

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of GVF [REDACTED]

GVF [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes, [REDACTED] (of Open Secret).

1. My name is GVF [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1957. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was married but I am now separated. I have two daughters. They are now grown up. My own parents have passed away. My mum's name was [REDACTED]. My dad's name was [REDACTED]. I have three brothers and one sister. I am the oldest. Then it is my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Then it is my sister [REDACTED]. My youngest sibling is called [REDACTED].

Life before care

3. Life before I went into care was a struggle. My mother and father stayed in a place near Kilmarnock called [REDACTED]. I remember my father couldn't pay the rent. When I was about six one of my aunties came to get me from school. We went to the house and all the furniture was sitting outside. My parents separated at that point.
4. We went to stay at my maternal grandmother's house. After that I was taken to my paternal grandmother's in Bonnyton in Kilmarnock. I stayed there with my dad for

two years. That's when my mother and father got back together. We then all moved to Longpark in Kilmarnock. Longpark was the pits. It was rough and ready.

5. I went on and off to the Grange Academy for secondary school when we lived at Longpark. I had a hard time when I went to school there. That was because I had come from another area. I suffered a lot of bullying. I had to try and defend myself when people were fighting me.
6. [REDACTED] at the Grange Academy was Mr [REDACTED]. I got beatings from him in his office whilst I was at the school. It happened on more than one occasion before I went into care. For whatever reason Mr [REDACTED] just didn't like me. He would tell me that I was "worthless" and "nothing". He wasn't a nice man. You were supposed to get given the belt on your hands but he would hit you wherever. I remember one time he beat me with a belt on my buttocks, back and shoulder over the top of my clothes in front of two policemen. The policemen were there to arrest me for something. The policemen were called Mr Sherry and Mr Gordon. They didn't react at all. They just took me away to the police station in Kilmarnock.
7. I would say that I was about ten or eleven when I started to go off the rails. I would stay out and commit crime. When I think about it now I was doing stupid things. In 1971 I was supposed to have committed something like forty eight or forty nine charges in one day. I was fourteen years old. I was taken to my first children's panel because of that and not going to school. I can't remember whether I was taken to the panel from school or from my parent's house. All I remember is the police being there.
8. I remember the first panel hearing. It was held on Grange Street in Kilmarnock. I think that was the first time that social work got involved. My father attended the hearing.
9. The first time I actually remember getting sent to Kirkland Park was by the children's panel after the hearing in 1971. I was sent because of the charges and not going to school. I was sent there for assessment for three or four weeks. I had to go there

for that time before being sent back for a second panel hearing. After those three or four weeks I was sent to Thornly Park. I stayed there for about four to five months. After that I returned to Kirkland Park for another three or four weeks before I went home to my parents.

10. There is a period of my life in 1970 where I don't know where I was. I remember being given a colouring in book and a couple of pens for either a Christmas present or a birthday present. The presents weren't from anyone in my family. I think the place may have been Kirkland Park but I really can't remember. It could have been somewhere else.

Kirkland Park, Darvel, Ayrshire (the first time)

11. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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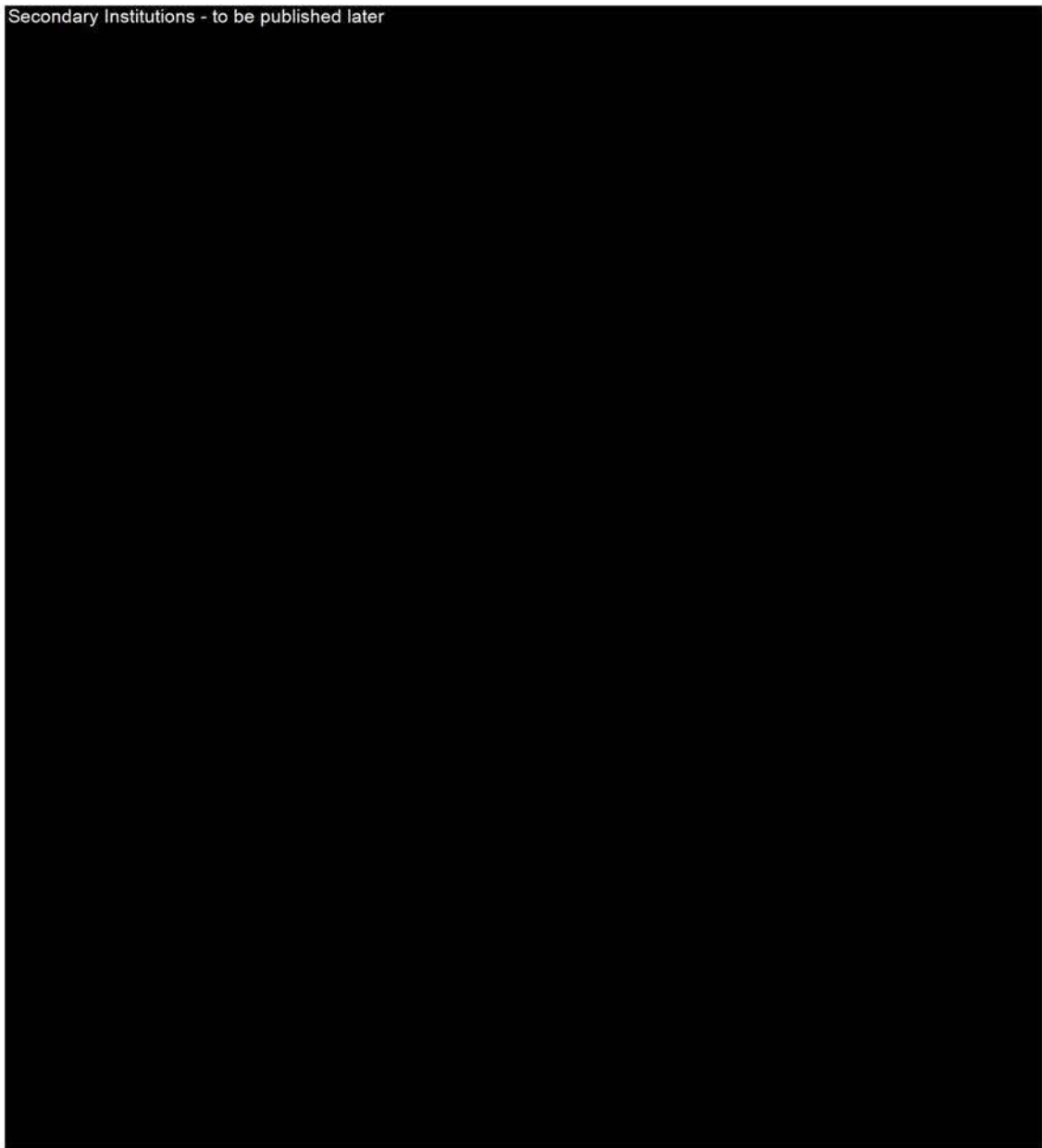
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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Leaving Kirkland Park (the first time)

43. Mr Boyle was my probation officer and social worker from when I was first at Kirkland Park to when I left school at the age of fifteen. I must have first met him at Kirkland Park. I hadn't known him long. He took me up to my second children's panel hearing. I think my dad was at that hearing. I think that it was Mr Boyle's recommendation that I should be sent to Thornly Park but I am not sure. The panel ultimately decided to send me to a residential place in Thornly Park. Mr Boyle and

my dad then took me to Thornly Park. I was sent there in 1971. I was in there for about four to five months.

Thornly Park Approved School, Paisley, Renfrewshire

44. Thornly Park was an approved residential school for boys. It was located between Paisley and Barrhead. It was twenty odd miles away from my home in Kilmarnock. It was another big house up a big drive. It was way out from the main road. There was a gatehouse at one end of the drive. The main house was massive. There were a lot of grounds around it. I don't know who ran the place. It could have been the Council. There were maybe ninety to one hundred boys there. I think it held boys from the ages of thirteen or fourteen up to sixteen years old.
45. The place was open. There was a football park and a vegetable plot. You could get out of the building into the grounds and further if you liked. There were no bars or fences around the grounds.

