

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HZY

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HZY. My date of birth is 1976. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. My name when I was born was HZY.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Stockport, Greater Manchester and along with my family moved to Elgin in 1978. My father's name is . He was in the and was at Elgin.
3. We then moved to Aberdeen and my father became a senior staff officer within base at , Aberdeen. My mother's name is . Although she was as intelligent as her twin brother, she didn't get to go to university. Her parents could only afford to send one to university and that had to be the man. My mother had to get married.
4. I have an older sister called . She is four years older than me. I did have a relationship with my sister as a child but she was incredibly bullying towards me. I understood years later that she was envious of me when I was born. I had no idea. To this day, my sister will tell you that the first four years of her childhood, before I was born, were her best years. She wasn't supportive of me at all.
5. We lived in the Bridge of Don, which is an area north of the river Don in Aberdeen. Because we were Catholic, I was sent to St Peter's Roman Catholic School. That was

in 1981 and at the old Nelson Street School. In 1983, the school moved to Kings Street, Aberdeen. I stayed at St Peters Roman Catholic School until I was eleven.

6. The school was fairly strict. There were two sisters teaching there, a Miss Lamont and a Sister Lamont who was a member of The Society of the Sacred Heart. They still exercised corporal punishment. They hit children although I don't think Miss Lamont ever hit me. Sister Lamont did, although at that time, hitting children was being phased out and none of the other teachers did that.
7. My problems started at St Peters when I was aged ten. I was very dysphoric at that time and I felt naturally a girl. I was a boy called HZY at that time. In the eighties, being different was incredibly difficult and because of Aids, homophobia was rife. I didn't know how I felt at the time because my natural instinct was to be like a girl and that created problems in my primary school. Teachers used to call me "sissy" and things like that.
8. In 1986, I turned ten. For the following two years I had a teacher called Mrs [REDACTED]. Like my father, her husband was in [REDACTED]. He was subordinate to my father. He had also been my father's subordinate in Elgin and my mother knew him and his wife. Both my parents were aware of the situation at school and that she was my teacher.
9. I believe that nowadays this would raise a red flag. There was a huge conflict of interests. The fact her husband was my father's subordinate in the [REDACTED], you would at least think there was a potential for a conflict of interests. There was a power relationship between my father and my teacher's husband and there was a power relationship between my teacher and me.
10. But it was a very different relationship because my father's relationship was a professional relationship whereas this was my teacher and it was a very disparate relationship because I was ten. I don't like to think I am exaggerating when I say this woman made my life hell.

11. In November 1987, I was in primary seven when she slapped me for nothing. She lost her temper. The head teacher at that time was Mrs Fenton. She had a very bombastic way about her.
12. I had some of the strictest teachers in the school, like Sister Lamont. But I always associated them with being firm but fair. [REDACTED] just shouted and humiliated me and encourage others to bully me. She never told others off for targeting me because essentially that's what she was doing.
13. My mother knew about this abuse. She had even gone to see Mrs [REDACTED] but neither parent did anything to remove me from the situation. I had to endure it. Mrs [REDACTED] encouraged other young people to abuse me. She encouraged them to call me gay. She never intervened. She refused to discipline others when they were being cruel to me and clearly bullying me. Other parents knew she targeted me. It damaged me for two years.
14. Sister Josephine Ogilvie used to come into the school. She was a lovely sister and I was very close to her. She didn't treat me like the others did. She was very caring.
15. Sister Ogilvie was brutally murdered in the Cathedral on 6 May 1988. I remember hearing that a nun had been murdered in the local Press & Journal and seeing her face smiling back at me and seeing a photograph of her body being brought out of St Mary's Cathedral.
16. What happened to her was so barbaric. Being aged eleven, I read every detail into it. I wanted to understand why that had happened but I couldn't. I didn't know why someone who was so nice would have something so horrible happen to them. It traumatised me and was something I could never get over. Sister Ogilvie was the religious education advisor for the diocese of Aberdeen.
17. I went to her funeral and there were so many people there. I had never seen the cathedral so busy.

18. I talked to people about the impact she'd had on me and how traumatised I was by it. The church was dreadful for anything emotional, but at the time people didn't identify that I needed therapy to deal with it. It was a violent crime on someone I knew. The details were awful and she had suffered so badly. In court they described her as having sixty separate injuries and likened her to having been in a road accident. This was done by someone who was on drugs.
19. The positive to that was at the age of eleven, I thought being on drugs would make you go round murdering nice nuns. It really disturbed me and is something that strikes to my core to this day.
20. When I transitioned, I adopted Sister Ogilvie's [REDACTED]. Not because of her death but because she had such an impact on me and because she was such a nice person. She didn't judge me for who I was, she didn't ridicule me, she was just nice. There was no side to her at all.
21. My experience of her resonated with many young people. I'm sure many young people at that time, which was particularly disturbing, were confused by something so violent happening. I was extremely sensitive to it.
22. I remember the day after Sister Ogilvie's funeral, [REDACTED] shouted at me for something. I think I was fighting with another child. I nearly told her to 'fuck off'. I can remember I was on the brink of it but I withheld. I regret that now because I was almost complicit in it. Going to school every day and putting up with it. It was as if nothing was wrong. I was allowing it to happen.
23. That's why I later stayed off school at Oldmachar Academy, why I later ran away when at Nanhurst School in Surrey and ended up in Oakbank. I think there is a direct correlation there. The fact I tolerated it in primary school, endured it. That was the longest two years of my life.
24. [REDACTED] used to tear work up. I remember doing something and I had misunderstood the exercise and she just tore it up in front of me. She had real issues.



Other parents told me they didn't like her and that she targeted me. They gave me examples. I just couldn't understand why my parents weren't doing anything about it. She just shouted at me the whole time and I was on edge consistently. I wondered daily when she was next going to shout at me. These days you would go off work sick and raise a grievance.

25. I can remember going up to senior school in August 1988, to Oldmachar Academy. I had gone from a regime, which Mrs [REDACTED] had presided over, of being persecuted, abused and feeling on edge waiting to be unjustifiably disciplined. That's how I felt. When I went to the academy, that evaporated. I was just an ordinary child. I did however struggle to cope with that after all the negative attention I had had for the previous two-years.
26. The teachers at Oldmachar Academy were being normal with me. It didn't feel right and I didn't know what was happening. That was because of the emotional and psychological abuse I'd had suffered for so long. I had almost become used to it and was expecting it. When I moved to the academy, it just completely threw me. I wasn't being disciplined. I suppose that developed into me seeking attention, deliberately, because I was so used to it.
27. It took me a long time to settle at Oldmachar. Settle into the new regime, new teachers. I thought I was different because of how I had been treated.
28. In my second year I settled down and came to terms with the new timetable, new routine in my life. My second year was one of my better years.
29. Puberty hit that year and that was a difficult time. We moved up to do our standard grades in our third year. I was performing reasonably well. It was when I went to P.E. I felt very uncomfortable. I had felt settled in my old class and we had got used to each other, we generally got on. When we integrated for standard grades and classes were messed around, that was very unsettling for me.

