

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GCR [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is GCR [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1969. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. Before I went into care, I lived with my mum and dad, [REDACTED], and my older brother [REDACTED], who was born on [REDACTED] 1966. My dad was known as [REDACTED].
3. My parents had a bed and breakfast in [REDACTED] when we were younger and then we moved to a little village [REDACTED] Forfar and Kirriemuir, called [REDACTED]. My mum and dad had bought a cottage in [REDACTED] and we were living in a caravan while it was getting done up. We then went to live temporarily on a farm that my mum was working on. I don't know what happened to their marriage, but my dad was having an affair behind my mum's back and she found out and stabbed him. Both of them were taken into hospital and we stayed on the farm for a couple of nights and then went to live with my dad's brother [REDACTED] and his wife [REDACTED].
4. My mum went to court and was put into a psychiatric hospital, Sunnyside Royal Hospital, instead of being given a prison sentence. She later breached her conditions and had to do an eighteen-month sentence in Cornton Vale.

5. I don't know how long we stayed with my aunt and uncle before going into care. I remember going into the social work office in Kirriemuir, which was on my way to school, and telling them I was unhappy. I think social services must have already been involved with us. The police and social services would have got involved when my mum stabbed my dad. I don't know whether the social workers came to see us at my auntie's house and that's what triggered them putting us into care. The living conditions weren't good. They had four children of their own and it wasn't the cleanest of houses. I slept in a double bed with their three daughters, and one of my cousins and I used to wet the bed.

Children's home, 57 Strathmore Avenue, Forfar

6. I don't remember being taken to the home or the actual year I went in there. I only have some memories of being there. I was around seven or eight and [REDACTED] would have been about ten or eleven. I don't think the home had a name. It was just called the "children's home".

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving the children's home in Forfar

31. I don't know how long my mum was out of jail before I went back to live with her. I can't remember whether I went home on visits at first or whether any other sort of preparation was done. I was about eleven and still in P7 when I went back to my mum.
32. I went to live with my mum in a flat in Kirriemuir and started a new primary school. My dad was still with the woman he had had an affair with. He never paid maintenance for me and he and my mum used to have arguments. My brother came back at one point as well, but I don't think my mum could cope with him. He went

back and forward between my mum and my dad's. My dad was quite nifty with his fists towards my brother and myself. We had a few run ins, although he was not as physical with me as he was with my brother. My mum couldn't live in the same town as my dad so we moved to Forfar.

33. I then went to Chapel Park Primary School for a short time, before I moved up to First Year at Forfar Academy. That transition didn't go down well at all. I was still known as the kid from the home. I didn't have very good communication skills and I didn't mix well with the other kids. I didn't go to school very much in First Year. Then we moved to Arbroath and I went to Arbroath Academy. I didn't settle in there either. By Second Year, I had stopped going to school.
34. I was going out to pubs and drinking when I was thirteen. I started a relationship with a man I met in a pub, who was eleven years my senior, and I ran away with him to Glasgow and slept in tenement entries. He thought I was eighteen because we had met in the pub. I let him believe I was eighteen. He got taken to court because we'd been having a sexual relationship, but I didn't have to give evidence because he admitted we were in a relationship.
35. An emergency social work meeting was called when I went back home to Arbroath. We had social work involvement on and off. I'm sure the social worker, Peter Phillips, was only involved with us when I was in the children's home. The next social worker was Ian Stephens. Both of them would have been employed by Angus Council before the local authorities changed. Their office was probably in Forfar or Arbroath.
36. I said at the emergency meeting that I had no intention of returning to school because I didn't like it, I didn't know which classes I was supposed to be in and I was struggling with the work. My brother slapped me on the face and told me that I would end up going back through the system but I didn't believe him. I thought someone would give me the help I needed to help me process my life.
37. I got put into Burnside Assessment Centre, supposedly for three weeks for an assessment to be carried out, because I was deemed to be outwith my mother's

control. I was probably told that I was going to a locked unit, and I would have known what locked meant, but I don't think I really knew what to expect.