Staff

46. There was a lot of staff there. The staff were mostly male. I think the staff wore suits. I don't remember any of the staff members' names. There was a high turnover of staff at Thornly Park. You would see staff members for a week and then they were off. You wouldn't see them again. There were two schools in Paisley. One of them was called Geilsland. Some of the staff used to come up from there to work at Thornly Park. I don't know how that worked.
47. Mr ^{GNG} [REDACTED] was ^{SNR} [REDACTED] He would have been in his forties. There was also a matron there. I don't remember the matron's name. She would have been in her thirties or forties. She dealt with medical things.

Arriving at Thornly Park

48. When I arrived I was taken to a big white tiled room which had baths in it. I was then covered in this bleach stuff. The matron then scrubbed me with a scrubbing brush. I then had all of my hair shaved off. I was then taken to a big dorm with ten or twenty boys in it.

Routine at Thornly Park*Mornings, daytime and bedtime*

49. You got up at about 6:00am to 6:30am. The staff would shout at you and kick you to get you up. After you got up you had to have a shower. You all got put into groups after that and went to school or work. At night you were locked into your dorm. If you needed to go to the toilet there were people on duty at night. You would have to chap the door to get out at night for the toilet.
50. There were more than twenty boys in each of the dorms. I was only in one dorm during my time there. I think there were mixed ages in the dorms but I can't remember. It was all single metal beds. I remember the smell of the starched sheets. There were no chest of drawers or wardrobes. You had a chair.

School and work

51. At the back of the house were wooden huts where you went to school. There would be about twenty or thirty in each class. You had to go. You went for two or three hours. They taught you basic things like spelling, reading and writing. I just looked out the window during the classes. I think there was a joinery class but I didn't go. I went to the gardens. I was in the garden squad. I liked planting things. I can't remember whether we got paid for our work.

Uniform and clothes

52. Your own clothes were taken from you and put away when you arrived. You didn't have your own clothes. There was a uniform you had to wear. It was grey trousers and a grey jacket. I think you had a blue or red striped rugby shirt. You also wore boots and their underwear. You had to fold your school clothes at night and put them on your chair. When you went home for the weekend they gave you one of their suits. They were grey or green. The clothes were washed in a big laundry maybe twice a week.

Home leave / visits

53. I was in Thornly Park for six weeks before I got any home leave. You got out on a Friday and went back on a Sunday. I think I got another opportunity to visit home later on. I didn't go back after that one. I can't recall what happened.
54. My mother and my auntie visited. It might have been a Sunday in October when they visited. I think it was October because there was snow. My father also visited but I didn't see him because they said I had the mumps.

Leisure time

55. I remember there was a shared pool and a telly. There were books available to read. We had a football pitch. I think we mostly played football amongst ourselves. I vaguely remember there being another school that came to play us. I went to the army cadets in Barrhead. I went there on a Thursday night. I quite liked that. There were two or three of us who went down in an old minibus.

Birthdays

56. I did have not a birthday in Thornly Park.

Religious instruction

57. You went to the Salvation Army church in Paisley on a Sunday. I went two or three times. It was optional. You went just because you wanted to get out. They took you in the old minibus. Between two and a dozen kids went down.

Medical care

58. The matron was available if you needed anything to do with healthcare. I tried to give her as wide a berth as possible. I think you got checked up once a fortnight or month. I don't know whether the matron was there all the time. If I had a cold or something I would avoid going to see her.

Abuse at Thornly Park

59. The abuse started on the first day when the matron scrubbed me with a scrubbing brush in the bath. She did sexual things to me. She touched me whilst I was in the bath.
60. On the third day I was there something happened. I don't know what it was. I think I might have been fighting. I was then taken to a room. I can't remember where the room was in the building. I don't know who it was who took me there but it was a couple of male staff members. I was beaten in the room. They beat me with their fists. I hated them so they had to fight me to make me do anything. I wouldn't lie down for them. I just wouldn't do it. They beat me until there was no fight left in me. They then sexually assaulted me. They made me perform oral sex and then they performed penetrative sex on me. Both the staff members did that.
61. One or two weeks after I arrived I tried to escape from Thornly Park. It was night time. I was caught before I even got out of the grounds. A member of staff who worked there caught me. I got given a beating because of that. I was also sexually abused. I was made to perform oral sex and suffered penetrative sex. I was then

isolated and put in a different part of the building from the other boys. I was locked in a room separate from everyone else. There was a bed but nothing else. You would be locked up in that room day and night until your injuries healed. The staff brought me my dinner.

