Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Support person present: No

My name is GDR although I prefer to be called GDR. My date of birth is
 1960. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

- 2. My mum and dad, and and and and an and an another, have both passed away. My mum worked in a hospital and in a bank. My dad worked as a boiler scaler. I am the second youngest of their eleven children. It wasn't unusual at that time to have such a big family. The oldest child was eleven years older than me then there is roughly a year between each child. Three of my brothers and one of my sisters have died.
- 3. I was born and brought up in Pollok in Glasgow. Life at home was good. I went to Gowanbank Primary then Cairnbank Secondary School. I later went to Bellahouston Academy. Being one of the youngest children I got a lot of hand-me down clothes. I know it was tough for my mum and dad. They were both Catholic although they weren't regular church goers.
- 4. When I was eleven I stole some money on a bus. I went to a children's panel but I am not sure what happened at that time. When I was twelve I stole a pair of trousers from a shop. The police came to interview me but I had hidden the trousers. They told me if I gave the trousers back nothing would happen to me. I gave them the trousers back. A few weeks later I was taken to a children's panel in Glasgow city centre by my mum.

There might have been three or five people on this panel. I was told that I was to go into residential care for three weeks. Both me and my mum were upset and crying.

5. A female social worker who was there then drove me to Balrossie Castle. My mum didn't come with me. I never had a social worker before I went into care. I don't know her name. I cried the whole way to Balrossie. As we got closer, the social worker stopped the car and pointed out Balrossie Castle up a hill. It was a big white castle. This made me cry even harder. I had never stayed away from my own home before.

Balrossie List 'D' school, Kilmacolm

- 6. Balrossie Castle was near to Kilmacolm. There were gates at the bottom of the drive which were open then a long driveway up to the castle. Near the entrance was an oblong shaped roundabout. Beside the castle was a house which I later found out was the headmaster's house. There were other houses near it and I believe they were occupied by staff. They were on Balrossie Drive.
- 7. My understanding is that Balrossie Castle was run by Glasgow City Council. I have a feeling that it had some links to the Free Church of Scotland. SNR at Balrossie was Mr GKF.

 Apart from one time when I ran away I never really had any dealings with him. The only other member of staff that I can remember was Mr GYW.

 The whole time I was there I called Mr GYW 'Sir'. There was a nurse or a matron there and there were staff who worked in the kitchen. I don't remember any other staff.
- 8. There was a door at the front of the castle and there were doors at the side. As far as I remember the outside doors were always locked. Downstairs on the ground floor level was the dining room. Behind that was the kitchen and an office where the staff worked. There was a cloakroom. At the back was the medical ward. I can't remember much about that or even say how many beds were in there. There was also a recreation room. There were stairs which led you up to the next floor where the dormitories were. I know there were at least two dormitories with about twelve beds. I

was in the same dorm my whole time there. There must have been more dorms but I can't remember what they were like. There was a bathroom and a shower room. On this level was the store where Mr GYW handed out the clothes, boots and equipment when you needed it. There was also a big hall and there was a stage at one end. There were areas outside where we could play, and there was a concrete area where we marched. This area was covered so we didn't get wet when it rained.

9. I can remember some of the names of the boys who were in Balrossie with me. They were _____, ____, ____, ____, ____, ____, ____, ____, and ____.

10. I don't know how many boys in total were there but I was told recently by a psychiatric nurse who had worked with boys at Balrossie that there were 77 boys. I know there were no girls. I don't know the reason why any of the other boys were in there.

Routine at Balrossie

First day

- They must have seen us coming up the driveway. They were Mr GKF and and GYW took me into the dining room and the social worker went somewhere else with Mr GKF. I was still crying. All of a sudden he punched me on the side of my head with his fist and he said that there would be no crying here. I was shocked and scared but realised that I had to stop crying. He took me over to a table with four wooden chairs around it. He showed me how I was expected to sit down at the table. There was no-one else in the building that I was aware of.
- 12. He then took me to a picture board of former pupils and asked me if I recognised anyone. I spotted a couple of my relatives. He told me that they had survived Balrossie and if I behaved I would survive too.

