

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IHV [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is IHV [REDACTED] My maiden name, and the surname I used at the time I was in care, is IHV [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1975. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Dennistoun in Glasgow and lived at home with my mum and brother. My mum's name is [REDACTED] but she is known as [REDACTED] and my brother's name is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is nine years older than me. I've never known my dad.
3. I went to St Denis' Primary School. Then, I went to Charlotte Street Secondary school for a while, but that got knocked down before I went into third year. It was amalgamated with St Mungos, but I went to Whitehill Secondary School because it was closer to us. I got on well at school. I was quite academic and I was in the top set in all of my classes.
4. Life at home was difficult. My mum had mental health issues. Looking back on it now, it was probably schizophrenia, but I didn't know that at the time. She liked to blame me for everything. She would shout at me and say she wished she'd never had me. Sometimes, she would just shout and scream at the walls. You could hear her from the street. I tried to escape it by staying at friends' houses quite a lot. I was embarrassed and ashamed of the way she was and lashing out was my defence system. If other kids said anything about my mum, I'd probably have battered them to

shut them up. All people saw was me acting out. No one ever asked the child what was wrong back then.

5. I lashed out by doing the usual stuff, truanting from school, going out with my friends and doing silly things. My friends would shoplift boxes of chocolates. I didn't shoplift. I couldn't do that. I couldn't steal anything, but I was with them when they did and I got tarred with the same brush.
6. When I was around thirteen, social work became involved and everything happened very quickly after that. A social worker would visit the house because of the truancy and shoplifting. I ended up at maybe three Children's Panel Hearings. My mum would go to the hearings with me. She was on tablets for her mental health, but it was never spoken about by the social worker or the Children's Panel. It was like the worst kept secret. Everyone knew what was going on, but no one wanted to talk about it, not even my brother.
7. At the third Children's Panel Hearing, I was removed from my mum's care and sent to an Assessment Centre in Johnstone called Newfield. That was in 1988 and I was thirteen years old at the time.

Newfield Assessment Centre, Johnstone

8. I was driven to the assessment centre in Johnstone by a social worker. I can't remember her name. I think we went straight from the Children's Panel. I can't actually remember arriving there or my first day. I just remember the noisiness. I wasn't used to that.
9. I think there were around ten to fifteen boys and girls in the assessment centre, ranging from around eleven to sixteen years old. The boys and girls were separated into different dorms. In the girls' section, the dorms were upstairs. I think all the rooms were either singles or doubles. I had a room to myself. It was quite small with a single bed and a chest of drawers in it. There was also a common room upstairs which had

seating and a TV. Downstairs, there was a kitchen, dining room and another common area with a table tennis table. I wouldn't say the assessment centre was secure, but you couldn't just come and go as you pleased.

10. I don't remember the names of any of the staff or kids. I just remember there being a lot of male carers for the girls, which I thought was strange.

Routine at Newfield Assessment Centre Johnstone

General Routine

11. The staff got us up in the morning. We got showered, dressed and went down for breakfast. There must have been schooling in there but, to be honest, I can't really remember it. I don't think there was much focus on education.
12. During the day, it was quite chaotic. There were kids there from all different backgrounds, so it was a bit wild. There was a lot of fighting, arguments and people kicking off. We had some chores to do like cleaning our own rooms and cleaning some of the other rooms. The staff also took small groups of us out sometimes to the pictures or bowling. In the evening, I think we went to bed around 10:00 pm.

Mealtimes/Food

13. At mealtimes, we all ate together in the dining room. We would be supervised by the staff. The staff were always around. The food was ok and nothing particularly stands out about mealtimes.

Washing/bathing

14. The girls used a communal shower room. I can't describe it because I just can't picture it now. I don't remember the male staff ever coming into the girls' shower room at the assessment centre.

