

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HWL

Support person present: Yes

1. My full name is HWL and my date of birth is 1973. I am 44 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was brought up by my parents, and lived with them and my two older brothers and older sister in Duntocher near Clydebank where I have stayed all my life. I was the youngest, and my older siblings are called and .
3. I was in two children's homes which I want to tell you about. The first was the Cardross Assessment Centre, Dumbarton where I was between 1984 and 1985. The second home was called the Ramsay House, a children's home, and was in Clydebank. I was there between 1986 and 1989.

Life before going into care

4. The only reason that I can think of for being put into care was because I was not attending school. My father would take me to school and make sure that I went but as soon as he was gone I was out of there. He came from a large family and it was tough love that he subjected us to. He did his best to ensure I went to school.

5. My mother was a very loving person and looked after us as best as she could. My father was a hard worker. He came from a large family and did his best to support us. He would often walk to Dumbarton for his work so that he could earn money. It was not unusual for him to walk nine miles with a pane of glass in his hands to earn more money to support his family. My father did not like my mother getting into debt and did not like her ordering stuff from catalogues which she would have to pay for later.
6. My real problems started when I was at the local primary school. I got knocked down in a road accident. I had a serious head injury. I was in primary six at this time. When I returned to school after a period of recovery I was put into one of the lower classes. I presume it was done so that it would help me catch up with what I had missed. I was not part of the decision making process. I didn't like this at all as I was no longer with my mates. I started playing truant and basically missed out on primary six and seven.
7. Strangely my sister [REDACTED] similarly had a bad accident involving an ice cream van and also missed large parts of school. She was also kept back to help her catch up. She did not like being away from her school friends. She didn't play truant but she would stay off school when my mother requested her to. My mother suffered from agoraphobia and depression and needed my sister's company at home.
8. I then was sent to secondary school, and again I played truant. I was put before the children's panel. It was quite daunting as there were six people sitting round a table deciding your future. It was very local as the mother of a boy I knew was also on the panel and part of the decision making.
9. I recall that my social worker was Anne-Marie Brady. She dealt with my sister and me. She was a hippy-type woman and I thought she was quite "free spirit"-thinking. She spoke mainly to my parents, so I didn't have many conversations with her. I can remember being told that I had to go to school or there would be problems.

10. Just before I was placed into care I remember being outside playing football with my mates. My brother came and got me telling me that someone was at the house and wanted to see me. I went back to the house, and the social work van was parked outside. I went into the house and they told me that I was to go with them. I got really upset and refused to go. I wrapped my arms about some pipes and hung on. They realised that I was too upset and so they left without me.
11. It was agreed that I would go the next day to Cardross Assessment Centre with the social worker to have a look around. I was not aware that the children's panel had made the decision to take me into care as I was never consulted. The same decision had also been made about my sister, and she was to go into care with me.

Visiting Cardross Assessment Centre

12. The next day my sister, mother and I, along with the social worker, went to Cardross Assessment Centre. My mother suffered badly from agoraphobia and depression and had not been over her own front door for twenty years.
13. When we were taken to see the home my social worker left leaving us on our own. My mother got very upset as she had no idea how to get back or which train to take. We were just young children and didn't know ourselves. As it happened we ended up on the wrong train and finished up in Hyndland, Glasgow. We should never have been left on our own by my social worker as she must have been aware of the circumstances.
14. We did have a look around Cardross Assessment Centre, although I don't remember meeting any of the other children. There were four sections. In order to go into the place you had to go through the dining room where all the meals were served. There was a pool table there. You then went upstairs to the different sections. I was to go into Lomond section. There was also a television

room. There were bars on the windows and this freaked me out. I just didn't want to be there. The social worker was still with us.

15. I think that the member of staff that showed me round had the surname Swinson. I was only twelve years old so I think that I was quite wary of him. My sister was with me, and she was also in Lomond section. Everybody had their own room.
16. I just didn't want to be there. I knew that I was due to go there in three days' time which was the next Friday. It was very daunting.
17. I think at the time we were more worried about the state of my mother who was becoming very agitated. I don't think that my mother would have gone with us if there wasn't a plan in place to get us home. It took us over two hours to get home.
18. We had to wait three days thinking about what was going to happen to us. We had to pack our bags. The social worker came to pick us up in her car, and I think that my father came with us. He had not been able to go to the previous visit as he was working.