- 13. I was then taken into a medical room where there was a woman who I presume was some sort of nurse. She told me to sit down then told me to take all my clothes off. They picked them up off the floor using a stick, as if they didn't want to touch them, and dropped them in a plastic bag. I never saw these clothes again. I was given other clothes to wear. I was weighed and they measured my height.
- 14. I was then taken to a door and shown outside. That was when I saw all the other boys playing outside. It was like a circus. The boys were doing somersaults and all sorts of other exercises. They were bouncing about all over the place. They were doing all of this in their own time. It was mad what they were doing.

Mornings and bedtime

15. Every morning a bell would sound. It was like a big hand bell. I don't know what time it rang. When it rang I got up, dressed for school and made my bed. I would then fold my other clothes and lay them out on my bed. We would then have to stand by our beds and wait for Mr GYW to come in and inspect the room. He would check everywhere for dust and check our beds were made correctly.

Mealtimes/Food

16. All the boys ate together in the dining room. We had a set place at a certain table. All the tables were numbered. That was my place for every meal. I can't remember anything at all about the food. I can't actually remember sitting down and eating a meal there but I must have done.

Washing/bathing

17. I can't really remember what the washing routine was. I know we all showered at the same time. I remember we all lined up waiting to get in the shower. Mr GYW was there and he would have a big container of shampoo which he put on our heads when we got to him. He was always there when we were in the shower.

Clothing/uniform

18. I was given clothes to wear and I can only describe them as hairy. I had grey shorts which I wore in summer and winter. I also had a red shirt, a sleeveless jumper, a big itchy jacket and a pair of boots and a pair of swimming trunks. On Sunday I had long itchy trousers to wear to church. We had gators to wear when we were marching on the square.

Leisure time

- 19. Before our dinner in the evening we used to play a game outside called 'padders'. It was like tennis but was with big heavy wooden bats. By the end my hands were all blistered. Within the house there was a recreation room where there was a pool table. There may have been books and stuff like that to read but I never read any of it. There were some board games like chess and draughts. We never got to play football outside.
- 20. One time we had a sports day outside on one of the football pitches. I remember having a piggy back race. The staff were there. I don't know if there were any prizes but I never won any.
- 21. We weren't allowed to smoke cigarettes. The staff didn't allow us. It didn't stop us. There was a disused outdoor swimming pool in the grounds where we used to go and smoke before our evening meal. If you were caught smoking GYW would punch and kick you.

Trips and holidays

22. If you behaved there was a holiday home that you went to. I believe that holiday home was in Rhu. I never went there and never went on any sort of holiday when I was at Balrossie. Sometimes Mr would take us swimming at the weekend to a swimming pool. The only other outing I remember was going to church in Kilmacolm on a Sunday.

School

23. I don't remember anything about school. I assume there was a school within Balrossie as I remember a couple of incidents which happened in a classroom. Apart from that I have no recollection of classes or what school was like.

Healthcare

I never saw a doctor or a dentist when I was at Balrossie.

Religious instruction

25. There was a transit van that took some of us to church in Kilmacolm. I don't know how they decided who went to church but only ten could go because that's all that would fit in the transit van. I went quite regularly. We were marched into church then marched out again.

Work

26. We had to keep out bed space tidy. We did our own ironing and sewing if anything needed repaired and we 'bulled' our own boots.

Birthdays and Christmas

27. I would have been there over one Christmas but I can't remember if I got home. When it was my birthday I didn't get a cake or any presents.

Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention

28. I never got any visits from any of my family when I was there. I never saw a social worker either. No one came to visit me. I never went to another children's panel at any time and I am not aware of any review being done of my detention. I was never encouraged to write any letters home to my family.

Home leave

29. I don't know how long I had been there before I started being allowed to go home for the weekend. I got taken to the bus stop in Kilmacolm and got the bus home. I got the bus back to Kilmacolm on the Sunday night. One of the times I went home I found that my mum had moved from Pollok to Govan. I didn't know she was moving.

Personal possessions

30. Beside our beds was a wardrobe that we shared. It didn't lock. The only other things we had in our bedside cabinet was a rule book, which told you what you were and weren't allowed to do in Balrossie, and a bible.