30. There were a lot of bullies in Oldmachar. I remember it started off with me staying off P.E. because I didn't want to be in the changing room and amongst the people who were there. Then it got worse. Staying off P.E. developed very quickly into not going to school at all. I was so unsettled and I couldn't articulate to my Catholic parents why I was being targeted. I used to get called a 'poof', 'gay' and everything else. That was derogative but I couldn't tell my parents because I felt so ashamed.
31. To avoid school, I used to go to the woods at the back of our house. We had moved house, still in Bridge of Don but more North of Aberdeen, towards Dyce.
32. I really hadn't settled in my third year. Not attending school had an impact at home. The school psychologist became involved as did social services. I remember there was a particularly bossy social worker called Mrs Gerry. She told my parents I should be sent to a residential school. I don't know why but my parents seemed to run with that. I just don't think they wanted to bother anymore. I think that was the reality.
33. It was a very difficult few months. Oldmachar didn't handle it well at all. The headmaster at the time, Joseph Leaper, was very bombastic. His attempts to get me into school and to stay in school were to shout in my face. The worst thing he could possibly have done. When I look back, his logic as to why he did that escapes me. I think there was probably some sympathy from some of the teachers because it was handled so badly.
34. No one actually realised why I couldn't tell people I was being bullied. It never occurred to anyone. Or perhaps they knew but didn't want to know.
35. There was a boy called [REDACTED] who had gone to a residential school in Surrey called Nanhurst. [REDACTED] had gone because he was dyslexic. He was highly intelligent and a very articulate young boy. I don't know why because I had very different issues, but they thought that would be a good placement for me. I was always told it was voluntary.

36. This placement was arranged through the education department. I don't know who made the decision as I wasn't privy to those decisions and the decision making process.

**Nanhurst Residential School, Surrey**

37. In [REDACTED] 1991, my mother took me to Nanhurst. This was around eight miles South of Guildford and was very rural. I remember we flew from Aberdeen to Gatwick and my grandfather picked us up there.

38. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
- [REDACTED]
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### **Leaving Nanhurst Residential School**

58. In the three months prior to me starting at Oakbank, from [REDACTED] 1992, I was at home. I was fifteen and they didn't know what to do with me. Eventually they agreed that Nanhurst was not a suitable placement for me.
59. At the time things were very difficult. In the November my father found out that my mother wanted to officially separate. I had a very fractious relationship with my father and we fought often. I stole a large amount of money from him. It seems sad now but I was actually buying friendships. I felt very isolated and I was being manipulated by older boys to steal large amounts of money to buy drugs, cigarettes and alcohol.
60. I took the hit for it. I couldn't explain that I was being bullied, manipulated and groomed by older young men to steal large amounts of money to go and buy these things. I got the blame for it basically. Being involved in this level of criminality was essentially why I ended up in Oakbank. They didn't know what else to do.
61. Looking at the chronology of it, you can see that my descent into criminality was always going to happen. I was very vulnerable but resourceful and I did what I had to do to survive.
62. It is all because I did nothing when I was ten at primary school. I know now there is a chronology to it. Because I was being abused for two years by [REDACTED], it had a knock on effect for the rest of my childhood. She was quite unbridled and unchecked

and because my father knew her husband, they thought she couldn't be doing what she was doing.

63. I have to say my father has a very different view now and since I have been able to articulate what she did. It made him look very differently at the conflict of interests. He can now look at it from my perspective instead of his own and can now see that he failed me. He knows he should have been alive to the potential conflict of interests and should have acted upon it. He knows that he should have listened and removed me from that situation.
64. During the three months before I went to Oakbank, social services were involved. I had a young social worker then called Lynne Gillies. They didn't know what to do with me. I was fifteen and a half. I really don't know what the motivation was to be seen to be doing something.

#### **Oakbank Residential School**

65. I had a panel hearing scheduled for 21st December 1991 but it didn't go ahead because my mother had known the chairperson of the panel and someone else had said the chairperson was a parent of someone who had known me in primary school. So it was adjourned until early [REDACTED] 1992.
66. At the panel on [REDACTED] 1992, social services wanted to place me in Oakbank Residential School because of the circumstances that were prevailing at the time. The panel did not want to place me there and they were very definite about it. They said it wasn't the right place for me. They asked social services to go away and find an alternative.
67. That was [REDACTED] 1992 and my second panel date was [REDACTED] 1992. I didn't attend because my social worker, who had attended previously, told me they had no other place for me and were recommending Oakbank. My dad attended the panel. It

was decided that I would go to Oakbank. It was a fait accompli. I was fifteen years old when I went to Oakbank.

68.

I was at Allenvale Cemetery at the time visiting Sister Ogilvie's grave. I went there a lot during that time, for comfort. I was so confused and didn't know what was happening so went there to get away. I wanted her to protect me and to tell these people I wasn't so bad. She was like a mother figure to me when my own mother wasn't there. I still go there when I visit Aberdeen. I remember the social worker used to say that all I would talk about was this dead nun. That's how she was referred to. That was awful. She didn't realise the impact that person had on me when she was alive but also the way she died was so traumatic that it impacted me for years. I suppose I went there that day in the hope that this awful thing, which I had heard was going to happen to me, would not happen to me.

69. When I went back to my dad's he told me they had made a care order and that I was going to Oakbank.

70. Oakbank's reputation preceded itself in Aberdeen. It was where very bad children that couldn't be managed went. For me it was like throwing me from the frying pan into the fire.

71. I can't express how screwed up these boys were when they went into Oakbank. These were boys who had been physically and sexually abused which had manifested itself into criminality and they thought, put them out the way. Oakbank was the next thing to secure accommodation, like Rossie Farm or somewhere like that.

72. My dad now says I should never have gone there. I personally think he was so embroiled in the breakup of his marriage at that time that he considered it to be very convenient. During my time at Oakbank, I recall arguing with him and him taking me back there. He didn't want to deal with things.

73. I don't know but because he was high up in the [REDACTED], he thought it would impact him professionally. He was embarrassed about it. I don't think he thought he had failed but he does now. It's very different to think of my father back then to the man he is now. His views are the polar opposite. He actively encouraged me to give a statement today about the abuse I experienced at Oakbank.
74. I do remember thinking, you were there at the time, I was telling you this at the time, this is not a surprise to you. I think my father was the sort of man who would put his head in the sand and pretend it wasn't going on.

*First day at Oakbank Residential School*

75. I refused to go initially but remember going there the day after the panel. My social worker took me there in her car. It wasn't far from where my dad lived in Aberdeen, I would say about one mile.
76. I was met by SNR [REDACTED], LIQ [REDACTED]. I had never been there before. It was an old Victorian style building off Mid Stockert Road in an affluent area of Aberdeen. It wasn't fenced off but was a very imposing building. There were two wings to it and a central door. There was a roundabout in front of it. It was so far up the hill you could actually see over Aberdeen and beyond, all the way to the North Sea.
77. When you entered the main door there was a staircase directly in front of you. There were very high ceilings. On the left were two residential units which consisted of a kitchen/dining area and a recreation area. The two units led into a hall where we had assembly every morning with SNR [REDACTED] who at the time was HMY [REDACTED]. I understand he is now an [REDACTED].
78. I was initially placed into one of the external units called Oakhill. That was a building off the main building although still within the grounds of Oakbank. That was where they placed all the girls at the time. They were very concerned about me being at Oakbank. They didn't understand why I was there because I was very different to the



other young people there. I had very different issues and I had come from a very different background.