Clothing/uniform

15. When I arrived at Newfield, I think I just had the clothes I was wearing. Each of the kids were given a clothing budget. If you needed anything new, the staff would take you out to the shops to buy clothes. They used to try to take us to the shops in Johnstone, but there were no decent shops there. We'd usually end up going into town to buy clothes and I got to pick what I wanted. The budget wasn't much, but it was enough to get everything I needed. I thought it was great. My mum was always skint so it was more than I got at home.

Healthcare

16. I don't know if there was a matron or a nurse at the assessment centre because I don't think I needed any medical treatment while I was there. I did have bumps and bruises from fighting or abuse, but no broken bones or anything like that.

Review of care / detention

17. I did have a key worker at the assessment centre. They would report any incidents to social work. No matter what happened, it always seemed to be turned around on me, so it was my fault. I also went to another Children's Panel while I was in there, but I can't remember what happened at it.
18. A social worker visited me now and again. It must have only been two or three times in the two or three months I was there. It felt like more of a tick box exercise on her part, rather than actually checking on me. She never asked how I was getting on or how I was feeling.

Family contact

19. I think my mum came to the assessment centre once while I was there, but I got to go home a few times too. The staff used to give us pocket money and we used that for home visits. I'd walk along to the station in Johnstone and get the train into Glasgow

Central. From there, I'd get the bus to Dennistoun. I'd be home for a night, two at the most if it was a weekend. Then, it was up to us to get ourselves back to the assessment centre.

Abuse at Assessment Centre (Name Unknown), Johnstone

20. The general feeling in the assessment centre was one of intimidation. I found it intimidating that the staff were mostly men. We couldn't lock our bedroom doors from the inside so they would come into our rooms at night. There was one male staff member in particular who came into my room a few times when I was in bed. He was maybe in his forties and I just remember he had a big forehead. I found him really creepy. He was the reason I tried to run away for the first time. I was terrified and wanted to get away from him so I managed to take one of the bars off the window in my room. I was with one of the other girls and we climbed out and onto the roof. We couldn't get down from there. They had to get us down. I seem to remember them saying they were going to get the police and the fire brigade, but I don't think they had to in the end. We got down somehow.
21. The carers in there were always rough. I only have memories of the male staff. They would batter you, punch you, kick you, pull you about and lock you in cupboards. It was really bad. They were always pinning you down and putting your arms up your back. It wasn't restraining. They were trying to hurt you. These types of things were a daily occurrence in there. It didn't just happen to me though, it happened to everyone.
22. I was quite fiery. I answered back and if I felt threatened, I lashed out. You had to stand up for yourself in there. When it came to staff and the other residents, if you didn't fight your way out of it, you would be even more of a target.
23. There was one time I specifically remember being hit by male staff. Then, I was flung in one of the rooms downstairs and locked in for quite some time. There was [REDACTED] and tried to slit my wrists. I didn't do it right and I remember hearing the staff making a mockery of me. I had cut myself, but it wasn't too bad. They

didn't give me any medical attention. I remember cleaning the cut myself with tissue paper. Getting locked in one of the downstairs rooms happened to me a couple of times.

24. I think I managed to run away from the assessment centre twice. I ran home to my mum. I told her what they were like in the assessment centre but she would just phone the police to take me back. The police would come out and I'd end up in the cells at Baird Street then back at the assessment centre.
25. The police never even asked why I'd run away. They were just as bad as the staff in there. They were very heavy handed. I remember once, the police came to get me at my mum's. Two male officers pinned me to the living room floor with my arm up my back, hit me, then threw me in the van. It wasn't just a one off though. They were heavy handed every time I ran away from the assessment centre and after that, when I was at Kerelaw. It happened in front of my mum, and my brother a couple of times. I would be screaming that I didn't want to go back, but no one did anything about it.
26. All the staff in the assessment centre knew what was going on. You would hear them making jokes, laughing about it and making fun of you. It was really terrible and I didn't want to be there. It was just constant intimidation, threats and fear.