Running away

- 31. Early one morning another boy woke me up. It was well before the bell to wake us up. He said that he and a lot of others were going to run away. The intention was that if we all ran away then people would realise that there was something wrong in Balrossie. About twenty of us ran away. We were euphoric. Me and another boy, got back to Glasgow. He went to his mum's house and I was to phone after a while. I phoned and his mum told me that she had phoned the police and they were taking back. I knew the same would happen to me if I went home so I just phoned the police. The police picked me up and drove me straight back to Balrossie. They never asked why I ran away. When I got back I was caned
- 32. A couple of times when I was on the bus on the Sunday night heading from my home back to Balrossie I decided to abscond and not go back. The police caught me and took me back. I can't remember if I was punished these times.

Discipline

33. We had to sit down at the dining room table a certain way. We stood beside our seats until we were told to sit down. We then had to put the seats down together so they all clicked at the same time, like a performance at the military tattoo. At the dinner table we had to sit with our heels together, elbows off the table and no talking. When we were sitting in the transit van going anywhere we had to have our arms folded and feet together. I can't remember who taught us this. I think I just picked it up quickly from the other boys. We had a rule book and all these things that we weren't allowed to do were listed in there.

Bed Wetting

34. I wet the bed once that I can remember in Balrossie. I believe this was on my first night. I can't remember how it was dealt with.

Abuse at Balrossie

- 35. Mr GYW regularly hit me, usually if I had done something wrong. He would punch me to the head or body, or rap my head with his knuckles. Sometimes he would kick me in the shins. He would often do this when he was inspecting our bed spaces in the morning. If there was something out of place he would kick me once on the shins and upset the bed and throw all the stuff on the floor. He would then tell all the other boys that because my bed wasn't made properly no one was getting any treats that night. There was no animosity from the other boys because of this.
- 36. On the first morning after I arrived I went into the dining room for my breakfast. There were cornflakes in a bowl at my place. I couldn't believe it. I had never had cornflakes before. This was going to be a treat. I forgot to pick the chair up. GYW came over and punched me on the side of my head. I fell or probably flew off my chair and hit the ground. That's all I remember about that incident, apart from the fact that I never got the cornflakes that morning.
- 37. From the day that I arrived, every morning I was given some sort of medication to drink after breakfast. All the boys with me had to take it. GYW would have a tray in front of him and he would call the tables out one by one and we would line up and he would

give us a small plastic cup with some liquid in it. It tasted of bitter orange. I was never told what it was for or why I was taking it. I never asked.

- 38. I can't remember if that medication had any immediate effect on me. I don't remember a lot from my time at Balrossie so I wonder if the medication had that effect on me. Some months later we started to get the same medication given to us when we were in the recreation room in the evening before we went to bed. As far as I know all the boys took this medication. I just seem to remember that I used to sleep a lot when I was there, far more than a boy of my age should have.
- 39. We weren't allowed to talk at any time when we were in the building. You weren't allowed to talk even in the dining hall when we were eating or in the dormitory at any time. The only time we were able to chat amongst ourselves was on the bus going home on leave.
- 40. I hadn't been there that long when I got some black shoe polish on my hands. We polished and 'bulled' our own boots and I got some polish on my hands and I couldn't get it off. I had to go to Mr GYW and told him. He took me into the toilet where the shower is. He stood behind me and started scrubbing my hands with a small brush. When he was doing this he was grinding his groin into my back. I don't know if he was aroused or not. I was scared because I knew what he was doing wasn't right.
- 41. The morning after I ran away with other boys I was taken to Mr GKF office. Mr GYW was there too. Mr GKF asked me why I had run away but I told him I didn't know why. He asked if I thought if I should be punished and he went on and on until eventually I agreed that I should. They turned me round to face the desk and bent me over it and pulled my shorts down. Mr GYW went round the other side of the desk and held onto my wrists on the top of the desk. Mr GKF then started caning me on my bare backside. I don't know how many times he hit me because I passed out. When I woke up I was in the medical ward. I was in that medical ward for a few days but I can't remember anything else about being there. I don't know if my backside was injured or bleeding.

