

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HCQ [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is HCQ [REDACTED]. I was born HCQ [REDACTED] but when I was adopted my adoptive parents changed my name. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1964. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born and initially lived in Perth. I have no knowledge of my birth mother but know she gave me up for adoption. I was about six months old when she placed me in Quarrier's Village but I have no memories of that period. My adoption was delayed slightly as I was suffering from Chicken Pox.
3. My adoptive parents are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and I have an adopted sister [REDACTED], who now lives in Australia. As far as I am concerned they are my mother and father. My parents adopted me when I was about two years old, from Quarrier's. The adoption was arranged through Perth Social Work Department. I was about five years old when I was told I was adopted. They did not want me to find it out from anyone else.
4. Later in life my mum would ask whether I wanted to try and trace my natural mother, but my thoughts were that woman had given me up and as far as I was concerned my adopted mum was my mum. I did later visit the National Registrar and saw my birth certificate on the microfiche system and saw my mother's name, but I cannot remember it and can't recall if there was a father's name on it.

5. I don't have any bad memories of being brought up by my parents. I do remember it was good and we had no issues and was a happy childhood, until Bellfield. Most of the memories I now have, have been triggered by my recent attempts to join the Children's Hearing Service.
6. One of the few memories I have is visiting the Loch Lomond area as my father and uncle had a boat there. I also remember when my uncle, who was a blacksmith, visited, he would be wearing a boiler suit and a flat cap. When I saw him dressed in his work clothes I would run off scared. I am not sure if this is as a result of Quarrier's or not.
7. I do recall I had some unusual eating habits. When I left the dinner table I would hide food throughout the house. I also never cried as a baby. I can only assume this was a result of lack of attention during my stay at Quarrier's. The first time I cried my parents were so tearful as they knew the barriers were finally coming down.
8. We stayed in a two bedroomed flat in Glasgow before moving to a three bedroomed house in Cumbernauld. Both my parents were employed as civil servants. I also remember visiting my grandparents at [REDACTED] and playing in the park there. They always had a packet of Pandrops in their pockets.
9. I went to Abronhill Primary School which was [REDACTED] from our house. I started secondary at Cumbernauld High School, but I think I was only there from the [REDACTED].
10. When I was between the age of ten and eleven my parents separated and about thirteen or fourteen when they divorced. I thought it was because of me and I took it so badly. They tried to assure me that it was just their relationship breaking down. After the divorce I stayed with mum in the house and my dad moved out and paid the mortgage. During this time mum left the civil service and started work for a company as a book keeper.
11. I was not coping with the break up and my schooling was being affected. I was withdrawing into myself and feeling really angry inside. I wasn't violent or aggressive

with other people, I was just upset inside myself. I don't remember any social work intervention beforehand, but as a result of the changes in me my parents decided I would be better off in boarding school.

### **Lendrick Muir School, Kinross**

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Again there was consultation with the social work department and again with agreement of my mother it was decided I would reside at Bellfield Assessment Centre during holiday periods. I am not sure who funded my time in the school but presume it was the Council.

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38. When I was allowed to return home at the weekends I would take the bus back and forth to the school. If it was a holiday time my dad sometimes picked me up in the car. I would spend the week at his house in Falkirk. That did not work out for long as his new partner was not happy and told my father to choose between seeing his new kids or to see me. He chose his own kids. He later met another woman, [REDACTED], and they are together still.

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50. Things went bad during the summer holidays. The social work department became involved and as it was not working out with dad and mum was not able to look after me, they decided I would be placed on a part time basis at Bellfield Remand Centre. The first time I went there the social worker picked me up from mums house and took me to Bellfield.
51. I did have to go a panel at some time. The decisions were being made between the panel, my parents and the social work. I did not have any say in what was happening. When it came to routine journeys to Bellfield the social worker picked me up from the school and transported me to Bellfield.

#### **Bellfield Remand Centre, Dumbarton**

52. When I arrived at Bellfield it was accessed from a short driveway leading to a detached building. I was very frightened when I went to Bellfield as it was a strange atmosphere. No one had given me a proper explanation as to why the social work department were placing me there.
53. I am not aware of who was in charge of the Centre or the names of any of the staff. Some of the staff wore normal day clothes and some wore a suit and tie. You addressed the staff as Mr and their surname. There were no female staff. I think they spoke to us using our forenames.
54. The dormitories were upstairs and they were all of mixed age groups. Anyone new would just take over wherever the spare bed was situated. I think there were about twenty boys in total there from about eleven up to nearly eighteen.
55. I am not sure how we were woken in the morning but it was then get washed before heading for breakfast. Bed at night was around ten or eleven o'clock. I can't remember if the showers were open or in cubicles.

