

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HHU

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HHU. My date of birth is 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. My family home was in the Powis area of Aberdeen. There were seven children in the family. My mother had four children from a previous marriage. She and my dad had two children together and then lost a child to stillbirth. My mother was advised not to have any more children after that but went on to have me a year later.
3. My mother had a mental breakdown after I was born and she and I went into a mental hospital.
4. I've been told that when we came back home I misbehaved at primary school and they couldn't handle me. I was a bit of a rogue. I was then sent to school in a sick children's hospital near Westburn Park in Aberdeen. I was still only in Primary one at the time. The day school was in ward seven. I think I was seen by a psychiatrist there. I remember them saying I was hyper. At first I went daily to the hospital but then began living there.
5. I got moved from the hospital to a children's home called Seafeld Cottage. For some reason, I got moved about a lot when I was young and it's hard to remember much about it. I'm not very clear on dates.

6. I carried on going to school at ward seven when I was at Seafield Cottage. I also remember that I went to Walker Dam Primary School for a while but my education was way behind. I was also in Craiglea Children's Home at one point and it had its own school. All of these homes were in Aberdeen.
7. My brothers used to take me out sometimes at weekends when I was in the homes in Aberdeen. They took me swimming and to see my mum and dad.
8. I was the only one of seven children in my family who went in to care. I was classed by social services as being under 'voluntary care'.
9. In about 1971, I was taken out of Seafield Cottage and moved to another children's home called Orchardton House in Kircudbright.
10. I was in several institutions when I was a child. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Brimmond Assessment Centre were bad.

Orchardton House, Kircudbright

11. I don't know why I was moved from Seafield Cottage, I just remember leaving there and moving down. I think they couldn't get anywhere in Aberdeen to take me. I was a bit of a hyper kid; I think that was because of my mother.

12. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
13. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Contact with social services

30. My first social worker was Mr Mathieson. He was brilliant. He used to come to see me every week when I was in Aberdeen. When I moved to Orchardton, he came down about once a month but he retired and then I got Isobel Dewar. She came down to tell me she was my new social worker and I never saw her again until the day I left Orchardton.

31. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

32. About one month later, Isobel Dewar appeared and said I was getting moved back to Aberdeen. I presume my letter got to her, although she never replied back to me or spoke to me about it.

Brimmond Assessment Centre, Bucksburn, Aberdeen – first time

33. I remember being taken to Brimmond by Isobel Dewar. I don't remember when it was. She didn't explain to me where I was going or ask me about my time in Orchardton. I only remember her saying that I was moving back to be closer to my mum and dad.
34. It was dark when I got there and I was put straight to bed. Isobel Dewar just passed me over and never came back to see how I was getting on. Secondary Inst
Secondary Institutions - to be published later
35. Brimmond was in Bucksburn in Aberdeen. It was an assessment centre for young people who had done something wrong. It was specially built as an assessment centre and had a cell with a bed in it, like you see in a police station.
36. Young people were sent there by children's panels for assessment. The assessment would usually take about three months and then they'd go back to the panel and be sent on somewhere else, like a List D school.
37. I didn't know what kind of place I'd been put into. I remember waking up the first morning and thinking to myself that I would get up and go out to play. I thought it was just another children's home. I then found out that we were locked in. There were locks on the doors and windows.
38. The place was meant to be [REDACTED] Mr and Mrs ERL-ERM but you rarely saw Mr ERM. Mrs ERL was called Matron. She took to do with the girls, although we did see her at times. The place was [REDACTED] a bloke called KEF. He was the bad one.

Routine

39. I don't remember how many kids were there. There were boys and girls, all aged about fourteen to sixteen. I was still a primary-age child and was the youngest there. We sometimes mixed with the girls, but they were mainly kept in a separate part. We slept in dormitories.
40. You got up in the morning, made your bed and then swept up the bedroom floor with a dustpan and brush. You didn't get to use a Hoover. We then went down for breakfast in the dining hall. We walked in size order, smallest at the front.
41. ^{KEF} made you stand at your chair and wait until he told you to sit down. You had to pick up your chair and sit down without making a noise. Once you sat down, he would stand at a radiator while you ate. The first thing he said every morning was "Who's the one who's going to piss me off today?" Those were his first words every day. That was to put the fear in you. He was always looking for a reason, such as talking, to give you a hiding.
42. We wore a uniform, which was jeans and a brown jumper with a stripe. When we went out walking we wore tackety boots, which were like army boots, and a parka. We used to go walking up Brimmond hill.
43. Brimmond had its own gym but sometimes we went down to the Beacon gym in Bucksburn on a Friday. They would make us all run down there in shorts and trainers. Maybe it was for our own good to keep us fit, but it was embarrassing as everyone knew we were the Brimmond boys.
44. I don't remember seeing any medical staff or psychologists and I'm not aware of any of the others getting visits from them. I don't know how the others were assessed, maybe it was just their behaviour. They must have been getting assessed as they were there for three months at a time and then went back to a children's panel. There must have been some kind of paperwork which went back to the panel.