79. One of the other units was called Rosemount which was in the main building. This was the unit I was placed in after I initially ran away. It was more secure than Oakhill. The doors to the main building were locked. There were a lot of kids from Dundee in this unit. The other unit was called Ashgrove and there were a lot of kids from Alloa in there.
80. Rosemount Unit was headed by [KFJ] who was a former police officer. The deputy head of Rosemount was [IAB]. [LIU] was somewhere higher ranked. I didn't really understand the hierarchy of it.
81. Oakbank was mixed however there were many more boys than girls. I would say in total there were around forty or fifty children there and mainly from eleven to fifteen years old. The youngest child was eleven. There was someone there I knew from Bridge of Don. I was probably one of the oldest.
82. We slept in dormitories with two or three to a room but they weren't private. They were divided by internal walls but these walls didn't extend all the way up to the ceiling. They were building new sleeping quarters when I was there. They looked more adequate.
83. We never went up to our rooms anyway. We had to be in the social areas until bedtime. There was no escape from anyone really. The bedrooms were all upstairs. The classrooms were also upstairs but on a different wing. Rosemount and Ashgrove were to the left as you entered the building. The classrooms were above. To the right of the building were offices with sleeping quarters above.

## **Routine at Oakbank**

### *First day*

84. In the first few days at Oakbank I didn't think it was that bad.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

85. We woke up about 7:30 - 8:00 am. Day staff would come in and get us up. They would take over from the night staff.
86. We would all go upstairs at bedtime. That would be around 9:30 - 10:00 pm. We weren't locked in the bedroom overnight. We could use the toilet. The night staff would be on but they allowed people to leave their bedrooms if they needed to use the toilet.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

87. We would have our breakfast after washing. Not altogether but in our units. It was the same at dinnertime. The meals were not very nice. They were delivered from somewhere else. I don't think they were actually cooked on site. They were like school dinners.
88. Staff did supervise us at mealtimes. If people didn't eat their food, that was their choice. They would go hungry.

### *Washing/bathing*

89. After being woken up we would go to the showers. The showers were open plan. Everyone would queue up, I imagine like they do in a prison. There were two rows with six showers on each side. We would just shower together. I don't remember this being supervised.

90. I found this very uncomfortable. We showered in the morning when we woke up and everyone had to go. I don't know if I went that regularly though. It sounds shameful but I think my personal hygiene suffered in Oakbank because I didn't want to shower with people.
91. I didn't brush my teeth either. I remember my teeth were brown by the time I left Oakbank. It was only afterwards I started brushing them again. My personal hygiene plummeted and I had been quite fastidious about that sort of thing prior to going to Oakbank. This was because of the way we had to clean ourselves. It did tie in with my lack of self-esteem then. I did not have the choice of showering or cleaning myself alone.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

92. I wore my own clothing when I was at Oakbank. They did provide clothing. They provided pyjamas, which was ironic because they were exactly the same pyjamas the prisoners wore in the TV series Prisoner Cell Block H. Everyone wore the same. During the daytime there was no uniform.

#### *Leisure time*

93. There was a pool table in the unit so some people would play pool. Some would watch television, others would sit around and chat. There wasn't a lot of reading going on. There wasn't a lot to do really. I struggled with it. I remember there was a television room upstairs so people could go there before going to bed.
94. They used to take us out in the minibus. A staff member would take us. It used to be a bit of a sport with the young people. They actually used to take us down to the red light area, down by the harbour in Aberdeen. They used to shout abuse at the prostitutes. I think a few of the prostitutes actually reported Oakbank. It said Oakbank School on the side of the minibus. It didn't take a genius to work out where these people were coming from. The staff members were doing it as well. It was part of

their sport to go and shout at the prostitutes along the harbour. It was like a night out. One of the staff members doing this was EJS.

95. They used to take us out in their minibus. They would generally just drive around. They took us to a Little Chef which was in between Newton Hill and Stonehaven. They didn't take us out for leisure things. There was a beach leisure centre in Aberdeen but they didn't want to take us anywhere there was a risk that something would happen. Something they could not control and would highlight Oakbank pupils again. They basically segregated these young people from society. There wasn't a lot of public interaction.

### *Schooling*

96. Every morning we would all have assembly together, the whole school. SNR would take that. School classes would start after assembly about 9.15 am. We would stop for lunch then go back in the afternoon. The school times were roughly normal schooling hours.
97. The schooling was basic. They weren't there for schooling, they were there for behaviour management. It was very disruptive. You couldn't learn there for love nor money given the behaviour problems the children had.
98. The teachers did their best. It was structured with different subjects. No one sat any exams. It was just there as a finishing school for prison. It was almost to prepare you for a life of imprisonment. You had no hope when you went in there and certainly no hope when you came out. There was no support. Part of social services failings is that they didn't support you when you were sixteen.
99. As a young vulnerable person in Oakbank there wasn't much you could do about your situation. I thought it was a statutory requirement that they had to provide me with an education until I was sixteen.

### *Healthcare / medication*

100. There weren't any medical facilities at Oakbank. There was a woman who was there. She was very nice and we used to call her <sup>LIY</sup> [REDACTED]. She did a lot of the medical side of things although I don't think she was medically qualified. If ever there was a requirement you would be referred to your GP or to the hospital. We didn't have a school nurse. When I was assaulted and hurt my arm, I was referred to the hospital. I was never at the dentist.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

101. I wasn't there at Christmas and I left two days after my sixteenth birthday. They didn't celebrate it. I don't remember them celebrating anyone's birthday whilst I was there.

### *Personal possessions*

102. I had a locker in the shower area. I had a lot of things but I didn't take anything of value in because it would just have been stolen.

### *Bed Wetting*

103. There was a problem with bed wetting at Oakbank. We were all aware of people who bed wet. The staff did nothing about it. In fact, the kids openly mocked someone who was bed wetting. Staff did as well. They used to say awful things to that child. Like "Get you fucking shitey arse out that bed." I think because things were normalised in Oakbank, I didn't think there was anything wrong with this until actually out of there. A lot of things I thought were just normal because it was routine or that was just what happened, it didn't occur to me until I was out of there that it was all so wrong.
104. We all knew who the bed wetters were because they were roundly ridiculed as part of the school's culture of targeting people and putting people down. This was the nature of the staff they had at the time.



## *Culture*

105. I am very curious about people. I would ask staff members what their backgrounds were. It was surprising to me, even at that age, that very few of them came from a social work background. A lot of the staff were recruited from the army. A lot of them were former police officers. Others just seemed to appear and I'm not sure what background they had.
106. For me, the way they handled children was just for containment. It was aggression. There was nothing therapeutic about Oakbank at all. There was no acknowledgement of children's vulnerabilities. If you were vulnerable, they tended to exploit it. They tended to see it as a weakness with which they could ridicule you.
107. Looking back at it now from a [REDACTED] perspective, I don't think the demarcation line between staff member, pupil and the backgrounds of both, was too different. Some of the staff members were clearly very disturbed. I can see that now. I would not anticipate that they would ever set foot in a children's home, particularly one where you had children with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties like Oakbank.
108. I don't know how they were recruited. Or why they thought it was a good idea to have ex combat individuals in a children's home. The worst bullying came from staff and that gave a green light to the pupils.
109. The police had a very negative view of people from Oakbank. Grampian Police as it was at the time. They quite often saw Oakbank as an inconvenience. They weren't minded to look at Oakbank more closely. They saw the children in there as rat kids who would graduate up to becoming adult criminals. They saw it as a hot bed of criminality.