Leaving Newfield Assessment Centre, Johnstone

27. It was the Children's Panel who made the decision that I should leave the assessment centre and go to Kerelaw, but they didn't say how long I'd be there. I remember my mum being at that Panel Hearing. Again, my home life was never mentioned. Various incidents at Johnstone were brought up, but not what the staff did to me, only my behaviour. It was always like I was just this bad child for no reason. They were never interested in why.

Kerelaw Residential Unit, Stevenson

28. I'm not sure if I went straight to Kerelaw from the Panel. I think I must have gone back to the assessment centre to get my stuff, so maybe I went to Kerelaw from Johnstone. I can't remember whether it was a social worker or my keyworker from the assessment centre who drove me there.
29. Kerelaw was even further out than the assessment centre. I came from Dennistoun and the only grass you saw there was in the parks. Kerelaw felt like it was right out in the country, in the sticks. It was just these big concrete buildings surrounded by grass and fields. It was scary.
30. When I was at the assessment centre in Johnstone, the names of other places were mentioned. Kerelaw was one of them, but I didn't know anything about it. I heard some horror stories from other kids though. Apparently, it was the worst of the ones that had been mentioned. It sounded like a prison.
31. I remember driving into the grounds and seeing all these different buildings. There was a secure unit with a big, barbed wire fence around it. Then, there were two non-secure units, one for the boys and one for the girls. There were other buildings too, but I'm not sure what they were all used for. In my building, the bedrooms and shower room were upstairs. Downstairs, there was a kitchen, dining room, lounge and staff room. I'd say there were around sixteen girls in my building ranging from maybe twelve to sixteen years of age.
32. I used to see a guy in a suit walking around. I think he was in charge of the full place, but I don't remember his name. Most of the staff in the girls' unit were male. I don't remember all their names. I had a keyworker called EUM and there was a guy called zFSL. They were both ok. There was an art teacher called Matt George. There was a guy called John Muldoon who worked in the boys' unit but came to the girls' unit a lot. There was also a guy called IHW who was a bit of a lookalike. I only remember one female carer. She was an English woman and she was dating one of the teachers.

Routine at Kerelaw Residential Unit

First memories

33. The day I arrived, I was taken to a red brick building which was the girls non-secure unit. I was taken into the staff office and then up to my bedroom. There were single rooms and double rooms. I was put in one of the double rooms with a girl called [REDACTED]. It was quite a big room with big windows.

Mornings and bedtime

34. In the morning, the staff would come round and chap all the doors between 07:30 am and 08:00 am to get us up. We'd get ready and go downstairs for breakfast. All the girls ate together. After breakfast, we went to school. Once we were finished at school, we had some free time. I think lights out was around 10:00 pm.
35. Everything in the girls' unit was locked up at night. It wasn't secure or locked during the day, but you couldn't just come and go as you pleased. If you tried to walk out, during the day, without permission, one of the staff would have grabbed you.

Mealtimes/Food

36. Mealtimes at Kerelaw were supervised. There were always staff around, but they wouldn't be standing over you. The food was alright. My mum couldn't cook. When I lived with her, I was used to living on pot noodles and chips and coleslaw. So, I didn't think the food at Kerelaw was bad.

Washing/bathing

37. I can't remember if we had to shower at certain times or whether there was maybe a rota. It was a communal shower room, but I'm sure the showers had curtains around them. There was no privacy where we got dried and dressed though. The staff, including the male staff, would just wander about in the shower room constantly. You

could be just out the shower, in a towel, and a male member of staff would walk in. They just walked into our bedrooms when we were changing too. I always felt it was really inappropriate.

Clothing/uniform

38. At Kerelaw, I got a clothing budget, the same as I did in the assessment centre. It wasn't bad. The staff used to take us out to Saltcoats or Irvine if we needed anything.

Leisure time

39. In our free time, we could use the common rooms. There was also a wee room with space invaders in it. The staff had a van and at night or at the weekend, they would take groups of us out to the park or the beach. Sometimes, it was to the cinema or bowling. It would usually be groups of about eight of us with two staff.
40. I don't remember going on any overnight trips or holidays while I was there.