45. I wasn't assessed and didn't go through the same process as the others. They kept me there like it was a normal children's home. There was no one else in there like me; the rest of them were crooks. I shouldn't have been put in there. I hadn't done anything wrong and hadn't been to a children's panel.

Education

46. I didn't attend school when I was in Brimmond. There was no teaching at all in the place. They knew I couldn't read or write. I never heard from the education department. They must have assumed that I was getting educated there. I think there had been teachers at one point, but it would have been pointless as everybody, except for me, moved on after about three months anyway.

Abuse by KEF

47. KEF battered us about like we were rag dolls. He'd kick you, pick you up and throw you about and really lay into you. I think the first time he battered me was only about two or three days after I got there.

48. He kept himself very fit. He boasted about being ex-SAS. He wasn't that tall but was well-built. You could see he was fit. He didn't need to use anything other than his hands and feet when he battered you.

49. The hidings happened to someone every day, except for a Thursday which we called 'mad Thursday' because that was his day off. We thought we could get away with things that day because he wasn't there, but it always turned on us as the staff would tell him what we'd done and one of us would get a hiding the next day. We still used to do it though, we were like dafties not thinking it would get back to him.

50. He got very angry if our football team lost and he'd batter the person he blamed for playing badly. He would always be the bowler when we played rounders and

he used a proper cricket ball so that you got hit hard if you didn't manage to bat the ball. He was a big bully.

51. I remember a boy coming in called [REDACTED]. He became a pal of mine who I glue sniffed with later on. He was just in the door five minutes when KEF [REDACTED] headbutted him and knocked him unconscious. I think he did that because [REDACTED] was about six feet tall and KEF [REDACTED] wanted to prove a point to him; he wanted to let [REDACTED] know he was not to be messed with. [REDACTED] was left lying in the stairwell with his face all bloody. We had to walk past him to get our cup of tea before we went to bed. Nobody stood by him to watch him. I asked him the next day what it was all about and he said he hadn't done anything.

52. He used to creep up and down the hall at night when we were in our beds. If you got caught speaking, he would make you get up and use a toothbrush to clean the white bit between the tiles in the toilet until he decided to come back and tell you to go back to bed. You could be doing it for hours. That happened all the time; it seemed as if there was always someone doing it. I did it loads of times.

53. You couldn't go to Mrs ERL [REDACTED] to report anything. I think she was having a relationship with KEF [REDACTED]. His room was in the middle of the hall where we were and I used to see her going in at night. I slept quite close to it at one point and I could hear them together.

Abuse by other staff

54. Mr ERM [REDACTED] spent most of the time in his office, which was at the entrance of the place. If he did come into the dining hall for some reason, he used to hit the first person he saw on the head with his keys. They didn't have to be doing anything. It's just a thing he always did. You knew you couldn't go to him and report anything.

55. There was another staff member called Mr GJO [REDACTED], who I always thought was one of the nicer ones until he gave me a hiding. We were all out one day on

one of our walks and made a plan to run away. I was the youngest so I was told to go first and the others would follow. I ran off and when I looked back they were all just standing laughing. Mr GJO caught up with me and took me to the cell where he gave me an awful hiding. I was shocked. I had to bide in the cell for a couple of weeks for the bruising to go away. I think he was panicking after that when he realised what he'd done. He went well over the top. I think I should have been taken to the hospital. I was made to wear just shorts and sandals for a while when I came out to make sure I didn't run away again.

56. Mrs ERL used to come into the showers and offer to put shampoo in the boys' hair. That wasn't right. It was okay for me as I was only young, but the other boys were much older than me. I was told stories that she'd slept with some of the fifteen and sixteen year olds, but I don't know if it's true. They also talked about having put their tongues in her mouth when giving her a goodnight kiss. No one tried to touch me inappropriately.

Contact with family/Reporting abuse

57. My dad got in contact with me a few times when I was in Brimmond. It depended where he was staying whether he got in touch. He took me to a Scotland football game one time and because we got back late, he phoned up Brimmond to let them know I would stay with my family for the night and come back the next day. He was told to send me back, even if I had to walk. I started crying and told my family I was scared I would get a hiding when I got back. Mrs ERL and her son came to collect me in a white van. My brother, [REDACTED], got a hold of the son by the throat and told them he would go to the police if there was a mark on me. They denied that I'd been getting hidings. It was easy for them to do that because KEF wasn't with them.