- 42. One time I remember being in a room which must have been a classroom as I was beside a desk. I was looking about the room then all of a sudden GYW grabbed the back of my head and smashed my face down into the desk. My nose was bleeding. I don't remember if I got any medical attention for that.
- 43. Another time I was in a classroom and I was made to pick up a weights dumb-bell. It was fine picking it up and holding it but at some point I got some kind of electric shock. It must have been wired up. I can't remember who did this to me. I don't know if it happened to any of the other boys.
- 44. Mr was always there when we were showering. We were never allowed to look at him at any time, not just when we were in the showers. I think this was so that we didn't see what he was looking at when we were in the shower. He had a special towel which he rolled up in a certain way. He loved flicking and whipping us with it. He called it his 'cat's tail'. If you dared to look at him he would whip you. He whipped me several times.
- would sneak up on me when I was on my knees scrubbing the floors. You wouldn't know he was there until he 'toed' you in the backside. It wasn't a kick like kicking a football, it was more like a prod. He always wore Doc Marten boots so it wasn't particularly pleasant.
- 46. Mr GYW took us canoeing to Lochwinnoch. He would take three of us at a time. He would make one of us sit at the back of the bus, one in the middle and one in the front. Often I would never know who was with me. We weren't allowed to look at each other. We had to sit in the minibus with our arms folded and had to look straight forward all the time. When we got there we got changed at the minibus. He wouldn't let us close the minibus doors. He said he was taking photographs of the scenery but I am sure he was taking photographs of us getting changed.
- 47. When he was teaching us canoeing he taught us how to exit the canoe if it capsized. First of all we did it without the skirt which you wear and it clips round the cockpit. I flipped over and pushed myself out. The water was freezing cold. That was fine. We

did it again and again but each time he was holding me under the water longer and wasn't letting me get out. We then did it with the skirt clipped on to the cockpit. It was getting worse because he was stopping me from getting up. He even had his hand down my trunks and was touching me between the legs when I was under the water. This was all a horrible experience for me and I was sure I was going to drown. We went for a canoe and when we got back I started to get out the canoe and Mr GYW was helping me. That was when I realised that I had shit myself.

- I remember when I came out the water I was shaking all over. My teeth were chittering uncontrollably. It must have been so cold. When we got back to Balrossie there was a Radox bath waiting for us. Mr told the three of us to get stripped, get in the bath, put our heads under the water then stand up. When we had done that he put shampoo on our heads and told us that we weren't to open our eyes or the shampoo would blind us. We were all facing the same way, one behind another. I shut my eyes and he started washing my hair then washing my body. He was rubbing me between the legs and it was the first time in my life that I had an erection. I didn't know what was going on. He then rinsed the soap off and told us to get out and get dried. I cannot remember who the other two boys were and I don't know why I can't. I didn't see him washing them.
- Another time when we went canoeing I was told to go to the dining room. There were two other boys in there. The van was sitting outside and we were told to get in the van. I was sitting in the front. Someone else was in the middle and the other boy was at the back. I can't remember who these boys were. When we got in the van there was a bottle of juice on our seats. It was a bottle of Solripe. Mr GYW was driving and he told us we could drink the juice. When we got to a junction, instead of turning left towards Lochwinnoch he turned right. I drank my juice and before I knew what was happening I had fallen asleep or had passed out. I woke up at one point and briefly saw a big red thing, then after a while was on a very narrow road and there was a body of water on the right hand side. I fell asleep again and the next thing I remember was GYW carrying me into a building. He put me on the bottom bunk of a set of bunk beds. I had no idea where I was.

- 50. The next thing I remember was waking up and Mr GYW was performing oral sex on me. I fell asleep again. I woke some time later and I remember it was absolutely pitch black outside. There were no street lights and it was the darkest I have ever seen. I have no idea how long I was in this bed for. The next thing I remember was driving back to Kilmacolm from a different direction.
- 51. There was one night when the fire service came to Balrossie. I can't remember why. I have a feeling that this actually happened on my birthday in 1973. We were all out watching what was going on. When they were leaving GYW, who had been standing behind me, picked me up then put his hand over my mouth and nose. I knew I couldn't kick out at him and before I knew it I felt like I was sinking and drifting away and I passed out. When I woke up I was in my pyjamas in my bed. I don't know how I got there.
- 52. We never got any water to drink at Balrossie. GYW wouldn't let us drink it. I remember being so thirsty I once flushed the toilet and drunk that water.
- 53. Although there were all these other boys in there with me and I had friends I still felt very isolated and alone. I didn't see GYW or GKF hit any of the other boys. I was only concerned about myself when I was in there.