Cardross Assessment Centre

19. On our first day my sister and I and my father were taken by my social worker, Anne-Marie Brady, in her car. When we arrived all the other children were at school. It was very quiet and I was shown my room. My sister and I were left on our own. There was a pool table with no cues or balls. There was also a gym hall with no footballs to play with. My sister and I just sat about with nothing to do. As it turned out, I was to remain there for a year while my sister only stayed for about three months.

20. There were four wings at the home: Lomond, Fruin, Endrick and Carman. Between the four wings, if the home was full to capacity, there would be between 50 and 60 children. There were regular staff, but you had a key worker assigned to you. My key worker was called Cyril Curran. He was a good guy. He would be in his 60s, and he knew my father.
21. I had my own room on the first floor which was very small. It had a single bed, a bedside table and a small wardrobe. There was a window with a metal bar across it. You could open the window a small amount to let air in.
22. There was a shower block, a dining room, the bedrooms and an office on the first floor. I was the youngest resident at twelve, and I think that the oldest resident would be about sixteen.
23. There was a shower and a bath in two separate rooms. You used to decide yourself when you needed a shower.
24. I think that the first time I met the other children would have been at lunchtime. They had come back from school and they were introduced to us. It seemed fine. I then went back to my room and tried to hide.

Routine at Cardross

Mornings and bedtime

25. We got up at about seven in the morning and would get washed and go down for breakfast. It was usually cereal or toast. You would then get ready for school. You would be given your train ticket and then catch the five past eight train. I was being sent back to the school I had attended before I went into care. It was called St Columba's High School in Clydebank.

26. You would get your lunch at school and return to Cardross on the train at five past four in the afternoon. I would go to my room and put my school stuff away. I would wait about till everybody was in. We would then go down for dinner where you had to stay till the staff had finished their meal.
27. You were in bed by nine thirty. Before bed there was a light supper served of toast and tea. There was a night staff came on duty and they took over from the day staff. All our room doors were shut, and I don't know if they checked whether you were there or not or what the night staff routine was. I can remember being kept awake by the sound of the birds outside my window. I could also hear other children playing nearby who were much younger than me but were allowed to be outside, while I had been sent to my bed at nine thirty.

Leisure

28. There was a television room and you could sit on the hard chairs and watch television. There was very little to do. The only games I remember being played was when one of the staff members produced a set of dominoes. There were no planned after-school or evening activities. There were a couple of books. The pool table was missing all the equipment needed. The staff didn't have time to play football with you.
29. There was no Boys' Brigade or Boy Scouts to attend, and we weren't taken swimming or to the cinema or anything like that. My sister had some books, and she would tie them onto a bit of cloth and swing them out her window so that I could grab them at my window and sit and read in my room. You were only supposed to read for about ten minutes.

Staff

30. The staff I had most dealings with were my key worker, Cyril Curran, HWS, HWS, and HWM who had been given the nickname "HWM" but whose surname I can't remember.

Food

31. The food was fine and I had no issues with it. I do recall I was forced to eat kidney beans which I did not like but don't have many other memories.

Clothing

32. There was no uniform, but if you needed new stuff you would be given them by the home. If my parents bought stuff for me I was not allowed to wear them. I had to wear what was provided by the home. It lead to me being ridiculed at school.

Pocket money

33. You used to get £1.05 pocket money every Friday. I used to go to the local garage with the other boys. They bought chocolate and the like. I would buy a can of petrol which I would sniff. I graduated to sniffing gas and glue and was abusing any substance I could get my hands on. I used to steal money from the gas and electricity meters at my mother's house. This had the effect of my parents supply being cut off on one occasion over the Christmas period. I would often go to my mate's gang hut to sniff substances.
34. The staff at Cardross must have known what was going on, as I would smell strongly of petrol or other substances. They never challenged me about it.

School

35. I was back attending St Columba's High School in Clydebank. I had been attending there prior to going into care. I had a problem with one of the teachers at the school. I was wearing a leather "Harrington" jacket which one of the teachers Mr [REDACTED] took an exception to and told me that I had to take it off. I

refused, and the next thing he tried to push me through a door. I clung on to him and we ended up rolling about the floor.