58. When I got back to Brimmond, KEF was sitting at the door and Mrs ERL took him aside to speak to him. I was then sent to my bed. I believe I would've got a hiding if [REDACTED] hadn't spoken to them. My father came up the next day to make sure I hadn't been touched. He didn't follow it up though. He

only spoke to the people in Brimmond. He didn't get in touch with the police or social services; that's what he should've done.

59. The people in Brimmond always made sure they covered themselves anyway. They would have made us out to be liars. It was an assessment centre so they could treat the boys a certain way because they were bad boys. It was like a young offenders' institution.

60. Also, in that day and age the police used to give out hidings as well so you couldn't trust them.

Contact with social services

61. I was in Brimmond for one and half to two years and didn't see my social worker, Isobel Dewar again after she dropped me off.

62. I was then sent to Coblehaugh Children's Home and I think they did that so that I could get an education.

Coblehaugh Children's Home, Inverurie

63. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

64. I spent about one and a half years in Coblehaugh. Secondary Institutions - to be published la

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74. A decision was then made to send me back to Brimmond. Secondary Institutions - to be p

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Brimmond Assessment Centre – second time

76. I think I was thirteen when I went back to Brimmond.

77. I was put in the cell for the first week when I went back in. No one came to ask me about running away. There was really nobody I could speak to and explain why I had run away.

78. Life in Brimmond the second time was the same as the first. I got hidings from KEF [REDACTED] and didn't go to school or get any education.

79. I remember once being battered by KEF [REDACTED] so badly that I was kept in the cell for two weeks with just a pair of shorts on. I was black and blue. I think it was so bad because I was a bit older at that point and had retaliated.

Contact with social services

80. The social worker just disappeared. I knew she was still meant to be my social worker, but I had no way of getting in touch with her. I kept asking the people who ran Brimmond to get my social worker to come to see me. I don't know if they passed the message on to social services.

Life after Brimmond Assessment Centre

81. I moved out of Brimmond on [REDACTED] 1979 and went into a boys' hostel in Dyce. My social worker probably knew that I had moved out of Brimmond, but I didn't see her when I was moving.

82. The person [REDACTED] of the hostel, Mr GJQ [REDACTED], had worked at Brimmond and [REDACTED] it much the same way, although there was no violence from him there. I think Brimmond should have got me into a flat rather than a hostel. I was sixteen, was working and needed somewhere just to bide rather than being told what to do and given jobs to do in a hostel.
83. I also had to hand in most of my wages to the hostel. I was left with £6 a week. I was working at Grandholm Mill at the time. I was so desperate to get out of the hostel that I kept trying to get the sack so that I wouldn't be able to pay my way and they'd throw me out.
84. I moved in with a boy from work and his family, who lived in the area my family was from. I'm not sure that that was a good thing as it was a rough area and I got into glue sniffing. I felt good and comfortable at the time though, as I went around with my brother's mates and they treated me okay. My brother had moved on by that point and I felt that I had taken his place. I was sixteen and still under voluntary care, which lasted until I was eighteen.
85. I ended up sleeping rough for years and at one point slept in an old car, with about six other people who were also glue sniffing. I used to go to the social worker when I was on the glue and had problems. She would help me out with money or get me into a B & B, where you were allowed to sleep at night but got put out during the day.
86. I phoned my mum one time when I was sleeping in the car to ask if I could sleep in her spare room when the snow was really deep. She said no and put the phone down on me.
87. I used to get arrested when I was glue sniffing and got battered sometimes by the police. They would put me on the floor in the back of the old Black Marias and stand and stamp on me. I remember being taken to the Lodge Walk police station where I was put in a cell, stripped of my clothes, hosed down and left

there without a mattress until the next day. That happened to me three times. I was sixteen at the time. I don't remember the names of any of the coppers.

88. One time when I was being charged after I had been battered by the police, I said to the sergeant, "I hope you'll be charging him as well for assaulting me". The sergeant headbutted me and said "Who assaulted who?" I took that to mean that I would get done for assault if I didn't shut up. I was shocked as the sergeants used to be not too bad with me because they knew me and knew I was addicted to glue.

89. There were some decent coppers who used to leave the cell door open for me or take me to Seafeld Cottage for a couple of days. They knew that I was still under voluntary care.

90. I had a relationship with a girl and we had a daughter when we were both young. We lived in a bedsit. I wasn't ready to settle down and we agreed she should go back to live with the bairn at her mother's.

91. I took a lot of speed and ecstasy in the 1980s and spent time in a mental hospital.

92. I was in and out of prison until I was twenty three years old. I then made a decision that I wasn't going back. I got married and had a daughter with my wife. I think I got married in an attempt to start changing my life; that was the wrong reason. I settled down and got a job offshore, which I wouldn't have done if I hadn't got married. I was married for about eight years.

Impact of experience

93. My marriage didn't survive because of my upbringing. I didn't trust my wife. I told her about my experiences but I don't think she understood. I wanted to make sure that I showed my bairn I loved her, because I didn't get any love, and I did do that. It was the wife part that I didn't want; I couldn't take her telling me what

to do because I had been told what to do all my life. That's why I love biding on my own.