### *Visitors*

110. My social worker did visit me regularly at Oakbank. My dad was also a regular visitor. There was a visitor's room at the far end of one of the blocks next to the fire escape. We would see our visitors individually in there.
111. I was probably the most visited during my time at Oakbank. My dad could visit me anytime. The other kids just did not get the visits I did.

### *Family Contact*

112. I was quite well behaved in Oakbank compared to a lot of other young people there. So I actually got time away to go home. I was going home in the evenings latterly so it was a lot easier for me.
113. My sister had dropped out of university and was home in Aberdeen. I saw her then until she went to Manchester to be with our mother.
114. My maternal grandfather died on [REDACTED] 1992. I went to his funeral in Salisbury. Towards the end of April 1992, I went down to my grandmothers in Amesbury. That really unsettled me. Coming from Oakbank, down to England and then back to Oakbank. I really struggled to go back. I absconded on two occasions upon my return.
115. Between June and July 1992, I had a lot of free time. I was hardly ever at Oakbank. I went for an interview at college and got a place there. I told Oakbank I was going for a job interview and they just let me out the door. Basically I was just existing there. There was no purpose to me being there. At that time, I was back home a lot of the time with my father. He had met someone else so wasn't at all present. Most of the time he was at work.
116. I was just out. I would drop in to Oakbank, pick up my pocket money and then just go. It was really bizarre. I had a lot of regulation and then all of a sudden I had no regulation at all.

### *Running away*

117. My first instinct on arriving at Oakbank was to run away like I had done before. I ran away back to my fathers that first night. I remember taking a sleeping bag. There was some waste ground at the back of the [REDACTED] in Aberdeen behind where we lived at the time. I can remember sleeping in the waste ground. That was [REDACTED] 1992 in Aberdeen, it was very cold.
118. I thought that had worked for me before and therefore would work again. That was my resistance tactic. It didn't work this time. I returned to my dad's flat and can remember refusing to leave the next morning. My dad gave the house keys to Oakbank.
119. People arrived from Oakbank. It was LIQ [REDACTED] again. He entered the flat and struck me across the head, once. He was with IAA [REDACTED] who was another staff member. I was frog marched out the flat and into a car and taken back to Oakbank.
120. On Tuesday 21 April 1992, I ran away. I didn't go back to Oakbank in the morning. I had been down south visiting my grandmother and was really unsettled. I wanted to get on the night train to London to get back to Wiltshire. I remember hanging round where we lived in the centre of town. I was seen by one of the school's minibuses going round. For some reason they thought it appropriate to take a minibus full of kids to my dad's address.
121. I was caught and taken back that night. That next morning, I remember LIU [REDACTED] quite smugly saying to LIX [REDACTED], who was my key worker, that I was to be in for three weeks. No one asked me why I had run away and didn't want to be there. It was because of LIU [REDACTED] that I didn't want to go back.
122. I thought I was going to be stuck with LIU [REDACTED] who was just terrorising me all the time. I ran away again on the Thursday. That would have been the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1992. I remember informing the police officers who came to my dad's flat that I couldn't go back to Oakbank because I was being abused.

*Review of detention/hearings/external inspections*

123. I had two children review hearings. One in early March and one in late May 1992, which was my last one. The next hearing I had was the children's panel.
124. I turned up to a children's review hearing in March 1992 with my arm in a sling. The chair of that hearing actually ended up working in Oakbank. She had to resign her position fairly quickly. I do think of her being a social worker and then coming into Oakbank, she must have known exactly what it was like. I can't remember her name, it was Kate something. I turned up with my arm in a sling. Nobody thought this shouldn't be happening. Nobody did anything about it which was dreadful. There were no questions about it at all. It was almost as if it was being dealt with internally. But they weren't dealing with it at all. The attitude seemed to be, oh well that's what happens in Oakbank.
125. It strikes me, [REDACTED] looking in now that this was nothing unusual. That children were presenting themselves with injuries and it had been normalised. There was no probative process. It was just accepted that this happened in Oakbank. They did actually say that to me when I started at Oakbank, that I would get some bruises and things. [REDACTED] now would think I'm certainly not putting children to Oakbank if that is what it's like. They were openly admitting it by saying I was going to get abused and it was acquiesced to by professionals.
126. That just seemed to be the culture. Staff running Oakbank were saying you were going to get injured and the professionals at the reviews were just sitting there accepting it was fine. Grampian Regional Council abdicated any responsibility for Oakbank. That seemed to be a place where they put young people who were trouble, out of the way and then dispensed with them.
127. It happened with a lot of authorities. I would imagine some of the children from Dundee went home, others didn't. Dundee, Alloa, Perth, from all over Scotland. Some were from Dumfries and Galloway as well. Kids were coming from miles around. Were these authorities really coming to review hearings, seeing these children's injuries and

thinking that just happened at Oakbank, that's fine? I can't reconcile myself with that. I was there with my arm in a sling and my father was there as well. I have had this discussion with my father. He just sat there and accepted everything they said. He didn't actually question it or challenge it. He just sat there and said nothing. The authorities were aware of what was going on.

128. I had a very good ally in Oakbank, [REDACTED]. She was an English teacher. I think because I was probably more inclined towards education than the others at Oakbank she thought I was easy to teach. I wanted to progress and she did see potential in me and actually helped my career moving forward.
129. She turned up for my second review hearing in the May. Her first observations of my father was that he was incredibly weak. She said that her actually turning up to that hearing and sticking up for me had an impact on her professionally. Because she had gone against the school line which was that a lot of the things that had happened to me were brought on by myself. She stood up for me and said these things should not have happened to me. This affected her in ways you would have to speak to her about. She struggled and left Oakbank soon after I did. She then struggled to get a job. Her husband still worked there. He was part of the Rosemount Unit but was very passive.
130. By May, June time I had a lot more freedom. That was after my second review hearing. My social worker wasn't in attendance. There was another social worker there, a team manager. She asked what the point was of me being there. It seemed such a profound question that people really hadn't considered. This was the review [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was at. He was incredibly negative about me. He said I deserved punishment, that I needed to be controlled because my behaviour was so bad.
131. That was why I brought Mrs [REDACTED] there to almost disabuse it. To actually contradict him. Which she did. The manager was saying that if there was no point to me being at Oakbank why don't we go directly to panel and have me discharged. But the chair thought it would be a good idea for me to carry on at Oakbank until my sixteenth birthday.