Reporting of abuse at Balrossie

- 54. I never spoke to any of the boys who went on any of the canoeing trips with me or who were with me when I was taken to the place where GYW performed oral sex on me. I don't know who these boys were.
- 55. I never told my mum when I was home for weekend leave. I don't think I was aware at that time that I was being drugged.

Leaving Balrossie

- 56. I believe I was at Balrossie around a year. Towards the end of my time I sometimes got taken to an old folk's home in Paisley. I helped the older people then at the end of the day I got the bus back to Balrossie. They never taught me anything else about how to live outside the home. I don't remember being told that I was leaving. I did go and see a social worker at Govan Town Hall after I left Balrossie. I am not sure what the purpose of that meeting was. I saw the social worker a few times after that when I was home. I went on my own.
- 57. I remember my last day there. GYW drove me down to the bus stop in Kilmacolm. He told me not to look back and I never did. I didn't have a bag to pack because I had nothing. I don't really remember how I felt but I suppose I must have been happy. I was thirteen when I got out.

Life after being in care

- 58. I lived at home with my mum and dad and all my brothers and sisters. I never heard from anyone from Balrossie again after I left. I suppose my childhood was alright after that. My mum and dad did the best they could. We move to Govan and I went to Bellahouston Academy. I left school when I was sixteen but didn't have any qualifications. I 'dogged' a lot at school so I missed a lot of classes.
- 59. I wasn't happy at home or with myself and I was living rough for a while. I ran away with an older couple to Jersey when I was fourteen. It was a was my ex brother-in-law, but he has since died, and got arrested for theft. Because of that incident I think I went to court with him and I was put in a children's home in Jersey. At the first opportunity I ran away from there. I was only in there for one night. I was caught and sent to a young offenders institution. I may have been there for two or three weeks. When I left there I was put on a plane on my own to come back to Glasgow where my mum was waiting for me. I lived with my mum after that.

- 60. I would still have been fourteen, maybe fifteen when I ended up in Longriggend Young Offenders' Institution. I was charged with theft and the court sent me there. I was in the boys' wing. I was stealing lead from the roof of condemned buildings and selling it for scrap. I was in and out a number of times to Longriggend, usually for about four weeks at a time.
- 61. When I was sixteen I was sent by the court to Glenochil detention centre. I was sent there for three months for a breach of the peace. When I was still sixteen I was sent to Polmont borstal again for theft. I was there for nine months. Most of my convictions were for stealing. I stole to fund my drink and drugs habit. There is nothing really that I want to tell the Inquiry about when I was in these detention centres.
- 62. I was nineteen when I joined the army but left after the basic training which lasted around three months. Following that I did some labouring jobs. When I was nineteen I luckily met my wife and we married in 1980 and we had a son in 1981.
- When I was 24 I was in Barlinnie prison. I was doing 18 months for theft. Basically I was still stealing to fund my drink and drugs habit. One day in Barlinnie an incident happened. At one point someone shouted that was coming through and when that happened we had to stand up. I couldn't believe it when he went past. It was GYW.

 After I saw him my head was a mess and I didn't know what was wrong with me. I had a massive feeling of fear because of seeing GYW again. It brought everything that happened to me at Balrossie back to me. I asked to get moved to a different hall, which was stupid because I was in the best hall.
- 64. After seeing GYW I tried to commit suicide twice. I had been in front of between these attempts. I had thrown some mashed potatoes at a guard so he added two weeks on to my sentence. I was only weeks away from completing my sentence so it doesn't make sense that I would commit suicide so close to being released. There is no doubt in my mind that I had some sort of mental breakdown because of seeing GYW and I was completely irrational. I know that my wife spoke to someone in authority after visiting me in the prison hospital and told them that I wasn't mentally

well, that she was concerned for me and asked that I be seen by a psychiatrist. I was never seen by a psychiatrist in Barlinnie.

