

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KCA [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is KCA [REDACTED]. When I was in care I was known as KCA [REDACTED]. My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1949. I am 72 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care.

2. I was born in Edinburgh. My parents were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I had a younger brother called [REDACTED] and a younger sister called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was three years younger than me and is deceased. [REDACTED] is five years younger.
3. We all lived on the south side of Edinburgh in the St Leonards area. I lived a very normal life until my parents divorced and my world collapsed round about me. I was only about five years of age and my siblings were very young.
4. When my parents split up I was taken on the train by the social services to The Dale School in Arbroath while my younger brother and sister were taken to somewhere in Aberdeen. I don't know if it was my behaviour after my parents split up or what caused me to be sent away. I was very young and had no understanding about what was happening to me. I don't recall having any dealings with social workers before I went to The Dale School. I think that the person that took me was a male. Nothing was explained to me and I had no input into what was occurring.

5. I do recall that before I went to Dale School I was attending at Drummond School in Edinburgh. I recall my mother telling me in later life that she would take me to school but I would immediately run away and be back in my house before my mother got home.
6. My Dad had been in the army and when he came home he started working for a removal company. I don't know what my mother did but I didn't see her again until I got out of the Dale School as a fourteen year old.

Dale Residential School, Brechin Road, Arbroath.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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31. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Trips / Holidays

33. When the holidays came round I would be sent to Balgowan List D School in Dundee. There were much older boys there and you had to learn to fight. There was different bullying by your peers and you had to stand up for yourself. You would also get the belt from the staff there for fighting with the other boys.

34. Secondary Institutions - to be published later I had nowhere to go as my parents couldn't take me so I had to go to Balgowan during all the holidays. Secondary Institutions - to be published later as there was so much bullying and violence at Balgowan List D School. You would only be there for a couple of weeks to allow the staff at The Dale to have a holiday.

35. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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53. [REDACTED] bullies were at Balgowan and the older boys there would try and force themselves on you to have sex with them. If you didn't comply they would physical assault you. I can't recall their names but I had to fight a lot of them. You did try to mention it to the masters [REDACTED] at Balgowan but they just dismissed it as if it wasn't happening. They didn't want to know.

Leaving the Dale Residential School, Arbroath.

54. I was in The Dale School for about ten years. Once you reached a certain age you were shipped out. I think I was about fifteen. I was sent to Thornley Park in Paisley. I couldn't understand how I wasn't being sent home.

Care at Thornley Park Residential School, Paisley

55. The man in charge of the staff at Thornley Park was called Mr Miller or Mr Mullen. He was a very fair man. I think that Thornley Park was a locked school and so you couldn't get out without the door being unlocked for you. The teachers were all walking about in Thornley Park keeping an eye on you. It was very much run by the teachers. I have no idea how I got to Thornley Park.

Routine at Thornley Park School

56. The routine was similar to The Dale School apart from the fact that the school classrooms were all on the Thornley Park site. It was the same sort of institution but for older boys.

First impressions.

57. My first impression was one of fear. It was a huge building with a lot of boys and members of staff. I had come from a place with [REDACTED] members of staff. It was intimidating and I felt on my own. The boys were older than me. I couldn't understand why I hadn't been sent home.

School at Thornley Park School

58. You attended school within the complex that was Thornley Park. You were taught by teachers who were part of the Thornley Park Staff. I can recall being belted by them on a few occasions. On one occasion I recall being belted by the teachers in front of the other children after I had run away. I also recall the teachers standing watching you when you were getting showered.
59. There was a lot more interaction between the staff and the boys although it is nothing like what it is now. Nowadays there are inspections of the services and the staff are more carefully selected. I never passed any exams in all the schooling I had.

60. I remember that Mr Miller or Mr Mullen, I can't recall his name, tried to talk to me about running away. I couldn't talk to him because I didn't trust the masters. He also tried to help me with my schooling by recognising my academic problems in that I was poor at reading and writing. He would try to make it easier for me to understand by spending more time with me one to one. He was a very nice man.

Punishment

61. In Thornley Park you always got the belt on the backside but in the local school I attended you got the belt on the hands. In Thornley Park you had to bend over a desk and one of the masters would hold your hands so that you couldn't move. There was always two of them when you got the belt. They only did it in front of other boys if they wanted to make an example of you.

Running away

62. There was a green where the masters at Thornley Park would sit. It lead to a railway embankment which I would climb up and then run away. Mr Miller told me to look at the policeman who was walking on the railway line. He told me that he was a fast runner and would catch me. I wanted to prove otherwise and he never managed to catch me. I could run three miles and through the brambles but he never caught me. I was a lot older then. I recall that the man who chased me came into the showers one day and punched me.
63. At every opportunity I would run away. It was easy to do as there was a yard with no gates on it and you could just make a run for it and escape. I always got the belt for running away and it was done in front of all the other boys.

