REDACTED] was about twelve at this time. [REDACTED] took me to Govan police station, and she gave her statement and I gave mine. I also did a blood test. I never got those results in my hand but was told by [REDACTED] that [REDACTED] was not my father's son. [REDACTED] dealt with everything.
124. My father didn't get charged. I don't know what happened to him. I don't know if [REDACTED] did anything about it, because she was up in Glasgow and I was in England. All I did was give the statement and provide the blood sample. I even wondered at the time if my dad had sent somebody else in to do the blood test. He was a cunning old man.
125. In about 1994, two police officers from Strathclyde Police came to talk to me about allegations of abuse by my father which had been made by five children in St Annes. My father had been living there for a while. I spoke to the police about my dad and

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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126. I wrote to Maggie Thatcher in the eighties telling her about the abuse. I got a letter back saying, "Sorry, we can't help you at this time".

Records

127. I have never tried to access my records. I don't know how to. I would love to get them and find out what's been said about me.
128. I want to see in black and white why I was taken into care. I want to see if there is even a hint of what was going on in my family home, and if there was, why it was never followed up.

Lessons to be learned

129. I don't want to see in ten years' time that people are still waiting thirty or forty years before they disclose what happened to them in childhood. Agencies that work with kids need to find ways of helping them to disclose abuse when they are still children. I left the care system not able to disclose it. And, when disclosures are made, something needs to be done immediately. They need to get the right therapy in for the kids straight away to help them heal, instead of waiting until the damage has been done. In fact, I think as soon as every child is received into care, an assessment should be done on risks to their development, and the right team of therapists should be put in place straight away.
130. This early intervention would save the taxpayers money in the long run. When there's no such early intervention, the kids grow up suffering in all kinds of ways and then have their own kids, who often end up in care too. And so the cycle is repeated.

131. I think that the likes of social workers and doctors need to be better at recognising when children are displaying signs of abuse. To help achieve this, I think survivors of abuse, the ones that are strong enough, should be invited into colleges and universities to talk to trainee doctors and social workers to help them understand the impact of abuse and what to look out for. This would help them develop better skills and better ways of managing this.
132. There's an education programme in place in primary schools in Nottingham to do with sexual abuse and sexual violence. This should help children to speak out. I hope this kind of thing gets rolled out throughout the UK.
133. People in agencies such as the police and prosecution service need to get a better understanding of the impact of childhood abuse and attitudes need to change. I went to a conference last year as a representative of the charity I'm involved in, which was about finding ways of improving engagement with black and ethnic minorities. I sat with a man from the CPS, who was an ex-police officer with thirty years' service, and told him all about my childhood. His response to me was, "Can't you get over it?". That is the last thing any survivor wants to hear. It made me so angry that he was in a job that is supposed to help victims and he was making judgements like this. If this is typical, then where are we supposed to go to get justice?
134. I also think that agencies need to have proper whistle-blowing procedures in place. I have always been passionate about the protection of children. Anything I have seen that has been untoward, I have spoken out about. I was never afraid of doing it for somebody else, but couldn't do it for myself. I have reported concerns to social services about children in my local area. I am not prepared to sit back and let abuse go unnoticed even if it means losing my job. I worked in social services adult care and found that to be a real eye-opener. I witnessed a staff member physically abusing a young man and I reported it to the manager. I was then accused of bullying the member of staff. I ended up having to walk away from my job at a day centre for adults with learning disabilities, because the disclosure I made wasn't dealt with properly.

135. I think social services should stop taking kids who are not being abused at home into care. Some parents have mild to moderate problems, such as not being so good on hygiene, and their children get taken away from them. These kids then go into the care system and get sexually abused. I think that better home support for parents who are not functioning properly is the best way to protect children.
136. I would like to see children's services, like the NSPCC, overseeing the care system, instead of social services. These organisations are not perfect, but I think they would do a far better job than social services.
137. I think the police should make sure that female officers deal with female victims of abuse. And police units that deal with sexual violence could benefit from partnering with survivor groups to learn how to handle cases better.

Other information

138. I remember befriending a man, [REDACTED] and his family when I was a child. He was an ex-police officer and I got to know him through the Castlemilk community centre in Dougrie. I can't remember where I was living at the time. I don't know if this was when I was already in the care system. [REDACTED] had a wife and young daughter at home and a son in the army. I remember going to his house on a couple of occasions and I remember feeling safe and secure with them. I feel that they maybe had an inkling that there was something going on in my family, as they were very protective of me.

139. I still get a warm feeling of protection when I think about them now. I have a feeling that I was close to disclosing the abuse to them. I also remember overhearing a conversation between [REDACTED] and his wife about the possibility of me going to live with them. I don't know if they were in communication with social services about fostering me.
140. 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.

GCQ

Signed...

Dated...

8-8-2018