

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IEI [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is IEI [REDACTED]. I was known as IEI [REDACTED] while I was in care. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Oban. My mum's name was [REDACTED]. She is now deceased. I have never known my dad. I'm from a gypsy traveller family. I was brought up in the travelling community in Oban until the age of six.
3. My mum met and married a countryman called [REDACTED]. Shortly after I turned six, we moved away from the travelling community because my mum was ashamed of what she was. She took me away from my family. We initially moved in with [REDACTED]'s parents who lived in [REDACTED], Bridge of Don. I have some memories of going to nursery there.
4. My mum had three children to [REDACTED] who were all born in Aberdeen. I have two half-sisters and a half-brother. [REDACTED] is around seven or eight years younger than me. [REDACTED] is around nine or ten years younger than me and [REDACTED] is around eleven years younger than me. Growing up, I had a good relationship with my siblings, but not now. I don't see or speak to [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] but I occasionally hear from [REDACTED].

5. [REDACTED] never accepted me as his child. His favourite name for me was 'wee bastard'. I was always treated very differently from my siblings. My mum didn't have much time for me or my siblings, but especially me for some reason. [REDACTED] worked for the gas board and he kept control of the household finances. My mum never worked.
6. My home life was absolutely horrendous and that's where all my problems started. I had no parental care or guidance. [REDACTED] regularly lashed out at me and physically beat me. I remember once he beat the shit out of me with a belt and I had a big mark on my face. I was warned not to tell anyone what happened. My mum just watched and did nothing about it. She was also good with her hands. She had a little wooden brush that she used to chastise me. I later found out she had mental health problems which made sense because she could either be extremely violent or quite caring. Even when she wasn't being violent herself, she let [REDACTED] beat the shit out of me. I just never knew where I stood with them. I didn't know which way to turn.
7. When I wasn't being beaten, I was left to my own devices. While we were still living in Oban, I fell down a hole and cracked open my skull. I've still got a hole in my head to this day. After we moved to Aberdeen, I was out collecting lemonade bottles for some money. I think I was seven at the time. I got knocked down by a car and split my face open. I ended up in hospital, but I don't know how long I was there. I had broken bones, lost all my teeth, fractured my skull, and had to have a tracheotomy. That impacted my life a lot. The scaring has gone down now, but when I was young it was pretty noticeable and children can be cruel.
8. It was as if I was nothing at home. I fell and split my knee open when I was about nine and I had to walk to hospital myself to get stitches. When I went into hospital for four days to have my tonsils removed, mum and [REDACTED] didn't visit me once. I accidentally set myself on fire once and had to go to hospital myself and get myself home. When I got bitten on the leg by a dog, my mum just slapped me and said it was my own fault.
9. I don't have any good memories of being at home. I remember feeling hungry and hunger is a terrible thing. I only got fed when [REDACTED] deemed I should be fed. If I wasn't being locked in my room, I was getting got booted out the house, even in the middle

of winter when it was raining or snowing. We lived in a four in a block flat with a landing outside our door. There was many a night I ended up sleeping on the landing just to get out of the cold.

10. At some point we moved to the Northfield area of Aberdeen and that's where I have my first memories of going to primary school. I went to Bramble Brae Primary. I didn't like school and I didn't go very often. When I did go, I used to get in trouble for not bringing my school bag, school books or PE kit, but I didn't have any of these things. I felt ashamed that I didn't have anything and I wasn't being cared for at home.
11. The social work department must have been involved when I was at primary school in Aberdeen, but I don't remember it. I have my social work records now and they talk about me being a facially scarred, dirty, unkempt child. I only know what I have read in my records. They say the first instance of bad behaviour was me breaking into a school and stealing a jar of lollipops when I was around seven or eight. I don't have any memory of that.
12. The last thing that happened before I went into care was an incident with [REDACTED]. I think I was twelve years old. I went into the house to look for something to eat. I found some bread and I was about to put spread on it with a butter knife. [REDACTED] came in and slammed the bread out of my hand. He started punching me in the back of the head. I ran along the hall and out into the landing. He was trying to kick me down the stairs. I told him if he hit me one more time, I'd stab him. I still had the butter knife in my hand. I didn't mean what I said. I was just scared and trying to defend myself. I was crying and in pain from him punching me. My mum was there and I asked her why she let him beat the shit out of me. She said it's what I deserved. Next thing I knew, a load of police burst in and dived on me. They said I had attempted to stab [REDACTED] but I hadn't.
13. The police took me straight to Brimmond Assessment Centre. My social work records say I was initially there with my mum's consent. I didn't go to a Children's Panel until I had been there for around a month. I think the Children's Panel made an order to keep me there.