Impact

- 65. Almost from the day I left Balrossie I started drinking alcohol and then started taking drugs. I got involved in cannabis, speed and other tablets. I don't know why I started drinking and taking drugs.
- 66. I am fairly certain I would have been better educated had I not gone to Balrossie. I don't think I am a complete idiot. I don't even know if I got an education there.
- 67. It was because I saw GYW in Barlinnie that made me want to end my life. Because of the times I tried to end my life, I am paralysed from the neck down. I have only slight movement in my arms and hands but nothing else. I have had three tracheostomies after I nearly choked. My voice is affected and I can't raise my voice like I could before. I am confined to a wheelchair. To be honest I shouldn't be alive today.
- 68. There isn't a day goes by that I don't think about my time at Balrossie and of the abuse I suffered. I only have to look down and see my wheel chair and it reminds me. There are so many things that trigger thoughts in my head about Balrossie. It is there all the time. The impact on my life has been massive.

Treatment / support

69. I went to my doctor around 2004 because I needed help. He referred me to a psychiatric nurse. His name was Alex Ferguson. I saw him for around two and a half years. He helped me stop drinking and taking drugs. It has taken me fifteen years since then to be able to unscramble my head and to be able to verbalise what I went through at Balrossie and how it has massively affected my life since.

Reporting of Abuse

70. I went to see Gordon Jackson QC about sixteen years ago because I finally decided that I wanted to do something about the abuse I suffered at Balrossie Castle. Gordon Jackson said he didn't even know where Kilmacolm was. He wasn't interested in helping me. About a year later I went to see Jim Murphy, who had previously been the MP for Giffnock, and Ken McIntosh, who is an MSP and is now the presiding officer of the Scottish Parliament. Ken McIntosh came to the house to see me then arranged for the police to interview me. Two police officers came to my house in Giffnock and I gave a statement about the abuse I suffered at Balrossie Castle. I never heard any more about it.

Records

- 71. I have never tried to get my records from my time at Balrossie Castle. I would love to see them. I have been in touch with Future Pathways and I have spoken to someone called John Crawford. When I told him I had been at Balrossie he told me that when he was a social worker he used to "deliver' boys there. He went out of his way to say that he chatted to the boys when he was taking them there. That has put me off dealing with Future Pathways. He did help me get £3,000 compensation which went towards a holiday.
- 72. I wanted to get a copy of the rule book that I had when I was at Balrossie and I went to the Mitchell Library in Glasgow to look. I couldn't find anything similar to what we had back then. There were other more general rule books but nothing specific to Balrossie.

Lessons to be learned

73. Records need to be better maintained. Everything relevant to that child must be recorded and there must be something put in place to allow that child access to their

records. Children have to be given support and not punched and told that they shouldn't cry, like I was. There also needs to be checks done to make sure the place is being run properly. Someone independent should come in and do checks and this should include checking to see that education is being delivered correctly and that the place is safe for children.

Other information

- 74. I always thought that Balrossie was part of Quarriers Homes because we got all our supplies from there. I sometimes went with Mr GYW to collect things.
- 75. In the early 2000s I went to visit some of my family in Inverkip. On the way back, was driving and we drove past the ferry terminal at Largs. I recognised the roads as ones we used to drive on when I was at Balrossie. A few weeks later I got drive me back there and we got the ferry to Millport. We drove along so that the sea was on our right hand side and along that road I found the building which I am sure was the building took us to that day we drunk the Solripe and when he performed oral sex on me. Above the door of that building was a large sign which said it was Drumchapel Free Church of Scotland. I later found the building on google maps on Millport and is on a bay called 'Stinking bay'.
- 76. I went back to see Balrossie Castle years ago but it was all closed down and the building was derelict. The staff houses were still there in Balrossie Drive. I had a feeling of anger when I saw that the place was empty.
- 77. My father in law got a lawyer and he helped me get some compensation for what happened to me when I was at Barlinnie.
- 78. I found out about the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry by chance on the internet. After I read about it I decided to give a statement about my time at Balrossie Castle.

79.	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.

1	GDR	
Signed		
Dated	5-11-2019	