56. It was classed as an assessment centre but it seemed more strict. I was locked in for much of my time there. I learned that I had to grow up very quickly there as I was mixing with many of the residents who were part of the justice system and there was nowhere for them to be. There was no fighting, it was just the atmosphere.
57. We wore tracksuits that they supplied. We never wore our own clothes. It was obvious when we were out of the place, perhaps when we went for a walk to the River Leven, that we were from Bellfield, as we were all wearing the same tracksuit tops and bottoms.
58. As I was only there at weekends and holidays I cannot say what the general day to day routine would have been. Some of the staff would take some of the residents out for walks.
59. In the evening there was one television and everyone watched it together, supervised by the staff. It was like an old movie where all the inmates were sat in rows of chairs watching the TV. The staff had a large tin of cigarettes which they would distribute as we watched the television. The staff would light your cigarette and you would go back to your seat to smoke it. I probably smoked more at Bellfield as there was nothing else to do. I don't even remember there being books available. This like everything else you did was all regimented by the staff. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
60. I think I was still home at Christmas but all the other holiday periods were spent at Bellfield. It stopped near the end of my last terms at Lendrick Muir.
61. Sometimes mum would visit me at Bellfield along with her friend and sometimes with my sister. I think her friend was there for transport and moral support. Her visit was always by appointment. There was a room for visits and sometimes we would be allowed to go out for a coffee. Because I was only there on a residential order and not on a secure order I was allowed for that coffee. The visits were not regular perhaps once or twice during the summer.

### **Abuse at Bellfield Remand Centre**

62. All the abuse that took place was only ever one guy and it took place in one place, the kitchen.
63. The guy, I can't remember his name, said he was going to take me under his wing. He asked me to help him make supper, toast or chips, for the residents. The other staff were in the living room with the remainder of the residents. I was young and vulnerable at that time. The guy was in his fifties, thin build. He looked quite gaunt and facial stubble. He always wore a collar and tie.
64. As we prepared the food for supper it started with him hugging me, then it progressed to him trying to kiss me and licking my face. He was pressing himself into me and put his hands on my privates, over my clothes.
65. It became a regular thing for him to ask one of us to go in the kitchen with him. It was not always me. He would mix it up so it was not always the same person helping, which helped him hide what he was doing to me. If I was in Bellfield five days, I would be taken into the kitchen on three of those days. I think he picked on me as I was an easy target. Some of the others in the centre were people he could not get away with this abuse as they were more street wise.
66. At the time it was happening I just thought that was what went on in these places. I did not feel there was anyone I could speak to. I did not think the other staff would have believed me. It may have happened to other boys but I did not hear anyone else discussing this kind of thing. I just kept my head down to try and get through it.
67. There was no other physical abuse from the other staff. There was some shouting by them if you did something wrong in their eyes. Every day I spent in there was a traumatic experience.
68. When I was home I never discussed it with mum as she was already feeling guilty with me being there.

69. If it was the summer holidays I would spend the last week of that period with dad, that meant when the week was over, he would take me back to the school. I never told my dad, but towards the end of my time at school, my dad was realising that something was not right with me at Bellfield. Although I was not telling him what was happening he stopped me going there and I stayed the rest of any breaks from school with him. When dad told me I was not going back there I felt such total relief.
70. When I was leaving Lendrick Muir I was going to move back to live with dad. Mum was not able to care for me as she was suffering from some mental health issues.

### **Leaving Lendrick Muir School**

71. I left Lendrick Muir in 1981. I could have stayed on longer at the school but I had passed my exams and had a place at Cumbernauld College. At that time I was studying for my HNC in Computer Data Processing. I did have other thoughts about being an electronics engineer or even enlisting in the forces. I was not able to do either of those roles as I was colour blind. I completed my course but never used it in my adult working life.

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

72. There were times as an adult that the relationship with dad was not great but now we are best of friends. He has been ill quite recently so there have been more visits to check on him.
73. I loved my mum dearly, but there were times we fell out, but not for long. I helped her out with finances or would do some work around the house, if she needed it. My sister, [REDACTED], moved to Australia. There was one time when she was home for a holiday with mum and they had a fallout as there were only photographs of her and none of me. [REDACTED] argued with mum to make sure she put some of me on show. One day I

got a phone call from my cousin saying that mum had been found lying on the floor all day, after a fall. She passed away soon after in hospital. We were not on bad terms when she died.