Brimmond Assessment Centre, Newhills, Aberdeen

14. Brimmond Assessment Centre sat on a hill overlooking the city. As you went through the main doors there was an office on the left hand side. If you went downstairs, there was a laundry room, dining room and kitchen. If you turned to your left, there was another office and a nurse's room, although I never saw a nurse the whole time I was there. Then, there was a series of rooms: there was a staff room, a school room, TV room and shower block. If you turned to your right, there was a boot room and the back door which led out into the quadrangle where they gym was. There was a set of back stairs there. That's where the girls' wing was. We were never allowed in there. The boys' bedrooms were on the first floor. I shared with two other guys. There was also a toilet block with a cell next to it.
15. Outside the building, there was a car park and football pitch at the front. Round the back, there was a tar quadrangle that was used as a small five aside football pitch. Apart from that, it was all fields around the home.
16. I don't remember all the staff at Brimmond. Mr and Mrs **ERL-ERM** were **[REDACTED]** **SNR**. Mrs **ERL**, who seemed to be the main one running the place, was a wee woman with glasses. Mr **ERM** was a big, tall man and I remember he had a weird beard with no moustache. He shouted a lot. His favourite thing was to pin you against a wall, shout in your face, tell you that you were worthless and you were here for a reason. They both seemed to be a bit religious and there's nothing worse than a religious hypocrite.
17. I'd say there were around twenty to twenty-five boys in Brimmond and maybe a dozen girls, but I can't be sure as we were always kept separate from them. The age of the residents ranged from about eight or nine to around fifteen years old.

Routine at Brimmond Assessment Centre

First day

18. I arrived at Brimmond with absolutely nothing. I didn't have any personal possessions to take with me. There were no photographs of me at home. I had never even been given a birthday or Christmas present in my life, Secondary Institutions - to be published
19. I think it was early evening and I was taken straight into the office. They had obviously asked the police why I was there. They told me I was a dirty little boy. I didn't say anything to that, I was terrified to be honest. I did ask why I was there and they said it was because I tried to kill someone. I tried to tell them I was just defending myself, but I was told to shut up.
20. They said the first thing to do was to get me washed. I was taken through to the shower block and told to strip off and shower. They gave me a towel and clothes. If I remember correctly, I was given jeans, a shirt, a jumper, a pair of socks, underwear and sandals. Then, they took me to show me where I'd be sleeping. I remember all the boys looking at me because I was new. After that, they put me in the TV room and I was left to get on with it.

Mornings and bedtime

21. In the morning, the staff banged on the doors well before eight. We would get up, get ourselves washed, dressed and make our beds. We had to line up outside our rooms, according to age, and the staff would go in to check our rooms. Then, we were marched downstairs to the dining room for breakfast. That's when the night shift staff handed over to the day shift.
22. After breakfast, we had cleaning duties to do. We also had exercise in afternoon which we were forced to do. It wasn't daily, but it was fairly regular. It would involve press ups, sit ups and stuff like that. I remember being made to run around the quadrangle, in wintertime, in bare feet. It was usually Mr HQS who made us do that. He used

to wear a cardigan with leather buttons on it. He was actually ok. He liked to shout and pin you against the wall at times, but he didn't lash out much, other than the occasional cuff around the lug. That was the sort of behaviour that was just accepted. I didn't know any better. Once the cleaning and exercise was done, we were pretty much left to our own devices.