Schooling

41. The school, if you could call it that, was on the grounds of Kerelaw. The boys and girls mixed at school. I really didn't get any education at all while I was there. It was nuts. That's the only way I can describe it. I was quite academic, but you couldn't do any work in class, even if you wanted to. There was no way you could concentrate. There was always a radio on and people jumping about. Most of the teachers didn't even try. They used to just stand about smoking while the kids smoked hash in class. It was a free for all.
42. We did the most work in art with the art teacher, Matt George. I remember the history teacher paid me £5 to do my work in his class so I could pass my exam and get him a result. Most of the teachers didn't care about teaching you. It wasn't an education, it was a joke. Despite that, I managed to get some standard grades in art, history and science.

Healthcare

43. I don't remember there being any resident doctor or nurse at Kerelaw. None that I ever saw. If you needed to see a doctor, the staff took you to Stevenson.
44. The girl I shared a room with, [REDACTED] had been through the system since she was born. She had epilepsy. She was on medication for it which the staff used to give her. [REDACTED] had epileptic fits in our room at night. We were locked in at night and I was just left to deal with her when she had a fit and put her in the recovery position. It's really horrible seeing someone coming round from that. I would shout on staff and they would come eventually. I think I remember paramedics having to come at one point, but it seemed like the more it happened, the less medical attention she got.

Chores

45. We did have chores to do, but it wasn't bad. We had to keep our own rooms and the unit clean, but we all pitched in to clean the common areas.

Pocket Money

46. The staff used to give us weekly pocket money. I can't remember exactly how much it was, but that's how we'd buy cigarettes and things. I remember getting extra money on our birthdays. £50 rings a bell. At Christmas we got extra money as well as a small present. That was the first I'd been given a Christmas present because I didn't get any at home.

Review of care / detention

47. My social worker, the same one I had at the assessment centre, came to visit now and again. Just like before, it was just a tick box exercise for her. I also went to Children's Panel Hearings every so often. My mum and the social worker would be there. The Panels were always the same. They weren't interested in how things were. They thought I was a bad child and that was that.

External Inspections

48. I think I do remember having one inspection. All the rooms were cleaned and we all had to be on our best behaviour. No one spoke to us one on one.

Family contact

49. My mum visited me a handful of times the whole time I was there. She didn't stay long. You'd be lucky if it was half an hour. She used to always complain that she didn't get money from social work to get there. I didn't see my brother at all. He was at the kind of age where he was always out partying.

Home/Day Leave

50. We got leave home leave and day release at Kerelaw. When we told staff we were going home or got day release to go into town, they would give us our train fare plus a couple of extra pounds. A lot of the time, we would just take the money and use it to buy drink. Everybody used to do it and the staff obviously knew about it, but they didn't do anything. They kept giving us money at the drop of a hat. For me, somebody who never had any pocket money, it was great. Kids would come back to Kerelaw drunk all the time. Most of the time they'd just sneak into their rooms. They would only get punished if they were rowdy. I think the staff just let us do it to get rid of us for a couple of hours.
51. If I got day release, I usually took [REDACTED] with me and we would go to my pals' houses. I was in my pals houses more than I was my own. When I did go home for a night, I wouldn't go back when I was supposed to. The police would get called and I'd try to run, but they'd grab me, put me on the ground, kick and punch me, then throw me in the van. I'd usually get a dig in the ribs as they threw me in the van too. I'd be taken to Baird Street, then back to Kerelaw.

Discipline

52. There were sometimes punishments that didn't involve physical abuse. The staff would take away pocket money or stop you going out to the shops or places like that. They would say your privileges were revoked. They would give you these types of punishments for anything though. It could be as little as a member of staff being in a bad mood.
53. The staff were always threatening us by saying we'd be sent to the secure unit. When I left Whitehill Secondary School, a girl I'd been at school with was stabbed and died. The Girl who killed her was put in the secure unit at Kerelaw. So, I knew exactly the type of people in there. It was terrifying.