36. Mr [REDACTED] knew that I was a kid in care, and he didn't like me for that reason. I also knew that some of the other teachers shared his views. I had heard that Mr [REDACTED] had other issues with another pupil when he taught at St Andrew's High School also in Clydebank. I don't know what those issues were or who told me.
37. I would go into school first thing in the morning to be registered. I would stay for one or two periods and then leave. There were other pupils at the school who were looking to fight with me because I was in care. I was being bullied. Some of the time I couldn't go to school because of the bullies. I did report it. The staff at the school asked me to school assembly and point out the guilty parties and then they would take the appropriate action. There was no way I could have done that in front of all the other boys. They would have made my life a misery. I just hoped that these boys would leave the school soon.
38. I didn't report to the staff at Cardross Assessment Centre what was happening to me at school. They probably wouldn't have listened, and I thought that it was pointless to do so.
39. There was a meeting held between HWS [REDACTED] from the staff at Cardross and the headmaster of St Columba's. I can't remember all the details, but I do remember being required to sign a form which said that if I didn't attend school I would be expelled.
40. After that meeting HWS [REDACTED], who at that time lived at [REDACTED] in Clydebank, took me back to his house. It was a warm day and he had been wearing a large sweater and jeans. He wanted to change into something more appropriate for the weather. I don't think he should have taken me back to his house, but nothing inappropriate happened apart from him changing his clothes.

41. When I was playing truant from school I used to get the train into Glasgow, or I would go to my mate's gang hut and hang out there. I would go home to my mother's and father's house for lunch, but I only had twenty minutes to see them so I had to be quick.
42. There was a review of the schooling done every three weeks which had input from my key worker Cyril and the headmaster. If I was playing the game and attending school they would promise me that I could go home on a Friday night to spend it with my family. It didn't really work out as I was doing what I wanted anyway.
43. My attendance record at school was not good. The teachers at the school just saw you as a naughty guy. One of the guidance teachers was quite helpful. When I got to the end of my schooling I realised that I had no education and I asked to go back to school to learn. By that time I was no longer at Cardross but was living at Ramsay House .

Running away

44. I ran away from Cardross every opportunity I could get. I used to hide at my mother's house but my father never knew I was there. The police used to come and take me back. On one occasion, I was hiding under the bed and I had two knives on me. I told myself that if the police come they will have to get past the knives. The police found me, and I tried to resist by kicking and screaming.
45. I was never spoken to about running away and was never asked why I was doing it. I just didn't want to be there.

Holidays and trips out

46. Basically, I never went on a holiday or went off on a trip out the whole time I was at Cardross. I can't remember birthdays and Christmas was celebrated at home with my parents.

Visits/Inspections

47. I had a couple of visits at Cardross from my father and my uncle. There were a few times when my father would call to see me, but they wouldn't let him in. They would never tell me that he had called in or phoned. I don't know why they did this.
48. The only phone was in the staff room at Cardross Assessment Centre and you weren't allowed to use it. I wasn't too bothered as I used to see my mother at lunchtimes.
49. I don't remember any assessment being made of me when I was in Cardross, although there was a three weekly review with the children's panel. I don't recall any psychological support being provided at Cardross.

Medical care

50. I do recall going to visit a child psychologist in Clydebank in a room above the shopping centre. I was being asked what I considered to be stupid questions. I was shown pictures and asked whether it was an apple or a snooker ball. I only went once.

Abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre

51. There was one member of staff who would hang about the shower area when you came out of the shower. His name was ^{HWM} [REDACTED]. He would point out that you hadn't washed your ankles, and he would go back into the shower room with you and make sure you washed to his satisfaction. I remember my sister saying that he had a reputation as being a "perv". His nickname was ^{HWM} [REDACTED].

HWM. Personally he never touched me, but he just watched you having a shower.

52. On one occasion HWM told me that I hadn't washed properly. I had to go back into the shower. One of the other boys was sent in with me. I think that he had been sent by the staff to give me a doing. It backfired on them, as I managed to get the boy down and ensure that he didn't attack me again.
53. There is no doubt in my mind that this had been orchestrated by the staff. I can't remember the boy's name, but I did run into him in later life at college. He was a very big bloke, and I was terrified that he would remember what had happened. He just shook my hand. I wasn't doing what I was told by the staff and this was the reason that the bully was sent in to sort me out.
54. The staff definitely had a problem with me as I wouldn't do what I was told. I spent a lot of time in my room crying. I didn't want to be there. I didn't tell my key worker, Cyril Curran, about these incidents so he didn't know.
55. They used to take me into my room and give me a bit of a hiding. HWS would force you onto the bed. He would put a pillow over your face and then put a metal watch strap on his knuckles. He would punch you in the face. HWM would keep watch at the door. They only did this to stop me from crying. I don't know what effect they thought it would have when they started hitting me.
56. The first time the staff set about me my sister came into the room because she could hear me screaming. HWM hadn't shut the door properly. They told her that if she said a word to anyone about what was happening she was "fucking next".
57. During the beating they told me that I didn't have a mother or father any more. In my eyes, they wanted me to think that my parents were dead and they were now my new family. It was very upsetting.