Burnside House Assessment Centre, Dundee

38. I was thirteen when I was sent to Burnside. I vaguely remember arriving there. It struck me straight away that everything - the gate, doors, windows - was locked. I had never seen anything like it before.
39. I don't really remember what it looked like from the outside, except that it was another big, white house. There were two parts to it, one for the juniors and the other for the seniors. I think I just made it into the juniors, where the youngest was about eleven. Had I been fourteen I would have been put in with the older ones. There were boys and girls there. I don't think there were many girls. Only one girl sticks in my mind because she was epileptic and I remember seeing her having a fit. I don't remember any of the staff.
40. I don't remember sharing a bedroom with anybody. There was a chair, bedside cabinet, built-in wardrobes and a bed in the room. I stayed in my bedroom most of the time. I don't think I ever put myself in a position where anything bad could happen to me.
41. I got fed, watered and watched TV. I stayed in my bedroom most of the time, crying. That's what I always did. I'm not really an angry person. It takes a lot to get me angry. I just always cried. I think that was my way of releasing my emotions.
42. I didn't see my family or my social worker when I was in Burnside. I think the social worker was Ian Stephens. I was supposed to go back to a children's panel after three weeks, but for some reason social work had to postpone their meeting about my assessment, so the panel got postponed and I had to stay at Burnside a few more weeks. This didn't go down well with me and I put a chair through a window, injuring my arm in the process, and ran away. I didn't get very far. I wandered round Dundee for a while and then I went to the police station because my arm was sore.

43. I recall going to another children's panel and being told that I was going to Balnacraig School. I don't know if I went straight from the panel to Balnacraig. I was still just thirteen years old.

Balnacraig School, Perth

44. Balnacraig was on Fairmont Terrace, on the same road as Bracklyn Gardens. It was the very last house on the left. I like horror movies and I remember telling stories about the last house on the left. It was a List D school.
45. I don't remember the journey there. I just remember that I didn't want to go. I got shown my room when I got there and I remember SNR ██████████ SGQ ██████████ chucking his keys at the window to show that the windows were unbreakable. He probably knew what I'd done at Burnside, although he did that same routine with everybody. It wasn't a locked unit. You could turn the snib on the front door and get out. I didn't get a handbook like the kind you get in school nowadays. I wasn't told what to expect by way of punishment for breaking any rules.
46. The other staff members I remember are Mr GHG ██████████ SNR ██████████ Miss GHF ██████████, Ma McDonald and Elspeth, members of the care staff; Sarah Lawson, my key worker; ██████████ SGQ ██████████'s wife and Maths and Art teacher; and Mr Roy, English and Geography or History teacher. Mr Roy is dead now.
47. There was a big gate at the entrance and a sweeping driveway up to it. The main building was an old mansion house type building with two sides, A and B, with about twelve girls in each side. The two sides were separated by just a sliding door. I think the most it could hold at any one time was twenty-four girls. A girl called ██████████ was the youngest. I think she went in there when she was eleven but she was twelve by the time I arrived. The oldest was sixteen or seventeen.

48. Mr SGQ and his wife lived in a house . Mr SGQ office was to the right as you went in the front door. There was a pool room on the ground floor but we never got to use it much as it was always locked. The dining room, kitchen, scullery and recreational room were all on the ground floor as well. The school wing was a prefab building to the left of the main building. I think there were four classrooms in that building.
49. The bedrooms were upstairs in the main building. I think there were five bedrooms and the sick bay on my side, and there were four rooms plus the office on the other side. The office is where the nightshift worker would sit. We called them the "Night Supie". The number of girls sharing a room varied. I was in a room with a girl called at one point. I was only ever in a room with one or two other girls.

Routine at Balnacraig

Mornings

50. The morning routine was shower, breakfast, clear the plates and do the dishes, and then go to school. I can't remember what time we went into school at, around nine anyway. You had privacy to get a shower or a bath. I relied on the staff to provide me with my toiletries, and pretty much everything else really, as I never got much from my parents.