62. I remember my dad came up to see me after this incident. It was a Saturday. He had travelled all the way up from Kilmarnock. He was told I had mumps by the staff. Because of that he didn't get in to see me. I didn't have the mumps. I was being kept away because I had a sore face from the beating. I had black eyes because the staff members had gone too far.
63. I did eventually escape later on. I was caught again though. I think I was taken back to Thornly Park by the police. It was the same scenario again. I was beaten and sexually assaulted. I was in Thornly Park for about four months. I think I tried to escape about five times.
64. The last time I escaped was on a Saturday. I heard that some of the Glasgow boys were going to abscond. I said that I would go with them. I went with them as far as Barrhead. I then got a bus to my auntie's house. My mother and father didn't know I was at my auntie's house at the time. I think it was arranged that if I handed myself in a quick panel hearing would be arranged.

Mr ^{GNG} [REDACTED]'s knowledge of the abuse

65. Mr ^{GNG} [REDACTED] knew about the abuse. I know he knew because he came into a room and saw things happening to me. I can't remember where the room was. He came into the room and saw two of the members of staff sexually assaulting me. I can't remember whether he said anything but I remember him walking back out of the room. That's the only occasion I can remember him seeing something happening. He never spoke to me about the incident.

Bullying

66. When I went into Thornly Park I was like the new kid on the block. There were boys in the home from Glasgow and Paisley. There weren't many Ayrshire boys in there. There was resentment right away between the boys from Glasgow and Paisley and the boys from Ayrshire. I had to fight them. They bullied me. I had to try and protect myself. I would fight back the best I could. You were always on your guard because the other boys bullied you. I remember the other kids used to spit in your dinner.
67. The staff didn't care about the bullying. They just laughed it off. They only became involved if it became serious. You couldn't concentrate. You had to have eyes on the back of your head.

Bed-wetting

68. I continued to have problems with bed-wetting. You would have to take all of your bedclothes down to the laundry. You would then get a slap or a punch, or whatever the case may be, from the staff. I think there were two or three other boys who wet the bed.

General discipline

69. You got the belt there. Mr ^{GNG} or [REDACTED] would give you it. I don't remember what Mr ^{GNG} [REDACTED] was called. The belt was given on your hands. You could also miss your home leave if you didn't behave. Mr ^{GNG} made the decision about that.

Reporting of abuse whilst in Thornly Park

70. There was boy called [REDACTED] He was from Irvine. He was wee. We became pals. I always took his side. We stuck up for each other. [REDACTED] is dead now. He died a couple of years back. He was murdered. He confided in me, whilst we were in

care, that things were happening to him during the time we were both in Thornly Park. He told me that the same things that happened to me by the staff happened to him. He said that the staff had physically and sexually abused him.

71. I couldn't have told anyone what was happening to me. I didn't know what I would say. I didn't know who I could go to. I couldn't go to tell my mum, dad, my aunties or my brothers. If I had told my father about the abuse I was suffering then I don't think he could have gone into the home and done anything about it. In the seventies they probably would have got the police on my dad.
72. I really do think my auntie knew something. I remember her questioning why I was running away all of the time and saying that I wasn't the same as I was. I think that came out in argument I overheard her having with someone. I was close to her. I really do think that she knew. She kept me hidden from the police when they visited looking for me. She put me next door.
73. Mr Boyle was also my social worker at Thornly Park. I saw him maybe once or twice. He saw me at the school. There was a staff member there whenever I saw Mr Boyle. I didn't like Mr Boyle. I didn't trust him. I don't know why I felt I couldn't tell him what was happening. There was just something about him.


Leaving Thornly Park

74. Towards the end of my time at Thornly Park I became determined not to go back. I would have preferred to die than to go back. I wanted away. It was hell. We never had a good upbringing at home but we were never physically battered. We were just shouted at. I think they arranged the third children's panel hearing for me after the last time I escaped.