74. I have a close relationship with [REDACTED] and we email quite regularly and occasionally we speak on the phone. But in our earlier times we would have normal brother/sister arguments and fights, but nothing bad. I remember one time she wanted a lock put on her room to stop me annoying her. Dad put a lock on and one day I superglued it so she could not get out. That was the typical relationship we had, just like normal brother and sisters had.
75. While I was in college at Cumbernauld it was not practical to go back and forward between there and dad's house in Falkirk and therefore I got my own flat. It wasn't the best area but it was my council flat. When I started working in the hotels I had my own room and gave the flat up.
76. When I left Lendrick Muir I got involved in coaching outdoor activities. Dad had bought me a canoe. I also spent time at the National Scout Activity Centre, at Lochgoilhead. I would spend weekends and any of my holidays there. This was on a voluntary basis and soon realised I needed to get a paying job.
77. My first paid job was working in [REDACTED] Hotel, Aviemore and I spent the summer season there. When I worked in Aviemore I also worked as a ski instructor at weekends and helped out at the end of my hotel shifts. I went on to work in the hotel industry for over twenty years. I have worked for Stakis, Hilton and the MacDonald Hotels. I became very senior when I worked in [REDACTED].
78. I got fed up with the hotel industry and started working for myself in facilities management. I get to choose who I work for and when I work. It involves property maintenance and perhaps kitchen upgrades. I also did some volunteering at the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Since then I have become more involved in volunteering. It is just to give something back.



79. I got married in 2008 but that relationship did not work out and after about six years we divorced. For a little while my life fell apart, for different reasons to do with that relationship. I met [REDACTED] and we have been together and have a daughter. I do worry about her, not because of my time in care, but because I am aware there are strange people out there. Sometimes when she is out with the dog I might follow a few minutes later, just to make sure she is alright. I am very protective of her.
80. [REDACTED] has worked for the Children's Hearing Services [REDACTED]. Last year I tried to become a member. I am aware from the training that I was receiving that the way I was dealt with at my panels is not the way things are dealt with today.

### **Impact**

81. Up until last year I did not have any impact in my adult life as a result of my time at Bellfield. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED] I think my time in care probably did me more good than bad.
82. During my training for the Children's Hearing Services all the bad memories from Bellfield came flooding back. I had not thought about them throughout my adult life. We had completed four or five full day sessions and we were starting on the module dealing with secure accommodation. We were having discussions about places in the local area when the memories came back without warning.
83. I spoke with the trainer letting her know I was having some issues with some of the memories suddenly coming back. She must have spoken to the head of the department, because at the end of that day she sent me an email asking how I was. I told her I was still having some issues dealing with the memories. I presume she must have had to report it back but after that I did not receive any follow up or any calls.
84. I did expect that they would have had things in place for panel members who may have had difficulties with some hearings they were dealing with. If that help was in

place I find it difficult to understand why there is nothing for people being trained by them.

85. I had to take some time out of the course. The Covid pandemic arrived and I was removed from the course. I wanted to continue with my training but they said I would have to start from the beginning. I was not happy with this and found it demoralising having to restart. I think it is remiss of them not to even follow up to check on how things are with me, as it was with them when the problem arose.
86. After the memories came back I did some research and found that my experiences were repeated to others at Bellfield. As part of the research I found out the Inquiry was investigating Bellfield. That was the reason I came forward.
87. I have not looked for any counselling before this. I have been in contact with Future Pathways looking to see if they can offer assistance. I am in a waiting system for that to be progressed.
88. I visited the school about five years after I left. Some of the staff that taught me were still there. I stayed in a local bed and breakfast and had dinner out with some of them. I never went back to Bellfield as it was no longer in operation, but at that time the memories had not returned. I have done the Kilt Walk on many occasions and walked passed Bellfield without giving it any thought. I have since been back to Lendrick Muir and it is no longer a school, it is now a religious retreat.
89. There are days just now that I waken up angry with what happened. As a result of Covid this experience of providing my statement has taken longer than it should have and at the end of the process I am hoping to put it all to bed.



### **Reporting of Abuse**

90. I have not reported any of the abuse to any authority or the police. I did not say anything before because of a fear that it may have been covered up and would not be believed.

### **Records**

91. I did return to Quarrier's to see what information they had on me. They were able to give me a few documents showing the brief period I was there and showed me the building I would have stayed in. As it is only recently that I have the memories of Bellfield I have not considered applying for any other records.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

92. I think that even as a trainee and as a volunteer for the Children's Hearing Services the staff should be better looked after. Any assistance should not just be for full time staff, but I am not even sure whether they provide enough back up for the full time staff. There was a professor we had to speak with during the training and we were talking about us being volunteers. He wanted us to change our thinking to not being volunteers like someone helping at a marathon, but that we were unpaid professional laymen. Maybe if this was taken more on board by the CHS they might be able to look after staff better, and the staff would not be worn out when making decisions on the future of children at Hearings.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

93. I hope by giving evidence to the Inquiry it gives strength to others and gives hope that they will not be alone.

94. I hope other people giving evidence to the Inquiry get some sort of closure. I don't think there is any chance of the people involved with me to be taken to task, because it was so long ago. Strathclyde Regional Council must have been aware of something happening in these places and they need to be held to account and apologise for their inaction. There should be nowhere for them to hide. There are too many damaged adults because the wrong people were employed in those places and there was a lack of any checks made on them, before and during their employment.
95. 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..... 24 March 2021 .....