94. I got into drugs really hard when my marriage ended. I used drugs to block everything out. I injected heroin and have barely got any undamaged veins left in my body. I've got an artificial vein in my leg and have had a toe amputated.

95. I feel that I was let down in my life and maybe wouldn't have turned out to be a junkie if I had been treated better.

96. My wife married someone who was in the army and took my daughter to Germany to live for a lot of years without even telling me. I was trying to find her to get some sort of regular arrangement for contact in place but didn't know where she was. I think my wife probably poisoned her against me then.

97. I've never been properly educated. I can't read. I've educated myself most of my life.

98. Sometimes I can still smell KEF aftershave and roll-up cigarettes. He wore Old Spice and used liquorice rolling papers and the scent of these comes to me – it's like it's in my head. I was in Brimmond for a good few years and I was living in fear of him every day so I suppose it could be like a flashback; it's weird. I've also had nightmares about it.

99. I can't come into town drinking as I always look for a fight. It's always the police or bouncers I pick a fight with, or somebody to do with authority. I feel like the authorities let me down. It's stupid. I regret it the next day, especially if I wake up in the cells.

Current life

100. I'm staying with a pal just now in Aberdeen because my house in Carlisle got flooded.

101. I feel as if I'm always looking for something, like love because I never had it. My mate cracks up with me because I just bide in my room with my dog. The only things I do now are take my dog out and go to places I have to go to. I just hibernate.

102. For some reason I can't get close to my family. I try, but they won't let me get close to them. I don't feel comfortable visiting them. We've never been a family that shows love. I went out drinking with my mother years ago and when she got drunk, she gave me a cuddle and told me she loved me. That's the only time she's done that.

103. My dad is dead. He was okay with me before he died. I stayed with him when I first separated from my wife.

104. I have a good mate called [REDACTED]. His family treats me like one of their own. They tell each other how they feel and show affection. That's the kind of family I would've loved to have had.

105. I don't have contact now with either of my daughters or my grandchildren. People used to say to me that my youngest daughter would come looking for me when she got to about thirteen years old, but what actually happened then was that the social worker appeared and said that she wanted to be adopted. I went to court to argue against it at first, but the judge wanted my daughter to be brought to court for the next hearing and I decided the best thing to do for her was sign the papers and not have her dragged through court. She'll either hate me for giving her up or she'll understand that I did it for her.

106. I'm getting support for my drug addiction. I've done well. I haven't touched drugs since I came back from Carlisle to Aberdeen at the end of last year.

107. I don't get any support for what I went through in care. I didn't know you could get help for that. I didn't know there was anywhere you could go to for help until I saw information on the Inquiry on the news.

108. I've always said to my doctor that I should maybe see a psychiatrist or someone like that, but he just keeps giving me tablets. I'm on anti-psychotic and anti-depressant tablets.

109. The best tablet which makes me feel good is Valium, but I have to buy it off the street as doctors don't give it to you now. I took two before I came out today. I only take two a day. I take it to calm me down and make me feel good. I've always been pretty hyper. I don't take it to get high. Taking it allows me to do normal stuff like come into town. I find it hard to do that. I get bad paranoia. I don't think it's an addiction because I can't always get it and I can handle that.

Records

110. My drugs key worker in Carlisle helped me to get a copy of my records from Aberdeen social services. My cousin tried to read them to me, but it was difficult to make sense of them as there were more blank bits than writing and they were all muddled. I was told that they had to be blanked out because other people's names were included. I don't understand that; surely I'm entitled to see the names if they were involved with me.

111. I thought my records would include details of what I'd done during the day in the children's homes. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I was really looking for

[Secondary Institutions - to be published later] Brimmond. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

[Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I also wanted to see if there was any paperwork on assessments at Brimmond. As far as I know, they didn't assess me but it was meant to be an assessment centre so there should have been some sort of paperwork.

112. I don't have the records now as they got lost when my house was flooded.

Final thoughts

113. I feel that I slipped through the system. I was put into Brimmond and just left there. I don't understand why nobody in social services questioned why I was there for so long, or more to the point why I was there at all. It's the same as putting someone who didn't commit a crime into prison. I would really like Isobel Dewar or someone from social services to explain why I was abandoned in Brimmond.

114. I've wanted to do something about what I went through for years but I've never been in the right frame of mind because of the drugs. I've never reported the abuse to the police.

115. I think things have changed a lot in children's home. I visited someone in the 1990s in Oakbank Children's Home and was very surprised at how well the young people were treated. They weren't allowed to hit them anymore. It looked to me that things had definitely changed for the better. I think a lot of lessons have been learned.

116. 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.. 21.12.16