Abuse at Thornley Park Residential School, Paisley

64. All I can recall were the weekly beatings we would receive. If your shoes weren't polished or if your socks were down round your ankles or if you tore your trousers you would get a beating. You would get a cuff round the ear or a punch. The beating was being hit on your backside with the belt.
65. In Thornley Park if a boy was being punished then the rest of the boys would also be punished. That led to more bullying by the other boys who would attack you if you were the cause of the group punishment and you all suffered the consequences.
66. There was a lot of bullying amongst the boys. These were older boys and so the fighting was much rougher. If you tried to tell one of the teachers he would tell you to go away and stop talking nonsense. The older boys would also bully you for sexual favours but I learned to fight back and so I was not bullied to the same degree.
67. The staff did not want to hear about bullying because to them it meant that they were not doing their job in preventing it. If for example you ripped your shirt during a fight you would have to tell them that you had accidentally ripped it. They didn't want to know about the bullying which was rife in the school.

Leaving Thornley Park Residential School, Paisley

68. I was pulled into the office one day and let go the next. It was my time to go and that was all I knew. I don't think that I was ready to go home from Thornley Park when the time came. I had been working as a porter at [REDACTED] Hospital to gain work experience. I was fifteen years old. I ended up staying with my grandmother in Leith, Edinburgh.
69. I do recall that when I came back to Edinburgh I had to go to school for a few months as I was too young to leave. I recall that I only had short trousers and the rest of the boys were wearing long trousers. I took a lot of ridicule from the other boys.

Life after being in care

70. When I left care I went to live with my grandmother first and then moved in with my mother. I managed to get a job on the trawlers [REDACTED] I really enjoyed that work as you were part of a team and there was a great team spirit. I had tried other things but they hadn't worked out. Going [REDACTED] built up my confidence and enabled me to work with other people. I worked on the trawlers for ten years.
71. I worked on the oil rigs doing different jobs but primarily on the catering side. I worked for Lothian Region in the [REDACTED] department until I had a bad accident and was out of work for a long time. I went to work in a hotel for the last ten years of my working life. I married [REDACTED] in 1968. I have children and grandchildren.

Impact

72. I cannot watch films on television which deal with children's homes or children in care. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
- [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
73. I think that my life with my siblings was ruined by my time in care. I never grew up with them and didn't meet them again until I was nineteen. My sister is now deceased and I have none or little contact with my brother who lives in Manchester. I never had a chance to get to know them. I only got to know my mother a little bit because when I was fifteen I lived with her for a short while. As the years passed I got to know her better. In 1999 she died of motor neurone disease. I also ended up looking after my father for the last seven years of his life until he passed away in 2006.
74. I look after my grandchildren and I always have to lock up the house at night to make sure that they are safe. I don't like them being out late at night.

Reporting of Abuse.

75. I have never spoken to any one official and reported what happened to me when I was in the care system. The Inquiry are the first people that I have told the whole story to.

Records

76. I have never applied to see the records of my time in care.

Lessons to be learned

77. There were no disclosure procedures when I was in care. There were no inspections. The social services and the staff in the institutions didn't take the time to listen to children. I don't like the idea that children turn sixteen and eighteen and are no longer under the care of the social work department. Children are being excluded from schools and it can take a full week before someone from social services manages to speak to them. That is too late.
78. The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry should be going into the children's homes and asking the children what they think. It is what they want and they need someone to listen to them. "Tomorrow is the new future yesterday has gone". My life has nearly gone but the children's lives are just starting.

Other information

79. I have been involved with the Kinship Care Group and the foster care groups. I have Parental rights for my grandchildren which started in 2004. My grandchildren are going to be moving on to the next stage which is being put up in a flat where they will learn independent living now that they are both working. They are sixteen and nineteen.

80. I work closely with the local Kinship Carers Group and also met with the the foster care groups. I have been asked to collect children from schools who have been excluded. I have refused to do this because it is the responsibility of the social services. I have always challenged the local authorities and Scottish Government as I do not believe that they do enough for children who are in the care system. I continue to challenge the Children's Services in Scotland to try to get them to be more proactive and understanding of the needs of children in the care system.
81. There needs to be an alternative to the Child and Mental Health Services who are being overwhelmed by the amount of referrals. There should be a system where children can be diagnosed earlier and given the support that they need to steer them though the education system. Each child in Scotland is entitled to twenty five hours education per week and this needs to be honoured by the Scottish Government and the Educational Authorities. Currently "the powers that be" are sadly failing the children of Scotland.
82. 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

KCA

Dated 16/6/2021