Abuse at Kerelaw Residential Unit

54. There was always something going on in Kerelaw whether it was arguing or fighting between the girls or violence from the staff. I feel like I experienced more violence in the assessment centre in Johnstone, but there was definitely a constant threat of violence in Kerelaw too. I think it felt less because I got to know more of the staff in Kerelaw, so there wasn't as much violence directed at me. The night shift staff were more violent than the day shift staff because we never got to know them as well. More of the day shift staff came across as friendly, but there were a few creeps as well.
55. John Muldoon worked in the boys' unit, but he would come in to the girls' unit regularly. By reputation, we knew how bad he was. Everyone was shit scared of him. He put the fear of God in people because he would just batter you for no reason.
56. Matt George, the Art teacher, always tried to be really touchy feely. He would come up behind me in class and get uncomfortably close. I just used to move away and make an excuse. I remember once, when I was in the TV room in the unit, I had a migraine and he wanted to massage me. There was no one else in the room and he gave me a head massage. As he was massaging my head, his hands moved down

and he tried to touch my breasts. That's when I kicked off and a female member of staff walked in, so he stopped. He was really creepy. I don't know if he did martial arts or something like that, but he knew about pressure points. That's what he used to threaten us with.

57. He also used to take us to his house in Largs. I've been in his house loads of times. He would take two to six of us there on the premise that he had to pick something up from home. He said he had a wife, who worked in Frasers, and two daughters. They were never there when I was, but I saw pictures of them in the living room.
58. When we were in his house, he would ask girls individually to come into another room with him. They were never away very long. I made sure that I always stayed in the living room with the other girls. It felt off, but I never had any girls tell me that he touched them or anything.
59. There was a member of staff called [IHW]. I can't remember his surname. He was a bit of a [REDACTED] lookalike. He made me feel uncomfortable and I know for a fact that he was sleeping with some of the resident girls. I think he was in his twenties.
60. I would say I was physically abused at least once a month. There would be male staff pinning you to the floor, lying on top of you, hitting, kicking and punching you. There was also a constant feeling of being threatened with sexual abuse as well. That would make me lash out. Whenever I felt threatened, I kicked off. I had to. The violence happened so often that it became normalised and I can't really remember any specific incidents.
61. It's hard to describe how Kerelaw was. Sometimes it was alright. Other times, things would kick off and there would be a riot. Staff would run in from other units and that's when they would grab you and you'd get hit. There was never a quiet space, it was just full on with totally wild characters. It was constant put downs and emotional abuse too. Some of the staff spoke to us like a piece of dirt on their shoe.

Reporting of abuse at Kerelaw Residential Unit

62. I told my mum about the abuse each time I ran away. I also told the police about it when they came to get me and took me to Baird Street Police Station. No one did anything about it.
63. All the staff at Kerelaw knew what was going on. The staff who weren't abusive were just the best of a bad bunch. I got on ok with some of them and even though they weren't abusive themselves, they knew what was happening and did nothing to stop it. They didn't even try to protect us.

Leaving Kerelaw Residential Unit

64. I left Kerelaw when I was sixteen years old. I had a boyfriend at the time called [REDACTED]. He's dead now. We met at a disco and he was in another institution, I think it was Kibble. We started a relationship and I fell pregnant six to eight months later.
65. When I told the staff at Kerelaw that I was pregnant, they took me to the doctors. Initially, one of the staff talked about fostering me. His wife was pregnant too and they lived in Ayr, but that didn't happen. The staff also spoke about me going into supported accommodation. I think it was some kind of mother and baby unit. In the end, that didn't happen either.
66. They said I needed to learn skills that I would use after I left. They put me on what they called 'independent living'. I still stayed in the same room at Kerelaw, with [REDACTED] but they gave me a weekly budget to buy my own food. I wasn't allowed to get my meals from the kitchen in Kerelaw anymore. I had to buy and cook my own food. There was a little kitchen and fridge that I could use.
67. Not long after that, I got into a fight with a girl who was sleeping with one of the staff. The staff member got involved and I was kicked out. I was maybe six months pregnant

when I was told to leave. It all happened really quickly. One minute I was there, the next I was out. The staff arranged for me to go to a local authority flat.