Food

51. We ate at tables in the dining room. I think you sat at the same table as your key worker. We got toast, tea, milk, juice and a choice of cereals at breakfast. We had cooks and the food was always cooked well. I was never hungry. We got two options at dinner, things like chicken fricassee, mince and tatties, chicken curry and rice. The staff would reheat the food that was leftover from lunch and dinner and we'd get offered that at suppertime. The usual supper choices were yogurt, toast or cereal,

but the staff would also go into the kitchen and reheat leftovers if that's what you wanted.

Chores

52. We did the dishes and washed all our own clothes by hand. I remember wrapping my jeans round the taps to try and wring them out. They only things they washed for us was our underwear, which went into net bags and got washed in the machine. We did other jobs as a punishment.

School

53. There were four classrooms in the school building. I don't think the classes were divided by age. I'm sure there were separate classes for the two sides, A and B. Our school uniform was a shirt and grey pleated skirt.
54. The teachers were full-time Balnacraig employees. I don't think they taught anywhere else. I learnt bugger all at school. We did all the traditional subjects, but I don't think they took account of the fact that they were teaching young people whose heads were messed up. We were angry hormonal teenagers. We didn't get homework. I think it was hard enough getting us to do the work in class. I think I sat Maths, English, Geography, Art and History 'O' Levels and failed them all. I had to pay for my Maths 'O' Level as I ran away and did not sit the exam. Sixty pounds was taken from my pocket money. I don't think I ever saw much of my pocket money.

Leisure time

55. I watched TV and listened to music. I had some LPs, tapes and a tape recorder. There was a record player we could use downstairs. We had magazines and books to read. We did crafts some evenings. Some of the staff would do crotchet with us and baking. I learnt how to make sweet treats.

56. There wouldn't be that many girls in the place at the weekend, just those on punishment or the ones that didn't have a home to go. If you were on lighter punishment, and not confined to the craft room, the staff would try and do things with you, like take you swimming or out on bus rides. Mr Roy, one of the teachers, used to come in some weekends. He had been a hairdresser before, so he would dye your hair for you. Other teachers would take turns at coming in at the weekend as well. I think they worked some evenings too.
57. Some of the girls got taken on holiday to Spain with Mr SGQ and his wife. I was never invited.

Birthdays and Christmas

58. I don't remember my birthday being celebrated in Balnacraig. They put up a Christmas tree and decorations but we weren't there on Christmas day because we went home for two weeks. We used to do Christmas plays in some old folks' homes and hotels. I remember doing Calamity Jane, Annie and Beatlemania.

Healthcare

59. I said I had stomach pains three weeks in a row just to get out of PE. I got taken to Perth Royal Infirmary and got my appendix out, but I'm not really sure whether I had appendicitis. That's the only time I remember seeing a doctor. I can't remember going to the dentist, but I don't think I would have said anything if I had toothache because I've always avoided going to the dentist.

Family

60. I wasn't encouraged to keep in touch with my family. SGQ read all my letters. I know he read the ones that went out because my brother told me that he didn't get the letters I sent to him. SGQ also stopped me communicating with the guy I ran away to Glasgow with.

Visits/inspections/reviews

61. You could go home for the weekend once a fortnight if you were well-behaved. All of us, one girl after another, were made to stand up every Thursday in the recreational room and ask if we could go home for the weekend. SGQ [REDACTED] would be there with SNR [REDACTED], two teachers and a member of staff and you had to stand up and say, "Can I go home this weekend, please?". If you were doing sanitary duty as a punishment or had done something else wrong, you knew you wouldn't get to go home, but you still had to ask.
62. SGQ [REDACTED] would ridicule us by bringing up the things we had done and then he'd tell us that we couldn't go home. I remember once I had been charged with biting a police officer and he said that I couldn't go home because I had been charged with "cannabilm".
63. If you didn't stand up and ask the question, you got into trouble. In the three years I was there, I only got to go home some weekends over an eight-month period. The rest of the time I was on punishments and wasn't allowed home. The school shut down at Christmas and two weeks in the summer and I went home then. The home visits were fine. I used to go out to the pub and get drunk, go home and do my washing and then go back to school.
64. My mum never really came to visit me. I only remember her coming one year to see our Christmas play. My brother came to see me a few times.
65. I don't recall seeing my social worker very often and I don't remember any inspections taking place. I never saw anyone from Ofsted or anywhere else like that. The times I did see the social worker, I don't think I spoke to him. I'm sure the social worker, Ian Stephens, used to put cigarettes through my mum's door to try and get me to come out when I ran away from Balnacraig.
66. I went to a children's panel every twelve months. I didn't feel that I had any involvement in it. I didn't get the opportunity to explain how I was being treated in

Balnacraig. I didn't get to air my views. They didn't even ask me questions about basic things like what the meals were like. It was more a case of them asking questions about me, about my behaviour and schooling, and whether there was any improvement in these areas.