Kirkland Park, Darvel, Ayrshire (the second time in care there)

75. The third children's panel hearing must have been in either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] 1971. I appeared at the hearing. They were either trying to get me a place in Kerelaw in Stevenston, Ayrshire or the place in Geilsland. I have since read in my records that someone at the hearing thought that I had wanted to go down to Kerelaw because I wanted to be with my pals. I had never said that. These things aren't true. I had no say in where I wanted to go.
76. I think that Thornly Park wanted to control me. I think, reading between the lines in my records, they wanted me back up at Thornly Park so that they could control me. I think they were scared what I might say. There were no places in Kerelaw or Geilsland so the outcome of the hearing was that I was sent back on remand to Kirkland Park for the second time.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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Leaving Kirkland Park (the second time)

79. I went to my fourth panel hearing after my second time in Kirkland Park. This was in December 1971. My dad and my mother were there. The people at the Panel were trying to get me into the place in Stevenston. However, my mother was able to persuade the panel to let me go home for Christmas and New Year.

Life after time in care

80. After the Christmas and new year I went back for a fifth panel hearing. That was in [REDACTED] 1972. The panel had called Mr [REDACTED] at the Grange Academy. I didn't get on with Mr [REDACTED]. He was reluctant to allow me to go back to the Grange Academy but he allowed me to go back. I was allowed to stay at home.
81. When I got that opportunity to go back to Grange Academy I didn't miss a day. I had to put on a mask when I went back. I made sure that I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't get into any trouble. I went in every day because I was terrified to go back to [REDACTED] Thornly Park.
82. Mr Boyle and the people on the panels must have known that there was something wrong when I went back to the Grange Academy. They must have wondered why I had turned from a rebellious kid to a kid who went in every day to school. I always wonder why nobody picked up on that.
83. I left school when I turned fifteen. That was in the summer of 1972. My mother worked in [REDACTED] at the time. It was a [REDACTED] on the High Street in Kilmarnock. My mother got me a job there on the Monday after I left school. I lasted six or seven weeks. Then I went to [REDACTED]. They made toilets and things like that. The boss was a called Mr [REDACTED]. I don't know whether he had an involvement with the children's panel. He must have seen something in me because he offered me a job. I was married in 1974. I would have been about seventeen at the time. My wife then had my daughter [REDACTED].

84. I did get into trouble in my teens after I left school. I couldn't cope with anybody in authority with a uniform or a badge. I didn't understand what was happening to me. I was in Longriggend Young Offenders Institution in either 1973 or 1974. I was there for about two to three weeks awaiting sentence. They were waiting for reports. I was then taken to Kilmarnock Sheriff Court. I got out because I was about to start a job.
85. In 1974 I went to Jessiefield Prison. I was in there for two to three weeks on remand so that they could again do reports. I finished up with a fine. When I was eighteen I ended up in HMP Barlinnie for non-payment of fines. I had to do ninety or ninety-five days. I got out of there in [REDACTED] 1975. Nothing happened in these places. I had learnt to look after myself by then. I was able to handle myself. They were tough.
86. My dad came to see me after I came out of HMP Barlinnie in 1975. Unknown to me he was ill. He died on [REDACTED] 1975 at the age of forty-four. I was then left with my brothers and my mother to look after. I worked with [REDACTED] for a time in 1976 before I started with the Council in 1977. I did get into a few scuffles but I tried to avoid them because I had a family to look after. I worked for the Council roads department for over twenty years. I then worked for a cable company called [REDACTED] as a heavy goods vehicle driver. I am now retired. I retired in 1997 or 1998.

Reporting of abuse after time in care

Speaking about the abuse for the first time

87. There were no counsellors available when I was in remand after care. If they had been available it may have helped but I'm not sure I would have been able to speak to them. In the end I waited until my mother had passed away to talk about things. It's a bad thing to say but I didn't want her to be embarrassed about me. After she died it just had to come out. I had to do something about it. I wanted to do something positive with my life.

88. I had been seeing my GP because of my mental health issues. They referred me to a psychiatric nurse called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was the person who told me about 'Break the Silence'. He took me and introduced me to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is a counsellor with 'Break the Silence'. That was eight or nine years ago. [REDACTED] was the first person that I told about what had happened. I had a wee break for about a year but I have been seeing [REDACTED] ever since. I told [REDACTED] everything I've told the Inquiry, I told [REDACTED] the full story of what had happened to me over a number of sessions. My GP now knows that I am involved with providing evidence to the Inquiry. She doesn't know the detail. Neither does [REDACTED].