Life after being in care

68. When I moved into the flat in Shettleston, it had no flooring or furniture. I was given a grant to get what I needed. I think a social worker came to visit me once or twice, but that was it. I was sixteen, pregnant and on my own. I had to rely on my friend's mum and dad to help me do up the flat.
69. My boyfriend, [REDACTED], got out of Kibble around the same time as I left Kerelaw. He moved in with me although the flat was just in my name. Our daughter was born three days after I turned seventeen. Her name is [REDACTED]. I was getting benefits of around £20 per week and milk tokens. Then, I managed to get a job working in a shop at The Forge.
70. [REDACTED] was very controlling and he was sleeping with other women. I eventually got rid of him when [REDACTED] was about two or three. Even after I got him out, he would turn up at my flat and kick the door in.
71. When I was in my early twenties, someone who worked in the shop next to mine stayed overnight at my flat. He sexually assaulted me in my own bed. After that, I moved back to Dennistoun. I had my son, [REDACTED] when I was twenty-four. I was in a relationship with [REDACTED] dad but he was a drinker and a gambler so that broke down. I ended up working three jobs at one point to look after my kids.
72. I met my husband and we moved to Uddingston. We've been together now for eighteen years. We have a son called [REDACTED]. My husband was really supportive of me and after [REDACTED] was born, I went to Motherwell College to do an access to nursing course. I then went on to study nursing at uni. I graduated with distinction and did district nursing in Coatbridge for a while. After that, I went to do my Health Visiting course at masters level. I've been working as a Health Visitor for the last six years.

Impact

73. As an adult, I've always sought out care, but not always in a positive way. I've found myself in abusive relationships and I've put up with the abuse for longer than I should have. I tend to overcompensate, especially when it comes to my kids. My husband always jokes that I have something about a full fridge. That obviously comes from not having much in the house as a child.
74. I do have an ok relationship with my brother now, but not with my mum. I don't like her to be honest. She is a taker and a jealous person. She doesn't talk about my time in care at all. She doesn't give me credit for any of the things I've achieved, despite my time in care. I'm there for her if anything happens, but other than that, I don't really bother with her.
75. I do think about the lack of proper education I had in third and fourth year. I was bright and, despite truanting, was doing well academically before I went into care. I don't understand why they just didn't send me to a local school. If they had, I could have got into a good job much earlier than I did. In fact, I almost didn't get on to the nursing course at college because of my juvenile convictions. I don't think that's right. I definitely feel that minor juvenile convictions should be wiped. It almost stopped me from moving on with my life.
76. There are daily triggers in my job as a Health Visitor, particularly when I have to deal with the police and social workers. I can't stand them, which is obviously challenging. I know they're not all the same and there's good ones and bad ones.

Reporting of Abuse

77. I've never officially reported the abuse I suffered in care. I have told some friends about it, but that's it.

Records

78. I would like to see my records from my time in care. I've been in touch Glasgow City Council to request them but they keep asking me to provide more and more information. When I send it to them, they keep saying they've not received it.

Lessons to be Learned

79. I think there are lessons to be learned before kids get to the stage of being put in care. The process needs to be stripped right back. If a kid is acting out, questions need to be asked about why they are acting out. There might be a very good reason. No one ever looked at my mum and asked if she was part of the problem and for me, she was the problem.
80. I also think there needs to be more training put in place, not just for those working in institutions, but for those sitting on the Children's Panel too. From my experience, people pray on vulnerability. I was in a situation, as a vulnerable child, where most of my carers were male. That was intimidating. There needs to be more female carers looking after young females.

Other information

81. I hope that the work The Inquiry is doing stops similar situations happening to anyone else. It certainly gives people like me a voice.
82. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed. 

Dated. 26/5/2023