67. It always seemed to me that they had already set out what was going to happen and they were just going through the formality of it. I think the whole focus was on trying to get me back to mainstream school. I don't think they ever got anyone back into mainstream school. I think a few of them got moved on to Kenmure St Mary's in Glasgow, which was a big locked unit. Others vanished and you just assumed they went elsewhere. I never questioned anything.

Key worker

68. Sarah Lawson was my key worker. She was a lovely lady but I don't really have any understanding of what her role was supposed to be. I don't recall having to spend time with her on a one-to-one basis. I sat at the same table as her for meals and she was the one who took me out for clothes sometimes.

Running away

69. I was always running away. Sometimes I got as far as Edinburgh, Glasgow and London on the train. I'd go to Dundee, Forfar and Arbroath as well. We got reported missing as soon as we ran away. All of the police in my home town, Arbroath, knew me. They'd catch me as soon as I got there.
70. Nobody ever asked me why I kept running away from the place. We were just toerags. The police had other things they could have been doing so we were just a nuisance to them. They weren't interested in finding out our reasons for running away. If they had asked, I would have told them that I didn't like being at Balnacraig, that I was scared of SNR, that I didn't like being kept indoors on punishment and that I missed my mum and wanted to be with her.

71. I didn't report to the police what was going on at Balnacraig. I maybe did on the odd rant but they wouldn't have believed me anyway. I would have been shouting and crying and they would just have thought it was a load of rubbish.
72. The police sometimes put me in a cell before taking me back to Balnacraig. A few coppers had a slap at me. I've taken a few slaps off them, and I've given them a few slaps as well. Latterly, they didn't put me in a cell because I was a danger to myself. I would go crazy and start screaming, shouting and banging at the door. They would either leave the door open or let me sit in the office with them until they were ready to take me back to Balnacraig.

Discipline

73. If you were cheeky, swore at a member of staff or didn't do something you were told to do, you got punished by being put on sanitary duties. This meant doing things like the dishes, cleaning the dining room, washing the floors, sterilising the crockery, and setting up the tables for the next meal.
74. Another light punishment was to send us to the recreational room after school to sit with a member of staff until about half past seven. You'd then get your bath or shower and have some supper before bed.
75. Stopping our pocket money was another punishment. I rarely got pocket money because I was usually on punishment.

Abuse at Balnacraig

76. I was physically and mentally hurt in Balnacraig. There was no support or care. Nobody ever checked on you if you were upset and crying. I don't remember anybody ever caring enough to come and check on me.

77. SGQ [REDACTED] was a horrible man. I believe he's dead now. He used to say rude and crude things to us. He would call the girls sluts and tramps and insinuate that some of us were prostitutes. He called me a "cock tease". He used to say to me that I would never amount to anything and that I would end up having six kids and go through the prison system. We were young, vulnerable girls and he made us feel useless and worthless.
78. It's only now when I look back that I realise SGQ [REDACTED] tried to groom me. He would take a group of us into his study and ask us to sit on his knee. Some of the girls did sit on his knee. I don't remember their names. I don't know how far he took it with them. I never sat on SGQ [REDACTED]'s knee. I remember him trying to persuade me, saying, "Come on, I know you like older men". He made me feel bad about the choices I'd made before going into Balnacraig.
79. There was a fire in SGQ [REDACTED] study and he'd tell us to lift up our skirts up so that we could get a better heat. A male friend, called GYQ [REDACTED] I think, would be there sometimes as well, and he'd also ask us to sit on his knee. He was a creepy guy. I told SGQ [REDACTED] to "fuck off" one time when he was asking me to sit on his knee and I got banned from his study.
80. Some of the girls went on holiday to Spain with SGQ [REDACTED] and his wife. I got the feeling that something more than just sitting on his knee happened there. The girls were a bit different when they came back. They were quieter and subdued. They never said that anything had happened to them. They'd say that they'd had a great time and would show us their photos. You didn't question any of the girls, especially the Glaswegians. You'd get a smack in the jaw if you questioned them. I wasn't much of a talker anyway. Even in my bedroom, I'd just put my headphones on and listen to music.
81. SGQ [REDACTED] would take some of us for PE on a Thursday to a special school, the Glebe, in Scone. We only went there to use their gym hall. We'd go in the minibus. He didn't take all twenty-four of us, so I don't know how you got selected for this. Maybe he just took the girls who were on punishment. We'd play football and basketball and