Speaking to the police

89. The next step, after speaking to the Inquiry, is that I have to go to the police. I'm not a great fan of the police but I don't think I'll get any type of closure without speaking to them. Up until this time I've not gone to them before. I'm hopeful that the police will be able to go into the records, find names and get more detail.

Impact

90. I don't trust anybody at all because of my time in care. I am still anti-authority. I can't get over the trust hurdle. I drank and went off the rails. A lot of the time I couldn't tell I was going off the rails. I drank and did drugs.
91. For a long time I put a mask on. I didn't want anyone to know what had happened. I tried to be the macho guy. It started eating away at me in my late forties. You can only keep the mask on for so long. The mask was coming off all the time. I've got a lot of good pals. They've seen a change in me over the last ten years. They say that I'm not as happy go lucky as I used to be and that I have 'gone into myself'. I can't handle big crowds anymore. I can't go into supermarkets, shopping centres or to the football anymore. I think that folks are looking at me.

92. My marriage is away and finished. It ended about six years ago. All through my life I haven't been a cuddly person. I say to people "What is love?" I love my daughters and grandchildren but I don't really know what love is. I couldn't tell my wife about what had happened to me. I'm one of those people who, when it gets too much, runs away. I go away and sleep in my car. I keep away from people and try to gather my thoughts.
93. I see my granddaughters. They're the most important things in my life. They mean the world to me. I don't see my brothers or my sister. I just keep away. My family know how I act. They know that there is something wrong but I can't tell them. I don't want anybody to feel sorry for me.

Health

94. I have bowel problems. I was twenty eight stone. I then found out I was diabetic. I lost eight or nine stone after that. I still have high blood pressure. I don't sleep a great deal. That's been going on for years. Sometimes I only get three or four hours sleep. Sometimes I'm lucky if I get an hour's worth of sleep.
95. I have mental health problems. I've been crabbit for years. I can snap at wee things. When I go to the doctors they want to put me on pills. I have been on antidepressants in the past. I don't want to take pills. They make you feel like a zombie. I don't want to do that. I want to be able to rise above it.
96. I've tried to take my own life on two occasions. The first time was when my mother died thirteen years ago. The second time was five years ago. The only thing I have to stop me is my grandchildren. They are like my safety guard. At the minute I'm trying to get back into normal life but it is not happening.

Records

97. I did manage to get some records. I got my social work records from East Ayrshire Council. [REDACTED] helped me apply for them. The records relate to both Kirkland Park and Thornly Park. When I was trying to get my records I heard from someone somewhere that in the process of both places getting shut down there were fires. I don't know but I wonder whether records were destroyed in both those fires. I would be happy to share what records I have recovered with the Inquiry should they ask me to do so in the future.

Other information

98. Speaking to the Inquiry isn't about jumping on a bandwagon or something. If I can save a young laddie or lassie going through what I went through then I will feel I have achieved something in my life. I hope that speaking to the Inquiry and the police will stop something, even if it is just one person who is helped. Maybe I'm stupid thinking that way but that is the way that I am thinking.
99. When I was put into care I should have been cared for. I shouldn't have been abused and left like I am. If I hadn't been abused maybe my life would have gone better and I wouldn't be like I am now. I think about what happened to me every day. You can't help it. Whatever you do you hear about these things, whether it's on the telly or in the paper. The homes ruined my life. These people ruined my life. I want to see justice somewhere. I want people, dead or alive, named and shamed.
100. I think that the staff working in these homes should be vetted. People should look into the records they have. If people want to work with children they should be vetted. People shouldn't just be able to work with children for their own gratification. The authorities should look at everything.

101. I would like, if something did happen, that a child had a separate, independent person to speak to. There was nobody there for me. I was on my own. All I could do was survive and look after myself as best I could.
102. I would just like somebody to come back to me and say "Aye, you are telling the truth." That's all.
103. 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.

GVF

Signed.....

Dated..... 11 / 7 / 17