23. At night, I went to bed around nine o'clock. I think the younger boys might have been a bit earlier and the older boys a bit later. We were escorted to bed and it was lights out straight away.
24. I shared a room with two other guys. There were three single beds and possibly bedside cabinets in the room. We were never in our rooms during the day, but at night, we were locked in. You could chap to get out to use the toilet, but that was it. Everything at Brimmond was locked.

Bed Wetting

25. Bed wetters got it tight in the mornings. I didn't have that problem, but the ones who did were shouted at and humiliated in front of everyone. I remember staff shouting 'you've pissed the bed again you dirty wee animal'. A lot of boys would try to hide it, but the staff would check the beds.

Mealtimes/Food

26. We ate all our meals in the dining room at Brimmond. We never made our own way anywhere. We were always lined up and escorted to wherever we were going, including mealtimes. I remember sometimes seeing the girls in the dining room, but most of the time we didn't get to see them at all. They must have staggered mealtimes.
27. I remember having to be quiet while we ate. If you weren't quiet, it wasn't unusual to get a smack in the mouth. The staff used the older boys to keep the younger boys in line.

28. The food at Brimmond was ok. I remember having toast, marmalade and cereal for breakfast. Lunch was often soup or a sandwich. At night, we got our tea and sometimes a bit of fruit, an apple or an orange. At least I was getting fed, which was a good thing.
29. The food was either served at the tables or we had to go to the hatch, where the cooks were, to collect our food. We didn't get a choice and we had to eat what was on our plates. You weren't allowed to move until it was done. They used to give us liver, which I hated and still hate to this day, but I had to eat it. We weren't force fed, but you could be made to sit there for hours until you finished. There was an understanding that if they provided for us, we should be grateful for it. Most of us just rammed the food down as quick as we could.

Washing/bathing

30. In the shower block, there was a row of sinks, a block of toilets and a line of maybe four or five showers. There were partitions between the showers but they were open at the front. We were expected to shower daily. They wanted us to be clean. The showers were always supervised. We just got in, showered as quick as we could and out.

Schooling

31. I didn't go to school at all once when I was at Brimmond. They said they had a school room, but there was a woodwork thing in it and it wasn't used for schooling. I think I was given an assessment after I arrived to test the level of my education, but bearing in mind I had truanted from school as much as I could, I didn't really have any education at all. I do remember some children going out to school. They must have been the blue eyed boys and that wasn't me. I spent my time doing chores or entertaining myself.

Chores

32. After breakfast, there was a daily cleaning regime. We were each assigned a task. We had to clean the gym, TV room, toilets, Hoover and clean corridors and clean the boots. Cleaning the boots was a terrible job because if they decided one pair hadn't been cleaned properly, you had to do them all again. The worst job was cleaning the back stairs. It took forever. They were covered in linoleum, but each stair had a brass rail. We had to clean and dry the stairs and Brasso each of the rails and polish them. Woe betide you if you got Brasso on the linoleum. There were a couple of staff who used to kick over the Brasso just so you had to clean it up and start over.
33. The staff would watch us while we were cleaning and you were there until all the duties were finished. Once you were finished, the staff would inspect whatever area you had cleaned. If it wasn't done right, you had to start again. I used to hate it, but I had to do it. I didn't have a choice and if I refused, I'd be punched, slapped or put in the cell as punishment.

Leisure Time/Trips and holidays

34. After all the cleaning duties were done, we were left to our own devices. There was the TV room and a little room where you could play chess and draughts and things like that. That's where I learned to play chess. There were also books. I've always been a voracious reader. That was my escape. Books can transport you to different places. Places where you're not locked up.
35. There was a gym, but you couldn't just go there when you wanted. They would let you in at certain times, sometimes at night. There was a table tennis table in there that we could use. I was a football player and I used to like playing football because it got me out the building. Whenever they let us play, I would participate.