132. There never seemed to be a purpose for me being in Oakbank. No one could actually articulate to me why I was there. To this day if you were to ask someone why I was in Oakbank they wouldn't know.
133. It was to do with the criminality more than anything. But it didn't address the criminality and actually would make any potential criminality worse, going into a place like that.
134. I was targeted in Oakbank. **LIU** took a particular dislike to me and actually attacked me. He made himself omnipresent at my reviews and ended up being at my panel in the August. I remember thinking why was he making it his business to be there. He wasn't my key worker.
135. I don't remember any inspections at Oakbank. The only external people I would see were at review hearings.

#### *Discipline*

136. If you ran away, you had to stay in. You were basically imprisoned then.
137. We didn't have any chores. We didn't even make our own beds. That was done by cleaners who used to come in.
138. There was no discipline system and it didn't seem to be applied constantly. The only discipline was that you lost points for your pocket money. You came down levels and that happened if you absconded as well.
139. They seemed to be very reactive. There didn't seem to be any policy of restraint or reporting incidents. There was no consistent reporting of incidents. Certainly social services weren't informed I had my arm in a sling. It took them by surprise
140. We were given pocket money but I never really knew where it came from. It must have been paid for by the authorities. We got five pounds basic per week. You were

given an extra five pounds depending on what level you were. Your level was determined by your behaviour. Generally, I was on level six, which was the highest because I'd got one hundred percent, certainly through education. I was given an extra five pounds per week. In those days it was quite a lot of money.

141. Staff member <sup>EJS</sup> [REDACTED] had a conviction for paedophilia. He had been caught bringing pornographic material, magazines and photographs into the country. He was with children at the time. I don't know how long this was before he was employed at Oakbank but he was prosecuted and then managed to get a job in Oakbank.
142. There were a few staff members who had convictions for violence. Ironically these were people who didn't actually abuse me. But they had the background which meant they should never have been there in the first place.
143. The way I rationalise it to myself, Oakbank were doing what they just did. They were abusive people. Paedophiles and other people who abused children. They were opportunists who would go to a place where there was a plethora of vulnerable young people and would prey on them. That is exactly what Oakbank was during the period I was there and probably for very many years before. It was a place where young people were preyed upon, victimised, abused by people who were abusive. Because they were unregulated they could do it and get away with it.
144. I would say to my parents they had responsibility of me, Oakbank were doing what they could do to get away with it but as my parents they ultimately had responsibility for me and had allowed that to happen.
145. There was a problem with lack of oversight at Oakbank, even from the authorities. I can't actually fathom now, how on earth this all happened and how the authorities just let it happen at Oakbank. Inevitably when Oakbank closed, authorities were just not sending children there because of what the children were saying about Oakbank. I think Dundee City Council or possibly Tayside Regional Council stopped sending children soon after I was there. They were a big client for Oakbank. Then other areas

of Scotland stopped sending children there. Now there are very different ways of dealing with children with behavioural problems, fortunately.

146. It wasn't because of the abuse that Oakbank eventually closed, it was a lack of resources and a huge pension scandal at the end which engulfed Oakbank. Effectively the trust was bankrupt.
147. It astounds me that nothing was done about the abusers at the time. The evidence was all there. [REDACTED], who I was in Oakbank with is now dead. It was an open secret that IAA [REDACTED], a staff member, had his boys. There was a small house attached to Oakhill and he lived there. Him and EJS [REDACTED] were there supervising four boys.
148. [REDACTED] now, I know two of these boys ended up in prison. I'm not in contact with anyone from Oakbank now so I wouldn't know what has happened to most of them or what they are saying about Oakbank. I feel that I did get off lightly compared to others who were there for a lot longer and were sustaining this. This is because they had normalised this sort of behaviour.

### **Abuse at Oakbank Residential School**

149. I ran away from Oakbank that first night. In the morning I was in my dad's flat when people arrived from Oakbank. That was LIQ [REDACTED]. He entered the flat and struck me across the head with the palm of his hand. He was with IAA [REDACTED] LIQ [REDACTED] yanked my arm up my back and frog marched me to a car. He sat in the back with me and IAA [REDACTED] was in the front. LIQ [REDACTED] told me I was being transferred to one of the other units at Oakbank because I had run away.
150. Some staff members used to take children home with them and people never batted an eyelid. IAA [REDACTED] ran something like a sub-unit of Oakhill. There were four boys in there. That wasn't regulated. EJS [REDACTED] stayed there a couple of times too. EJS [REDACTED] who had a conviction for paedophilia.

151. Those men had unbridled access to those boys. One of the boys was called [REDACTED], one was called [REDACTED]. There was another [REDACTED] and he was from Perth. I can't remember his full name.
152. LIU [REDACTED] used to take [REDACTED] home with him quite often. There was no apparent reason why he would take him home with him. LIU [REDACTED] was in Rosemount as was [REDACTED]. This could happen any days of the week. [REDACTED] must have been about fourteen or fifteen at the time.
153. LIU [REDACTED] was a particularly nasty bully to young people. He used to target certain ones. I was very much one of them. He seemed to be preoccupied with making me suffer and I never got to the bottom of why this was. He would glorify in me suffering.
154. My maternal grandfather died when I was in Oakbank. That was [REDACTED] 1992 and his funeral was on the [REDACTED] 1992. This was incredibly traumatic because I was so close to my grandfather.
155. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1992, I was assaulted by another pupil called [REDACTED]. I was hospitalised. [REDACTED] was very close to one of the senior staff members called LIL [REDACTED] who was another bully. LIL [REDACTED] did not want me to press charges but I did because I didn't want anything like this happening again to me. LIL [REDACTED] didn't and he tried to blackmail me not to press charges. He actually threatened me that if I pressed charges I wouldn't know what had hit me. I don't know if he meant me pressing charges would instigate some kind of oversight of Oakbank and that another agency becoming involved in Oakbank petrified them. I think his threats were motivated by that.
156. He threatened me by saying I had seen nothing yet. Those were his words. I had my arm in a sling and he basically threatened me that that was nothing compared with what would happen if I pressed charges.



157. I had an injury to my right arm. It was a sprain. [REDACTED] kicked me in the back and I fell into a door. There was a sprain in my arm and they saw fit to put it into a sling. That didn't bother me either way but it was very sore.
158. LIU [REDACTED] wanted me to press charges against [REDACTED] but I didn't. For some reason he started targeting, victimising me. He used to call me a liar, a manipulator. Whenever I said anything he would be really negative towards me and dismissive.
159. There was physical abuse going on in the office at Oakbank. Close to where the dining room was, there was a little office. Each unit had an office. They would quite often shut the door to that office and beat people up.
160. A couple of times it happened to [REDACTED]. It happened to KLP [REDACTED] once. They came out of there with marks on their faces. They came out more wound up than when they went in. That's how they used to discipline. Take people in the office and shut the door. It was like a stable door, you could open up the top half but they used to shut it.
161. LIU [REDACTED] was certainly involved in one of those occasions with [REDACTED]. That was in April 1992.
162. IAB [REDACTED] was another one. I think he hit KLP [REDACTED]
163. There was a boy from Dundee, [REDACTED]. He was assaulted in there.
164. You couldn't actually see it but you could hear it. They came out with marks on their faces, very distressed and didn't want to talk about it.
165. LIW [REDACTED] was another staff member who was involved. There was an incident with him. This was on 29 April 1992. I was basically feigning illness because I didn't want to be amongst people, staff, pupils, no one. When you were ill you were able to stay upstairs on your own. On this day, it was a Wednesday, LIW [REDACTED] came up and he pulled me out of bed. He hit me across the face with his right hand, like a slap. He

said that I wasn't unwell and told me to get up. He was Northern Irish. I went onto the floor and he then kicked me. I didn't report it at the time. I did nothing because, what was the point? At that stage I felt everyone was in it together and that it wouldn't go anywhere and would cause more trouble.