58. I was not marked or bruised from the beating I took because he used the pillow to prevent any scars. He had me trapped on the bed. [HWS] was a fully grown man and I was a little boy.
59. My sister and I had rooms side-by-side before they moved her. They ripped up my sister's books and threw them about her bed. My sister was only there for three months and the abuse she suffered was more psychological. They tried to turn her against me.
60. My uncle had not long died and I had been given a lot of memorabilia about Celtic football club which was all I had belonging to him. [HWM] and [HWS] took it off the walls and ripped it all up in front of me. They told me that if I started behaving myself I would be allowed to put the things onto the board on the wall. This was meant for any stuff you wanted to display in your room. I was very upset about this it was needless.
61. Some days the staff would come to you at eleven in the morning and tell you that it was okay to go home for the day. This only left you a window of about three hours to visit home and be back in time. In order to save time I would take a short cut across a field. [HWM] would watch you running through the field and then shout on you to come back. He would tell you that you had been trespassing on private land and must write 5000 times "I must not trespass" before I was allowed to go. It was too late by then. It was all mind games.
62. One of the nights I was there I was taken, by the same boy who had been sent into the showers with me, for a walk in a nearby field. I felt that he was leading me somewhere. We came across a barn and in there was a man sitting naked apart from a trench coat. The other boy did not come into the barn, and I suspect that he had set me up. I ran out of the barn and back to Cardross. The staff were told and the police were called. I don't know if anything was done about it. I was about twelve at that time.

Reporting of abuse at Cardross Assessment Centre

63. I suspect that I would have told my mother and father about the beating I took when they placed the pillow over my head, but I don't think I reported it to anyone else. My sister knew about it as she was there. I didn't tell my social worker. The first time I spoke about it to my sister was when my mother died in 2009.

64. In 2015 I called at Clydebank police station and told them that when I was in care at Cardross in 1985 I had been abused. They advised me that these things had no time-bar, and if I wanted to make a complaint they would investigate. I didn't do anything formal at the time and left.


Leaving Cardross Assessment Centre

65. After being at Cardross for about a year the contract was ended. They realised that this was not the right place for me, and I was referred back to the children's panel. Cardross had washed their hands of me.

66. I was sent home till the next children's panel review. I know that they wanted to put me into a List D-type establishment. There was a children's home quite near where I lived and it was decided that they would place me there. The home was called Ramsay House and was in Park Hall, Clydebank.

Ramsay House, Clydebank


67 Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later



73.

74.

Life after care

75. When I left the care environment I was back living at home. I attended for six months at college where I took a course in welding and bricklaying.
76. Although I had left the home I went on the Ramsay House summer trip to Berwick-upon-Tweed. It was a good trip, although I did get into a bit of trouble over trying to get access to a nightclub when I was under-age.
77. The first job that I had was in a care home for the elderly. I didn't enjoy it as I was the only male there, and I felt that it was a job for a woman. I then joined a group called Adapt and was learning bricklaying and landscaping. I got sacked for cutting off to see my girlfriend. I then drifted from job to job. I had stopped sniffing solvents when I left care but I started drinking quite a lot of alcohol.
78. In 1995 I was working on a project landscaping new schemes that were being built locally. I got sacked with a month of the project left to go, which meant I left with no qualifications. I was sacked for poor time-keeping. It was my own fault,

but I remember that because I was sacked I was not allowed to go on a trip to Amsterdam that had been arranged for the end of the project. I was quite gutted about that.

79. I then worked on the roads as a labourer. I enjoyed the work but I got cheated out of the job because of a mate of mine that was going to court needed to show that he was employed. I couldn't drive, and as we had to work in pairs I lost my job. Strangely enough though, after his court appearance my mate went to work laying cables. He got me a job but it all fell through when the same mate ran off with all the wages.
80. After that I started doing voluntary work. I worked with the Prince's Trust doing different community projects. I recall helping to renovate a derelict church hall. I also built nature trails on Rannoch Moor. I did four weeks at Turning Point Drug Crisis Centre. I was well thought-of there, and the staff suggested I could have a career working with them. I also volunteered for Fairbridge doing community projects.
81. I had made my mind up that I wanted to volunteer for Raleigh International and to go to Africa. In 1998 that all came true. I went to Africa in 1999, and when I got back everything changed as my son was killed in an accident. I wasn't married to my partner, and she was from a privileged background. When she got pregnant she agreed with her parents that if they supported her and got her a house she would end her relationship with me. I was a bit of a lad back then. I couldn't stay officially with my girlfriend at the house and had to sneak in to spend time with her and my son.
82. It was 2000 when my son was killed in the accident, and he was six years old. He died two hours after he had his school photograph taken. I look at the photograph every day.