Healthcare

36. There was a nurse at Brimmond, but I never saw her. I didn't get any proper healthcare or dental care while I was there. I do remember boys having toothache and I think they saw a dentist, but I didn't. I was checked for lice once by staff and at some point there was an outbreak of scabies. Mrs ERL painted each boy's genital, hands and feet two or three times with a silver ointment. She used a brush and I remember there were male members of staff standing watching while she did it. I found it really embarrassing and I didn't think that was right. I think I was fourteen when that happened.

Religious instruction

37. There wasn't much in the way of religious instruction at Brimmond. I think ERL-ERM were pretty religious, but I can't remember any of the other staff being overly religious. They used to talk about Christianity, but we didn't have to go to church or anything like that. There was a church just across the road and there might have been a couple of kids who went with ERL-ERM, but I certainly didn't.

Birthdays and Christmas

38. I don't remember having any birthdays at Brimmond, but I must have been there over my birthday because I remember spending two Christmases there. We got a Christmas lunch. I wasn't given presents by the staff, but we got fruit and cigarettes. Everybody that smoked got cigarettes because the older kids were allowed four a day.

Visitors

39. Nick Baxter was my social worker while I was at Brimmond and Craigielea. He visited me a couple of times at Brimmond, but I couldn't tell him what was going on there. I was too scared. There was an unwritten rule that you didn't talk about it.

External Inspections

40. As far as I know, there weren't any external inspections. ERL-ERM everything. If there were inspections, I certainly didn't know about it and we must have been kept well out of the way.

Family contact

41. My mum and [REDACTED] didn't come to visit me at Brimmond, but after I'd been there a while, I earned home visits at the weekends. I got out on a Friday and had to be back at four on a Sunday afternoon. I can't remember how long I'd been there when the home leave started. The staff at Brimmond would take away home leave as a punishment if they felt you weren't behaving.
42. There was nothing for me at home, but I went because it got me out of Brimmond. There were no rules at home. I just tried to keep myself out of mum and [REDACTED]'s way because I knew if it kicked off, I'd get the brunt of it. They were happy that I wasn't around so I could be out all day doing my own thing. I usually ended up going back to Brimmond early on a Sunday. My social work records say that mum and [REDACTED] didn't want me to come home and that I was outwith parental control.

Discipline/punishment

43. If you stepped out of line at Brimmond you were punished. Sometimes you were sent to bed without any supper. If there were any misdemeanours during the night, depending on the member of staff on, you were taken to the toilet, given a toothbrush and made to scrub the sinks, baths and tiles on your hands and knees. You'd be given a bucket of water and some of the staff would kick the bucket over so you had to clean that up too. Mr GJR and Mr GJO's both made me do that. I just had to scrub for however long they thought I deserved.
44. The main form of punishment used at Brimmond was being put in the cell. The cell had a concrete slab floor and you were put in there with just a pair of nylon shorts and

a t-shirt, nothing on your feet. You didn't get a blanket during the day and your meals were brought to the cell. There was no toilet. The cell had one tiny window. It was plastic, like the rest of the windows at Brimmond, so you couldn't smash it or horse something through it. The window looked onto the quadrangle and the other boys would give you the finger if they saw you looking out.

45. You were locked in the cell until they deemed you had been there long enough. It could be a day, two days, a week. It depended on what they felt your level of bad behaviour was.

Running away

46. All the doors at Brimmond were locked. There was one key that opened them all and we soon learned that there was a wee button on the doors and if you pushed it, they didn't lock.
47. I ran away once. I had had enough. I came back from football and me and another two boys pushed the button on the shower block door, which lead outside. It was like the great escape. We each asked to go to the toilet and when we had our chance, we bolted. We ran across the fields and ended up getting split up. As I was walking down the road, a car stopped beside me. It was an unmarked police car and the guy asked where I was going. He jumped out and grabbed me. He took me back to the station and put me in a cell. A couple of older boys came down with staff from Brimmond to take me back.
48. When I got back to Brimmond, there were a few blows from the older boys. The staff were twisting my ears and I got a few punches in the back. Then, I was stripped off and put in the cell. I was there for about three or four days and even after that, I was watched like a hawk.