166. I never saw **KFJ** assault a child. I got on fairly well with him, he was actually very affable. But he knew what was going on, he knew and did nothing about it.
167. **FYZ** was another staff member. He was the one married to Mrs **[REDACTED]**. I never saw him assault anyone, he was never involved in any of that. I actually saw him being assaulted by a pupil.
168. When kids were taken into the office it was like a commotion going on. You could hear someone being upset, crying out, screaming. It was awful.
169. I remember 6<sup>th</sup> May 1992 very well. I was going to Sister Josie's annual memorial Mass at the Cathedral. **LIU** assaulted me that day. I was in the office. I don't know if I had had an argument the night before with **LIX**. In any event it was nothing to do with **LIU**. However, he decided to carry it on. He unilaterally said I wasn't going to the memorial because of what had happened the previous evening. I said nothing had happened and that it had only been a disagreement. I then walked away from him in the office. He came up behind me, shut the door, threw me against the door and said, "Don't you fucking look at me like that again." He pulled my hair and banged my head against the door. He then opened the door and shoved me out of the room.
170. Later that day I actually apologised to him. That was the thing about Oakbank, you thought you had done something wrong when you hadn't. Oakbank actually perpetuated that notion the children had felt all their lives, that they were no good. They did this deliberately. It was a deliberate ploy by the staff at Oakbank to make these kids feel they were no good and responsible for the abuse that was perpetrated towards them. I don't know if it was a form of control or whatever.

171. I apologised to LIU [REDACTED] and he replied saying, "You will be fucking sorry." He actually took me to the Mass. You got to a point in that place where these things happened and you just didn't question them. Because they happened on a regular basis. It got to a point where you just had to accept it. There was an element of reinforcing that from the authorities.
172. There was another incident. I was in a classroom with Christina Abela, who was a teacher I got on very well with. She was teaching me some music. I think I used to play the French Horn. She had brought one in and one lunchtime I went up to see her. I had told someone I was going up to her classroom.
173. There was a full scale panic about me not being where they thought I should have been. IAB [REDACTED] burst into the classroom and grabbed me by the scruff of the neck. He struck me across the face with the palm of his hand. That seemed to be the way they hit people. He shouted at the teacher saying that I was a "manipulative little bastard."
174. The teacher asked him what the problem was, she didn't understand. She said that I was fine there and to leave me there. She didn't say anything about him striking me. It was like that was normalised. So the teachers knew as well and nobody did anything about it. She was actually very reasonable with him because he had lost his temper.

#### **Reporting of abuse at Oakbank Residential School**

175. LIU [REDACTED] bullied me because I didn't press charges against [REDACTED] and I didn't understand why. I told him I wasn't pressing charges against [REDACTED] because I had been threatened and that I had been told it was being dealt with internally. He said he would believe it when he saw it.
176. After running away on 23 April 1992, the police came to my father's flat looking for me. I remember saying to the police officers who came to my dad's flat that I couldn't go back to Oakbank because I was being abused. The police woman was very nice and



sympathetic but said she had to take me back. I told her of the abuse I was enduring and other people were enduring at Oakbank.

177. I was assaulted by staff member LIW [REDACTED] on 29 April 1992. I didn't report it to other staff at the time but I'm sure I told my social worker about it. She did nothing. She didn't even address it with Oakbank. In my view that is shameful.

### **Leaving Oakbank Residential School**

178. I left Oakbank on the [REDACTED] 1992, two days after my sixteenth birthday. The panel informed me of the decision on the day. My care order was discharged. That was the end of any social work involvement whatsoever. I went back to my dad.

### **Life after being in care**

179. My father got into a relationship with someone in 1992. My mother had gone off with another woman. At that time, it was very emasculating for men to experience that.
180. That was another thing I had to deal with. I suppose my sister and I had subconsciously known my mother was gay. It was a complete surprise to my father.
181. I got my GCSE's when I was eighteen at South Trafford College. I had moved down to Manchester to be closer to my mum. That didn't work out because my mum just didn't want to know. She was with her new partner. My mum said to me her partner didn't like males. So I couldn't know where she lived. I couldn't know anything about her life because her partner had issues with males. That was the excuse she gave to me.
182. I rented rooms, bedsits in Manchester. I was on benefits at the time.



183. I then moved down to Salisbury to go to college and to be nearer my maternal grandmother. As it turned out that was a very good move for me. I ended up in a relationship with a much older man when I was nineteen. That gave me stability. That's when the healing process began in 1995.
184. I then signed up for my A Levels in Bath. I was able to integrate with people there. I gained a lot of confidence from being amongst friendly people who wanted to learn. I became very motivated by that and did exceptionally well in my A Levels during the summer of 1999. I then got into university which was a huge achievement for me bearing in mind I was told at Oakbank, I would go nowhere.
185. I credit my late partner with that. He gave me that stability that I needed. To feel I had a home and that people weren't going to run away and abandon me.
186. My father didn't want to know me when he got into his new relationship. The woman he met, who is now his wife, had a son who had done his standard grades and Highers. He was very reticent about me to her and I was very offended by that. He should have told her about me and my traumatic few years and told her he would be putting his energies into helping me. But he didn't say that, he ran away. He thought if my mother could do it so could he.
187. He acknowledges more than anyone now that that was the wrong thing to do. Had he not done that I may have achieved sooner. Actually that was all I needed, stability, after my experiences, I needed some input from someone to say I was wanted and that I wasn't going to be rejected.
188. At university I transitioned. That was in my final year in 2001
189. When I was two or three years old, we got Sky Television and the Sci-Fi Channel. I remember being obsessed with Wonder Woman, Lynda Carter. I said that was what I wanted to grow up to be. It was fascinating to me. I watched it again when I was twenty-five. I was going into my final year at university and into a professional career.

I thought this was me. This was natural for me and what I wanted to be. I was not actually a gay man. I then transitioned in my final year.

190. Southampton University were absolutely amazing. They were so accommodating. I experienced no discrimination at all. They went above and beyond. There was still a lot of homophobia around at university at the time and I thought I might be discriminated against but everyone was so supportive.
191. It was such a good environment, I excelled. I started on hormone treatment just before my final exams. But I had excelled that year because I felt myself. I did a dissertation on [REDACTED] Trans individuals. I got a first for that which was brilliant. I achieved the highest mark in the year in [REDACTED] which again was huge for me.
192. In 2002, I graduated from Southampton University with a two-one. I was actually in Aberdeen when my tutor phoned me and told me. I can still remember telling my dad I had passed my [REDACTED] degree.
193. I went to [REDACTED] school that year to become a [REDACTED]. I got a scholarship from [REDACTED], a [REDACTED] Scholarship, a Duke of Edinburgh Scholarship and a bursary award for those coming from a disadvantaged background.
194. I then got [REDACTED] in London during the summer of 2003 after passing my [REDACTED]. I was in [REDACTED] who did nothing but [REDACTED]. I spend the first six months of my training in [REDACTED] which was a wonderful experience.
195. I then went to a [REDACTED] in Bristol. I stayed in [REDACTED] there for a while.
196. During this and on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2003, I met the surgeon who was going to carry out my surgery. My father came down from Aberdeen to Edinburgh. I remember the surgeon saying to my dad that he didn't often see fathers at such a meeting. My father said

something I thought was quite profound. He said, "I've known her as a him all her life, but even I know that this is absolutely the right thing for her."