then he'd say it was time for a game of "Murderball". He'd get a medicine ball and literally throw it at us and we'd land on our bums. Then he'd get us all to play Murderball. There were no rules in this game. We'd split into teams to get the ball from one corner to another. Everybody would be fighting, punching and kicking each other and he just stood there and watched us. He seemed to enjoy it.

82. SGQ [REDACTED] would punish us for running away and wasting police time, or if we were already on a lighter punishment and somebody did something else to annoy him, he'd separate us from the rest of the girls and lock us in the craft room.
83. The craft room was a concrete room at the back of the main building. I imagine it would have been the pantry back when the place was someone's house. He would keep us in there all day until bedtime, sometimes for two to three-week periods at a time. This happened to me loads of times. There could be three or more of us in the room at a time and we didn't always get on with each other. There would be bitching, arguing and fighting. We'd eat our breakfast, lunch and tea in there. We wore a tracksuit and slippers. We weren't allowed to wear our trainers in case we ran away. At night, we got taken upstairs to a small room, right next door to the "Night Supie", and we slept in there on thin mattresses on the floor.
84. We had to sit at tables in the craft room during the day and read Shakespeare books. SGQ [REDACTED] would come into the room and we had to stand up with our backs to him, because according to him we were horrible and no good to society and he was ashamed to look at us. He'd then ask us to tell him a word from the book. The kind of question he'd ask was along the lines of, 'What's the 18th word on line 4 of page 12?'. You didn't get to look at the book. He was taking the piss just so he could punish us.
85. When you got the word wrong, he'd drag you out of the room by the neck or hair and punch you in the ribs. He was behind you so you didn't know what he was going to do, whether he was going to grab you or one of the other girls. Grabbing you by the neck was a favourite of his. I can still feel him on my neck now. He'd grab you by the

wrist as well and squeeze it. He must have known exactly how to hold your wrist as it never left any bruises.

86. We didn't get any education when we were in isolation in the craft room. We only had the Shakespeare books to read. Sometimes one of the teachers brought us in magazines to read. I don't remember her name. [SGQ] wouldn't be around at the weekend, so it was up to the members of staff to keep the punishment going. It was a bit more relaxed then as at least we knew that he wasn't going to turn up and assault us. We didn't go outside at all when we were in this room. We were on twenty-four hour supervision and we didn't go anywhere other than the craft room and the small room where we slept.
87. I still have scars on my left arm where [SGQ] took layers of my skin off removing tattoos. He did this to me and one other girl, [REDACTED]. I think there might have been a third girl, [REDACTED] but I can't be certain. We had used ink from a biro to do homemade tattoos on our arms. I don't know how [SGQ] found out. He got a hold of my arm and scrubbed it with a wire brush. I have no idea what the brush was normally used for. It had a handle about six inches long, and the brush part was about six inches as well. I was crying and screaming, and the blood was pouring out of my arm but he held onto my wrist and kept scrubbing. He then poured New Skin liquid on my arm which stung like hell. He did the same to [REDACTED]. I am sure Miss [GHF] was there at the time.
88. Miss [GHF] was a bit cheeky and used to wind us up as well. She'd say to the girls who were a bit overweight that they shouldn't be having seconds because they were fat enough. She shouldn't have been saying that sort of thing to vulnerable teenage girls. She'd be rough with us as well. She'd grab us and pull us into our rooms. I think this was more her way of trying to control us rather than any intention to hurt us.
89. I think the other staff knew what was going on. Some of them maybe knew more than others. But they all went along with the isolation punishment in the craft room, because they supervised it when [SGQ] wasn't around. They should have reported

it or at least had something to say about us not getting any education when we were in there.