Abuse at Brimmond Assessment Centre

49. Physical abuse was normalised at Brimmond. There wasn't really a day that went by without it. I didn't really know any better because it's what I had known at home too. It wasn't just physical abuse though. We were emotionally and psychologically abused as well. I was constantly being told that my family hated me and that's why I was in there. I was told that I was never getting out. They used to threaten us and say that if we didn't behave, they'd send us to Nazareth House. We had heard so many horror stories about that place, the threat would terrify us. I was called scar face, toothless, ugly and useless. I was told that I was dirty and smelly. You were constantly made to feel worthless and they used fear to control us.
50. One of the reasons we all hated cleaning the back stairs, was because some of the staff would take pleasure in standing on your fingers when you were on the floor cleaning. Mr GJO's was bad for it, but other staff did it too.
51. Mr GJO's ruled with an iron rod. He was the worst of the lot. He must have been in his forties and I remember he wore a herringbone jacket. He was tall with combed back hair and he always smelt of smoke. You couldn't joke or have even the tiniest bit of fun around him. He would kick you up and down the pace. His favourite punishment was to stand you at a wall, facing the wall with your hands behind your back. When he walked passed you, he would slam the back of your head so your face hit the wall. His other favourite pastimes were hitting you on the top of the head with his knuckle or giving you a dead leg or arm, it was painful. He was violent to me and I saw him do it to other boys too. You knew if he was on, you had to be careful.
52. Mr GJR would intimidate everyone with his size. He looked like a giant and he was powerful. No one ever said anything or messed about with Mr GJR, even the older boys. His favourite thing was to back you into a corner and take your hand and really squeeze it. I mean he would crush it. It was really painful. He was also one of the ones who would push you against the wall.

53. I remember another couple of staff who were violent. Mr IEJ was a sly puncher. If you upset him in any way he would punch you to the stomach or the kidneys. He actually got a job in Craigielea after I moved there, Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institut Then there was Mr GJQ. I think he was in his forties and he had slicked back hair like Elvis. He would lift you up out your seat by the hair and drag you.
54. There were rumours of sexual abuse at Brimmond, but it never happened to me and I didn't witness it. There was a room under the stairs that the boys talked about. They would say 'you don't want to go in that room'. I remember boys saying that Mr GJQ liked to look at boys.
55. When you were in Brimmond, you knew you had to stick to the regime as much as you could. You would try to make yourself invisible, but there was a lot of noise all the time. I was a scared kid and fear is a terrible thing. You were always scared that things were going to kick off. You could be sitting quiet and then two guys would start fighting. Sometimes the staff wouldn't come until the blood and snotters were over. The brothers were two of the worst for it. They were animals and they would thump you. You were always scared of getting dragged into stuff.
56. When the staff weren't being violent themselves, a lot of the time, they would let the older boys dish out the punishment. It made their life easier I suppose. They would make us play a game called murder ball. It was an excuse to let the boys kick and punch each other and the staff would just let it happen. You didn't know how to react or protect yourself at Brimmond.

Leaving Brimmond Assessment Centre

57. My social worker, Nick Baxter, told me I was being moved from Brimmond a couple of days before it was due to happen. I was really scared to leave. Although Brimmond was terrible, I knew exactly where I was and where I stood. I said if they tried to move me, I'd run away. There was no children's panel and I was never told why I was being

moved. I think it was a Wednesday when I was put in the social worker's car and taken to Craigielea Children's Centre.

Craigielea Children's Centre, Craigton Road, Aberdeen

58. I must have been around fourteen when I was moved to Craigielea and I ended up being there for maybe eighteen months. I can't be specific. Secondary Institutions - to be published

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

59.

60.

61.

62.

63.

64.

65.

66.

67.