197. I had been evaluated by two psychologists by that point and was on a very strong hormonal programme leading up to my surgery, which was in 2004. Ironically that was at the Murrayfield Hospital in Edinburgh. I'm still in touch with the sister there who was in charge of the programme and I had a wonderful surgeon.
198. I then got involved with a rugby player from France. I left [REDACTED] as I thought I would be moving to France. That didn't happen because he wanted children which was something for obvious reasons I couldn't give him. I had decided then to become [REDACTED] and I'm still doing that to this day.
199. I've been in Manchester working as [REDACTED] for the past four years. I have a house here now, three dogs and you wouldn't recognise the person I am now to the person I was thirty years ago. My experience has been a good one. It reminds me when I get caught up in day to day life, just how far I have come. I only have to look back at Oakbank.
200. It wouldn't faze me at all if I had to give evidence in the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. I would actually be glad in some ways to say that the abuse did not destroy me, despite my experiences.

#### *Family relationship*

201. About ten years ago my father and I had a huge argument. I made a throw away comment during a walk with my father. I said at least my sister had an example to give of her parents in respect of bad and neglectful parenting. That really resonated with him and he told me he knew he had been a bad parent and it all came out, everything. I was extremely upset. There was no challenge to anything I said to him. There was no need to say anything anymore because he was acutely aware of his own failures.

202. My mother knew exactly what was going on back then, far more than she let on. In later years I got back in touch with my mother and it was amazing how much she knew at the time. She told me that she hadn't wanted me going to the Catholic School or to be part of the Catholic Church. She actually married into the Catholic Church, she wasn't born a Catholic. She told me that she had wanted me to go to the local school, local academy and to have a settled upbringing. I remember thinking, what the hell were you doing then? I told her she wasn't powerless, my dad was a very weak man.
203. Because she had had this experience and had lost out to her brother going to university when she was young, she didn't have the bond with me that she had with my sister. Everything was to do with my sister. My sister got the highest mark in Scotland for her Highers, she did exceptionally well. She was offered a place at Cambridge and Durham. Oldmachar School was a very good school and it's a tragedy at the time that I didn't take advantage of it.
204. When my sister left for Durham in 1990 and I started my third year at Oldmachar, my mother thought her job was done. My sister had got to where my mother thought she should be and her job was complete. I was something that was keeping her tied to a relationship she didn't want to be in. I was basically imprisoning her. So I can see why there was very little resistance from her even though she did not think ethically I should have gone to these places. It was an easy get out for her. It was convenient. She has said that to me.
205. My sister was incredibly abusive although she will swear blind that it was the other way round. We don't talk and haven't really for the past twenty years. She is petrified of talking to me. I do take responsibility for some things but the narrative my sister has set is that her life is a disaster and that it is all down to me.
206. We both think our parents were failures but we say it for very different reasons. It is very difficult for my parents to actually hear it. But they could never accuse my sister and I of collusion about making things up because we haven't spoken for so long. Yet we both think, coming from different viewpoints, that our parents were failures and allowed things to happen that should never had happened.

207. The difficulty my sister has in later life is that she went to university at eighteen. She dropped out. [REDACTED] she was studying law at Durham. I had to work and go to college to get my GCSEs and A Levels. I went to the University of Southampton and actually got my degree. I was a lot older at twenty-three when I started university. My sister has struggled to accept the fact that I have made a success of my career. I don't have that same envy or jealousy that she has. So I can't actually empathise with how she feels. It is bizarre to me how she feels because she has had my mother the whole time. My mother's priority was her. Even up to the point of the two of them living in the same street in the same village when my sister had her children.
208. My sister is now a deputy head at a further education college in Leeds. I met her in 2004 and she said that she had heard I had made a success of my life. I didn't push it and changed the subject. When I later told my dad about this he said it was good I hadn't pushed it because she was very jealous of my success.
209. My sister blames me for taking all the attention away from her. Conversely I blame her for never discouraging my parents, certainly my mother. When my mother left, she left me. That was apparent by her actions, moving away. But actually she had left me a long time before that, emotionally. I think my sister was complicit, she certainly didn't do anything to stop that and at times actually encouraged it.
210. She never told me when my grandmother was seriously ill and the last time I saw her was when she was on her death bed in hospital in Salisbury hospital. I lived around there at the time.
211. My sister is now fifty and I don't think she quite knows what to say. She revelled in cruelty towards me. Because my sister was probably the primary source of my feeling dysphoric, she was the one who perpetuated this saying I was gay and made it feel like something awful and wrong.
212. I don't have a relationship with her children. I would never deprive, no matter what went on in the past, her children a relationship with their family. Her youngest son was

born in 2007. He is now staying off school because he is being bullied. I heard this through my father. They don't know what to do and I think my sister is very embarrassed by it. She is acutely aware of what happened when I stayed off school and has said she is not going to be to her son what her mother was to me.

213. It is difficult for me to think that my nephew is struggling with what may be other issues and history is repeating itself. Perhaps the one person who would understand what he is going through is me. For whatever reason, my sister has not sought to try and rebuild the bridges between us. My nephew doesn't know me from Adam and that's dreadful. They have no idea of my journey. I hold my sister responsible for that. She was a large part of me growing up. In no small way she contributed to my problems and it is tragic we now have history repeating itself.
214. I visited my mother in 2016. I decided to turn up on her doorstep. I said hello are you [REDACTED]? I asked if she knew who I was and she said she didn't. I asked her to have a closer look and think and very quickly she said she thought she may be my mother.
215. I don't have a relationship with her now. That is because she wanted the same rules that she had thirty years ago. She used to say to me when I was fifteen that our relationship had to be on her terms. I told her that isn't how relationships work and that I had far too much self-respect. So I've left it with her and I'm now fine with that. I like the woman and she has more self-awareness than probably my father has. This is probably why she couldn't handle a relationship with me now.

### **Impact**

216. My father retained his flat in Aberdeen. I lived there for a year. I didn't go out for a whole year. If I did go out it was very early in the morning whilst everyone was asleep. That would be to go and get cigarettes. That was my existence for a year. I didn't go to college. I couldn't face people. It was post-traumatic stress disorder. I think people would say that nowadays. That's what I was suffering for that period of time and it went on for a very long time. These traumatic events had punctuated my young life.