90. I got taken back to Balnacraig in a police van after running away one time and was assaulted by Mr ^{GHG} when I arrived back. He grabbed me by the throat and pulled me out of the van and then pushed me into the main building. The police and staff members would have seen this but must have thought it was okay because they said and did nothing. I ending up lashing out and kicking ^{GHG}
91. It's only later on in life that you can actually admit to yourself what actually happened in Balnacraig. For years I just thought that I gave as good as I got, because I hit back when I got hit, and I didn't really think that it had been abuse because I had also been physical. That's the result of constantly being belittled. It leads you to believe that you are useless and worthless, that your life doesn't matter.

Leaving Balnacraig

92. The year before I left they gave me a three-week trial at home. I went home for the summer holiday break and my trial was to start immediately after that, but my mum sent me back to school and my trial never actually started.
93. I turned sixteen on [REDACTED] 1985 and I went to my last children's panel on [REDACTED] 1985. Mr ^{GHG} came with me. I remember the panel saying I was to go back to Balnacraig and they would review it again when I turned eighteen. Mr ^{GHG} told them that there was nothing more they could do for me at Balnacraig and the panel then decided that I should go back to my mother's.

Life after being in care

94. I don't think I was well enough prepared for coming out of the school and back into society. I came home on [REDACTED] 1985 and by [REDACTED] 1985, my mother

had handed me a fiver and told me to bugger off. I went to my brother's and that didn't work out either. I saw an advert in a shop for a bedsit and I knew some people that lived there, so I rented a room and moved in there. My rent was paid by benefits. I had no help at all to go into the big, bad world. Within three months of leaving Balnacraig, I was on my own in a bedsit.

95. I met the man who would become my husband and I moved into a flat with him when I was seventeen. He was twenty-three, so that was another big age difference. We married when I was nineteen. He had kids and I brought them up. The marriage had had its good and bad points. We argued a lot. I think looking back on it, a lot of our problems were down to me and the life I'd had, and the mental health problems I had. I think I was close to a few nervous breakdowns when I was married.
96. I was in the marriage until I was twenty-seven. My mum died in 1995 and that's when our marriage totally broke down. Nothing prepares you for the death of a parent. My mum dying gave me the nerve to walk away from my marriage and to try and get my life sorted out.
97. I was homeless and slept in a car for a while when the marriage ended. Then I got a flat in the multi storeys in Dundee. I moved another couple of times and met a man and went to live with him abroad. That didn't work out either. I came back to live in Forfar and had a nervous breakdown and ended up in hospital at the end of 2001. I met the man I live with now in 2003 and I moved down to England to be with him.
98. I've always had issues with my mental health, but mostly I've been able to keep on top of things enough to hold down jobs. I've dabbled in a lot of things. I've worked in retail and snack bars, done factory work as a machinist, worked in a bingo hall, and I've run my own cleaning and food businesses. I work in merchandising now.