83. I was well supported by my mates, but I tried to shut myself away. I was drinking a lot and started taking drugs. I stopped getting into trouble. From 2000 to 2009 I was on a different planet. It was just a big empty nothing.
84. When I was in Ghana, on the Raleigh International project, I made a mistake and slept with a local prostitute. I was convinced that I had contracted AIDS. After my son died I hoped that I would die of AIDS. I had given up. In 2009 I got a check-up and found that I was not infected.
85. I had another relationship with a girl that I had met on the Raleigh International project but she lived in Brighton and I lived in Clydebank and so things were difficult. I was also still grieving the loss of my son, and my mother who died in 2009.
86. I am not married but I have a partner and two children who I live with. I have not had a permanent job but I still volunteer for Fare Share which is a charity running food banks. I also do some mentoring one night a week.

Impact

87. I still to this day have a feeling of dread when I go anywhere near Helensburgh or Cardross where the Assessment Centre was. I have been diagnosed with clinical depression and extreme anxiety disorder for which I receive medication. I exist somewhere between the two conditions.
88. The impact on my life of having been in care and grieving for my son and mother was huge. I sought help from a group called Stepping Stones who were able to help me with some of my issues. At the same time I contacted Sandra Toyer from ICSSS which is now called Open Secret. I still receive support and counselling from Sandra. I had to stop going to Stepping Stones as there was a conflict of interest, and they were not qualified to deal with abuse in care. They felt that they couldn't move me forward.

89. I also mentioned to my sister about the support that is available but she doesn't want to re-visit the whole experience. I find that when dealing with my children I have difficulty interacting normally.
90. When I left care I was self-destructing. I was anti-establishment because I felt that I had been badly let down by people who should have been looking after me. I was in trouble for fighting. I was very close to my mother but I was falling out with my father. I also learned through a court action that the local authority were the cause of my son's death, and I hated them for it. I learned to trust the police better when my son died as they were very sensitive in their dealings with me.
91. My father called me a "bastard child" because he didn't want me. He told me that my mother had three children who all died of spina bifida. He then told me that after my brothers and sister were born my mother was given medical advice not to have any more children. I came next and my mother, being a good Catholic, couldn't do anything about it. This was part of the cause of my mother's depression. I think that my father resented me for this.
92. I was not allowed to have a relationship with my first-born child as I was actively kept away by my partner's parents. I tried to take legal action to get access but this resulted in me being threatened by people with knives to stay away. I found this very frustrating but had no or little choice.
93. My current partner comes from London. When I met her she already had a five month old called [REDACTED]. She fell pregnant but had a miscarriage. She was living in London and I was in Clydebank. My father had thrown me out, and I was living on the streets. My partner and I decided that wherever we were offered a house first we would live together. I was glad in a way that the first opportunity came in Glasgow. I was in my late 30's. I found it hard to adapt to family life.

94. I still occasionally meet one of the members of staff from Ramsay House and

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published I think that Ramsay House has now shut down and I found it quite emotional.

95. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

96. I have not been in trouble with the police for seventeen years and have not taken drugs for eight years. I have a much better relationship with my father now as a result of a promise I made to my mother before she died

Records

97. I know that Sandra from Open Secret has tried to get me a copy of my records. So far we have failed to get these records. I recall that when I put the request in I got the name of the person who was to do the research. When I did a computer search on that person I noted that she had also worked in Cardross Assessment Centre. I am still waiting for a copy of my records but will follow it up with Sandra's help.

Lessons to be learned

98. Anybody that is in care and something happens to them should have some contact to speak to at the time. They shouldn't have to wait 40 years to tell them about what happened to them. Every care home should have someone that is visible and someone they can trust.

99. I would like to be considered to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry. I did feel awkward initially about being questioned about my past. Now that I have told my story I would find it easier to tell it again in public.

100. 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.....3.7.17.....