217. Oakbank has had a huge impact on my life. I would not be doing this career now were it not for what I witnessed at Oakbank. It was because those staff members did what they did, thinking they could get away with it. These were vulnerable young people. They did it and they knew what they were doing. That made me angry and that the authorities sat there at those meetings, even with me sat there with my arm in a sling, and did nothing.
218. Because of the abuse, I suffered from imposter syndrome, which for me was particularly acute. I thought, what the hell am I doing here? My self-esteem was so low before, during and after Oakbank. Even as [REDACTED] who is very good at [REDACTED] I still didn't think I should be there. That I was an imposter. That I didn't merit being where I was. That is an overhang from my childhood and Oakbank, which, at times, has made me feel that I shouldn't be where I am. That is still with me, even now, sometimes.
219. I would say my experiences have hugely affected my relationships. I am acutely aware of signs of abuse. I have great difficulty trusting people. Possibly my parents have had more of an impact on my relationships than Oakbank has. It's the signs of abuse that I look out for. Signs of aggression. Those were particularly acute in Oakbank. It was immediately after Oakbank that it was apparent I had been damaged. I just did not want to be amongst people. This was a direct reaction to being made to be with people I didn't want to be with. I just shut myself away.
220. I think my transition has actually helped me. Initially I thought back to those days but since I transitioned, it is almost like I can talk about it dispassionately. Even though I personally know this happened to me and I can still feel the feeling I had back then, I don't think it impacts me as much now as it did before I transitioned. I suppose in many ways it did happen to a different person. I think subconsciously, the baggage I carried had to be left behind and it was when I transitioned. I moved on. That doesn't stop the imposter syndrome however.



## **Treatment/support**

221. I haven't been for counselling or had direct support in terms of the abuse I suffered at Oakbank.

## **Reporting of Abuse**

222. I reported the abuse one year after leaving Oakbank. There was an enquiry into Oakbank and I was the only pupil giving evidence. This was run by Grampian Regional Council as an internal enquiry. I gave a statement to that. That was in 1993. I also attended at the hearing and gave my evidence. That was held at Woodhill House Council Building in Aberdeen.
223. It was the councillor for the Ward of Footdee, the harbour area. He had received complaints from the prostitutes in the harbour about Oakbank. He was in the local news complaining about it. Mrs [REDACTED] actually put me on to him. I had maintained contact with her. She told me the councillor was asking for an enquiry into Oakbank and said I should go and give him a statement which could support him and provide further ground for an enquiry. Particularly coming from a former pupil.
224. So I did that. I contacted the councillor and he took a statement from me. The statement related to the abuse I suffered whilst I was at Oakbank.
225. It wasn't until the next January that they published the report. The feedback I got from the councillors was that they heard evidence from staff members. I was the only former pupil they heard evidence from. They were absolutely shocked apparently by what they heard from me. It was very impactful.
226. Nothing happened with regards to the structure of management oversight which I had emphasised needed to change. This was because Oakbank was unregulated. It was independent but funded by Grampian Regional Council. Indeed, Grampian Regional Council members were on the board of Oakbank.

227. It struck me as being a dysmorphic relationship between the council and Oakbank. In some ways they were heavily involved in Oakbank, they were subsidising it, but at the same time it retained its independent status. I could not reconcile this. How could they allow children to be placed in an unregulated environment and a place they did not really know what was going on in. If they were genuinely shocked by what I was saying, then they had absolutely no idea of what was going on in Oakbank.
228. I would like to think my evidence changed attitudes about placing children there and that it started the gradual decline and ultimately the demise of Oakbank.
229. In 1994, I reported the abuse to the police. I think they were investigating something else to do with Oakbank and they approached me. They took a statement from me about the abuse I had suffered. I heard nothing further about it. Nothing happened.
230. I assumed at that juncture I wasn't the only one giving evidence and that someone must have mentioned my name.

## **Records**

231. In 1997, I was considering litigation against Grampian Regional Council because they placed me at Oakbank. I was thinking of civil litigation against the abuse I had suffered. I was able to access my records then. This isn't something I would ever recommend to young people. Particularly without support. It's very upsetting to see third hand accounts of things you have said.
232. It did however highlight social services thinking at the time. They didn't attribute blame elsewhere. They blamed me for the situation I was in. That I was responsible for it. The dispassionate way they spoke about the 'dead nun', the event that had such an enormous impact on my life. It was such a dismissive way of describing it. That was upsetting.

233. There was one reference in my records which stated Oakbank had failed to report a significant event. That was a surprise to me because I had reported it to social services at the time.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

234. Authorities simply cannot place children in an unregulated independent placement without oversight. The children's panel system needs to change drastically. There needs to be more active judicial involvement in child protection in Scotland. I think the children's panel system is very laissez-faire.
235. It is a far more proactive system in England. Our system in England is not perfect but children are far more protected than they are in Scotland today. There have been failures by agencies in England whereby children have been abused. Those fortuitously are matter that have not been before the court. I think the systems in Scotland need to change radically. There needs to be far more judicial oversight of children's placements. There needs to be an independent persons appointed, like a children's guardian, every time there are care proceedings involving a child. It is amazing what checks and balances they offer and they do regulate local authorities.
236. There needs to be Scottish Government oversight of any institution caring for young people and regular reviews of registration of those institutions.
237. There needs to be recourse which would allow young people to be able to freely complain about their care and to feel there aren't consequences for making allegations.
238. There needs to be better training in foster care. There isn't one size fits all. We have to think creatively, facilitate other placements created for that specific child and that child's needs. A place like Oakbank, they just put problem children in there regardless. There did not seem to be any oversight from the authorities who placed the children in Oakbank. From authority's miles away, there was even less oversight of Oakbank.

That needs to change. I don't believe any child should be placed in an institution away from their home environment.

239. Early intervention, something we regularly fail on in England. Our involvement can be far too late and obvious signs have been missed by the time [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] read the chronology and ask social work what happened at particular points. Did they intervene, call a child protection conference, and seek legal advice at that juncture? Quite often it is years later they are intervening, opportunities have been missed and the child has suffered as a result.
240. Agency involvement is far more integrated than it ever was when I was at Oakbank but mistakes are still being made. It cannot be where allegations of abuse are made, the establishment is allowed to continue with a belief it will just organically demise. This is what seems to have happened to Oakbank. Nothing was being done to address the abuse that was going on there. Oakbank ostensibly failed because it went bankrupt, it ran out of money.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

241. I hope there are going to be findings that abuse took place at Oakbank. I'm hopeful of that. It would then validate what I have said for very many years and may bring closure for many young people. I would hope there was an acknowledgment that the children should never have been treated the way they were at Oakbank. I would hope that would make a difference. Even if the people are now in their forties or fifties. I can't imagine how it has been for contemporaries who were at Oakbank with me and I don't know what's happened to them. I would dread to think what's happened to a lot of them.
242. I would hope if anyone was criminally liable that they would be charged. That there would be enough evidence for a reasonable prospect of success in a trial. I hope that people would have the strength to give evidence against these individuals who

perpetrated this abuse. I realise that thirty years on, a lot of these individuals may be dead.

243. I want an acknowledgement that this abuse took place. It should never have taken place. Those young people should never have been in that environment in the first place. They were vulnerable young people that were failed by the authorities. And that these young people were not responsibly for the abuse inflicted upon them.

**Other information**

244. 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.

HZY

Signed.....

Dated..... 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2022 .....