Impact

99. I had a nervous breakdown in 2001 because I moved into a house near to the town where one of the men who raped me lived. I was having flashbacks and that's when I started to realise what had happened to me. I spoke to my doctor about it and was referred to Sunnyside Royal Hospital for counselling and therapy. They wanted me to go into hospital but I refused, so they agreed I could just attend every day for treatment. I wanted to find [REDACTED] to talk to her about what had happened to us in that shed, but my doctor told me not to approach her in case she had blocked it out. I met [REDACTED], who had been in the children's home in Forfar with me, in Sunnyside. I don't know why she was there. We were shocked to see each other. It was like we had come full circle.
100. I have been diagnosed with PTSD and suffer from anxiety. I was on Valium, antidepressants and sleeping tablets for years. I've made attempts to take my own life. I've overdosed and self-harmed. Having my son has stopped me from taking my own life because I realised that I had to be here for him. I've used alcohol and cannabis, but I've not taken any hard drugs. I am not on any prescribed medication now. I've been taken off everything since I came down to live in England. I've had no mental health help down here. I've even been told to return to Scotland where they have a better mental health team. They cut me off my benefits and didn't renew my Disability Living Allowance or Incapacity Benefit that I'd been on for years.
101. I feel like life has been always been a struggle. It's a struggle every day to get to work, it's a struggle to stop having flashbacks and get to sleep, and I feel that it's a struggle just to keep myself safe. I try to appear stronger than I am. I've always laughed everything off, making a joke of things that have happened to me. I warn kids off getting tattoos, show them my arm and make a joke of it. It's not funny but that's the way I normally deal with things. It's easier just to smile and say that I'm okay, especially down here because nobody knows me or knows anything about my childhood.

102. I think I work a lot of hours just to try and stop myself from thinking. Not only do I think back to my time in care, but I also do a lot of thinking about how to cope with it now, how to get perspective. I have tried to put it away in a box but it still comes back. I don't know if there's any treatment or support that I could get now that would help. I don't like dragging it all up because I feel like I'm just a greeting-faced little bitch at times. At the end of the day, I'll be dead soon and I need to grow a backbone and get on with life. I don't want to dwell on the past.
103. I've tried self-hypnosis, tapping and cognitive therapy, but I don't keep at them. I don't like routine because of my time in care. I don't like being told where to be. I even hate being told by work that something needs to be done by a particular time. I know things need to be done within a specified timescale, but I like to be able to decide when I'll do it. I need to be in control.
104. I can't do relationships very well. The relationship I'm in now is not very good. I've been here a long time but I haven't fully unpacked all my stuff. I could leave any time. I am not able to give 100% to relationships because the people I have trusted in the past have always let me down. I put up a wall and don't let people get close to me. I am not close to anybody. Even my son's not close. We have a good relationship but because he's on the autistic spectrum, he doesn't like being touched. I would like to think that I am loving and I can give people a bit of empathy but I am not affectionate. I think I like dogs more than humans.
105. The constant belittling in Balnacraig led me to believe that I was useless and worthless, that my life didn't matter. I thought I was promiscuous because I was always being told that I was. You stop believing in yourself and it seriously messes with your mental health when you're constantly put down. I can't accept compliments now. I would be embarrassed if someone were to praise me. I don't think I was ever told that I was good at something when I was young. I was told that I was horrible, thick, illiterate and not good at anything when I was in Balnacraig.
106. The lack of education in both primary and secondary school has probably held me back. I went through my primary school years in a daze when I was in the Forfar

children's home. Then when I went to secondary school, I didn't have good communication skills to help me to mix or talk to people. I think I could have achieved more at school if it had been recognised that I needed proper support to help me to deal with the things that had happened to me. As an adult, I managed to do Highers and get a 'B' for a chef course I completed, so I know I was capable of achieving a lot more.

Records/Reporting of abuse

107. I went to the social work office to read my records from the children's home in Forfar. I think this was when I was still married. I wanted to see the full story of my mum. I knew that she had stabbed my dad but I didn't know all the ins and outs. Basically, they wouldn't let me take anything away to read and told me that I could only read the bits in the records that had my name on them. I didn't get anything out of it at all. I read a bit and then got too upset and left. I've never applied to get a copy of my records. It's easier just to bury your head.
108. I have never reported the abuse I experienced to social services or the police.

Lessons to be learned

109. I have come to speak to the Inquiry not just because I need closure, but because it might help some of the other girls who were in Balnacraig with me and also the young people that are coming up through the system now. I hope that I can now get peace and closure and that my experiences in care do not continue to interfere with the rest of my life.
110. I think the people who work in children's homes need to be vetted and properly qualified to care for vulnerable young people. In Balnacraig, I stopped believing in myself because I was always being put down. The people in these positions should be capable of understanding the effect their words have on vulnerable young people.

There also needs to be a system of supervision so that the staff in care homes are monitored and can't get away with treating young people badly.

111. 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...12/11/19:.....