Leaving Craigielea Children's Centre

68. I left Craigielea in [REDACTED] 1976, just before my sixteenth birthday. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions
[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later I couldn't stay after I turned sixteen. I had nowhere else to go but home. I went to a children's panel just after I turned sixteen and I was discharged from the care system. I felt like I was just cut off with no safety net and by that time I had no education and a lot of anger issues.

I had no idea what to do with my life. To be quite honest, I didn't really know anything and my life just spiralled out of control.

Homelife – [REDACTED] 1976-1978

69. My mum and [REDACTED] were still living in the Northfield area of Aberdeen. The first thing I was told to do was to get a job. They said I couldn't stay there without contributing. I was bigger though and [REDACTED] was older so I just tried to keep myself out of the way and I didn't talk to him. I did get a job at [REDACTED] Factory, where my mother worked at the time. There was a social club across the road from the factory and I started getting hammered into alcohol, sometimes before I went to work. Whenever I got paid, I gave my mum some money towards the house and I'd spend the rest in the pub. I ended up getting into a fight in the factory when I was drunk and my job bombed after that.
70. I spent about three months at home before I was kicked out for not contributing enough. I wandered the streets and slept rough for a while. I used to sleep on the roof of a local school and then in a friend's back garden. At some point, I became a trawlerman. I spent fourteen days at sea and then four days back getting hammered. It wasn't a good idea. That came to an end when I got food poisoning and I didn't go back.
71. I ended up in a bed and breakfast and got involved in drugs. Then, I bumped into a girl I was in Craigielea with. Her and her brother were actually in Craigielea. They had a flat and I moved in with them. It was absolute chaos. When I think back now, it was just terrible. It was just drink, drugs and fighting. I was getting in trouble quite a lot. I got done for carrying an offensive weapon, breach of the peace and assault. I ended up getting into a fight in the town. I was charged and had to go to Aberdeen Sheriff Court. I got a fine, but I didn't pay it. I was arrested and spent a week in the communal cell at Craiginches, which is what HM Prison Aberdeen used to be called. After that, they shipped me to Friarton Detention Centre. I think I was seventeen at the time.

Friarton Detention Centre, HM Prison Friarton, Perth

72. Friarton was extremely regimented. You couldn't do or say anything out of turn. We had to make bed blocks every day. Your bed had to have hospital corners. They would come in and drop a coin on your bed and if the coin didn't bounce, they kicked your bed up in the air and you started again. They would put on white gloves and check everything in the room to make sure you had dusted everywhere.
73. When the guards came in, you had to stand there with your hands behind your back and say your number, offence, how long you were in for and any previous convictions. We had to wear a uniform and polished boots and march in double time. We went to work every day. We were taken outside to huts and had to thread tags onto Behar carpets.
74. It was a disciplined place, but at least you knew where you stood. We knew the rules and just had to stick to them. If you stuck to the rules, you got on ok.
75. I wasn't at Friarton very long. It must have only been a month to six weeks. I had been writing to people I knew on the outside and one of them paid my fine, so I got out. They gave me a rail ticket to get back to Aberdeen and seven pounds that I'd earned.
76. I went back to the flat in Aberdeen for about a year and it was just as bad as before. I tried to commit suicide twice in that year. I had so much anger inside me. I was drinking heavily and one night we ran out of alcohol. We stole a car, my mate drove, and we broke into a bar. We stole alcohol, cigarettes and money. The police caught up with me and I was remanded. I was offered the chance of probation or borstal. That's how I ended up in the Kaimhill Project. I think I had turned eighteen by the time I went there.

Kaimhill Project, Aberlour Child Care Trust, Aberdeen

77. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

78.

79.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

I left Kaimhill when I was nineteen.

Life after being in care

80. My life started after I met [REDACTED] and her family. I called [REDACTED]'s parents mum and dad. They taught me an awful lot about life and her dad really taught me how to behave and do things properly. My eyes were opened to how a family should be. I learned a lot from [REDACTED]'s family and I'm dear friends with every one of them.

81. [REDACTED] and I married and moved into a private flat in [REDACTED] shortly after I left Kaimhill. We have two children together. I started working for Aberdeen City Council and became the supervisor for a group of youths who had been in trouble. We built handicap playgrounds. I then worked as a labourer for a while and picked up skills as I went along. I was shown how to erect steel and I ended up getting a job building the Queen Elizabeth Bridge. When I left that job, I went offshore for a little while. Then, I

started doing things in a proper traveller way. I started working in scrap metal and I did that for a long time.

82. I've been working with the NHS for the last four years. It's a wonderful job and I work with some great people. I drive out of hours GP's to appointments.
83. It wasn't until [REDACTED] and I got married that I had to get a copy of my birth certificate. That's when I found out my surname was really [REDACTED]. Up to that point, I'd been known as [REDACTED], which was [REDACTED]'s surname. Once I found out my surname, I manage to track down some of my extended family. I'm ashamed to say it, but when I found out my mum died, I felt absolutely nothing. I also found out that my siblings all ended up in care after I did.

Impact

84. I do think about my time in care. Sometimes, I manage to forget about it for a while, then I find myself thinking about it for weeks on end. Anything, even a smell, can bring it all back to me. I've also suffered from insomnia over the years. I used to wake up between ten and twelve times a night. It does rear its ugly head now and again, but not so much nowadays.
85. I grew up with a lot of anger inside me. [REDACTED: Secondary Institutions - to be published later]
[REDACTED: Secondary Institutions - to be published later]. That was taken from me and I was left to fend for myself at sixteen years old. I didn't know how to cope. I was physically big enough, but I couldn't cope emotionally. That's why I drank, did drugs and was violent. I was just trying to forget. I tried my best to drink myself to death. Anger can be an energy if you use it in the proper way, but if you use it in the wrong way, it can destroy you. I don't let it define my life anymore. Meeting [REDACTED] really did save me and I've been sober for many years.
86. I lived in fear at home, then I was sent to Brimmond for something that wasn't my fault. I reacted, but I reacted for a reason. I was fed up being hurt. I was fed up being

punched and kicked and stamped on. Instead of helping, they took me out of a place of violence and put me in another place of violence. I tried my best to make myself invisible at Brimmond. I tried not to catch anyone's eye. Even to this day, I struggle with looking people in the eye. Every day I had to be careful. Every day I lived in fear.

87. My time in care left me with a lack of education. The only education I have is because I like to read. I like to watch programmes and listen to podcasts by people who are intelligent. I often think about how my life could have been different. I could have been more. I've always had a love of history. If I had a proper education and was taught and guided to use my brain instead of being physical, I would have chosen to be an archaeologist.
88. I find it difficult to trust people, particularly authority figures. I also can't stand people telling me what to do as I had that day in day out growing up. Explain a job to me and I'll do it willingly and I'll do it gladly. I'll go out my way to help people, but if you try to force things on me, I don't react well to that. I also don't like things being done for me because I've always had to do things for myself. Growing up, no one had ever taken care of me until I met my wife and her family. Now, I live with a terrible fear of losing what I've got.

Lessons to be Learned

89. Care can be a wonderful thing if it's used in the right way, but it's so easy to abuse the system and too many people have their own agendas. I think there should be more done to vet people involved in care and find out the reasons they want to be involved in care. It has to be for the right reasons, not purely financial. They need to want to help the people who need it the most.
90. Those coming out of care, need to be given proper support. I didn't get it and I needed it. Care can be ok and you can be well looked after **Secondary Institutions - to be p**, but if you're booted out and that's it, that's the end of the support, then things can go downhill

quickly. Care leavers need support, not necessarily financial support, but they do need emotional and psychological support.

Other information

91. I hope that other people find the courage to come forward. Yes, it's emotional, but it can also be cathartic. If my story helps just one other person speak out, then I think it's been worth telling.
92. 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..... 9/3/23