

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GHG

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GHG. My date of birth is 1939. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born and brought up in the Scottish Borders. I left school at the age of 15, working initially for a grain merchant, then moving on to do office work in a knitwear factory. I joined the local police force at the age of 22 and worked in various departments for 9 years but left after not being supported for promotion.
3. I went to Moray House, where I did a diploma in youth and community work. As part of the course, towards the end, I did a 6-week non-assessed placement at Tynepark List D School in Haddington. At the end of the placement, I was offered a full-time post as a care worker. After a year I was promoted to the post of senior assistant. I worked there for around eighteen months.
4. At that point my headmaster recommended that I apply for the post of SNR at Balnacraig. I then applied to, and got the position as, SNR at Balnacraig in 1975. After a year and a half, I was given paid leave to complete a post-grad diploma in social work at Dundee university. I worked at Balnacraig until 31 December 1999. My intention was to retire, but I became a [redacted] for the children's panel.

Balnacraig

5. When I went to Balnacraig it was a List D school for girls and was within Perth boundaries. When there were local government changes we were redesignated as a residential school. The school was for 24 girls but rarely were there ever more than 12. The age range was from 12 up to 16 and its purpose was to prepare children for the day that they were going to leave us. Children generally came from a chaotic background. They always had involvement with the social work department, possibly as a result of truancy and would all have been through children's hearings. Some were beyond parental control, and some were there as a place of safety. There were not many girls who were involved in crime.
6. Quite often the girls had been to assessment centres first before they came to us. We would receive a request from the social worker, asking us to consider taking the girl and her circumstances would be assessed. We would also ask for the girl to come to Balnacraig for a visit, if we thought it was appropriate. Following that visit, we would report back on whether we thought she was suitable to come to Balnacraig. We were highly regarded by the children's hearings.
7. [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] of the school when I started and lived in SNR [REDACTED] house at [REDACTED] SGQ [REDACTED] in 1976. When I joined Balnacraig there were two police forces covering our area, Perth City and Perth County. At some point it merged into Perth and Kinross. There were members of the town council and the county council on the Board. SGQ [REDACTED] attended these meetings, which were once a month. I didn't go to these meetings. I am not sure what was discussed at these meetings, but I don't think the board would have been telling SGQ [REDACTED] how [REDACTED] the school, as he was the one with the expertise.
8. My first impression of the culture at Balnacraig was that it was strained. I think the staff had a very good relationship with the children. There was one girl called [REDACTED] from Dundee, who had never had a father figure in her life, and when she was at Balnacraig she decided that I would be that man. On the odd occasion when she 'kicked off' at night she wanted me to be there. Occasionally she climbed on the roof of the building,

so I was called out, even though there was no on-call rota. By the time I got there [REDACTED] was in her bed and I gave her a 'tongue lashing' for her behaviour.

9. At some point, when SGQ [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED], [REDACTED] that some of the girls should be moved on, because [REDACTED] their culture out of the building. So [REDACTED], amongst others, were transferred. I subsequently received letters from [REDACTED] telling me that she had qualified as a nurse and wanted me to be the first person she told. She went on to become a nurse in Guernsey and wrote and told me about this. One day, out of the blue, she turned up at Balnacraig. By this time, she was a woman. I had a chat with her and asked her about the occasion she climbed on the roof at Balnacraig. She said she wanted me to be called out, because she liked me being there when she was going to bed.
10. Mrs [REDACTED] had organised an Easter break for the girls at an outdoor centre on the Isle of Tanera, which is just off Achiltibuie. I was there with Miss GHF [REDACTED] who was a senior assistant. [REDACTED] was there and she had said she wanted to climb Tanera Mor, the hill on the island, and I promised I would climb it with her. I remember at some point I gave her my waterproof over-trousers to wear because it was pouring with rain. When we got back [REDACTED] couldn't wait to tell my wife, when she was visiting the school, about me being really good and giving her my waterproof trousers.
11. These are a couple of examples of the good relationship I had with most of the girls. I think this is a general reflection of the relationship the staff had with the girls.

My time at Balnacraig

12. I joined Balnacraig in January 1975 as SNR [REDACTED] I had applied, and I think the head at Tynepark gave me a glowing reference. I went for an interview. At that time the List D schools were controlled by the social services which was a sub-division of the Scottish Education Department. When I went for interview, as happened back then, my wife came along too. There was the headmistress, and someone from the Scottish Education Department. He was presumably representing Social Work

Services who were the paymaster. I believe at that time my salary was paid 50% by the Scottish Education Department and 50% by the Social Work Departments.

13. I cannot recall if I had to provide other references, apart from the headmaster at Tynepark, but I would probably have had to provide some evidence from Moray House.
14. SNR [REDACTED], at that time, was [REDACTED]. My understanding is that [REDACTED] whose first name was [REDACTED], was asked to leave for undermining [REDACTED]. The headmaster at Tynepark was very friendly with [REDACTED] and I had met her a few times when she visited Tynepark. Her husband was a church minister and a university lecturer. [REDACTED] later that year in 1975. [REDACTED] but I didn't apply. SGQ [REDACTED] position in January 1976.
15. When I arrived, I wondered what I had let myself in for. I realised that [REDACTED] was out of her depth. She was a psychologist and had never done that kind of work before. I think she got the job because her husband was a minister and so was the chairman of the board at Balnacraig. She was not qualified to do this job and got the job for the wrong reasons. I am not saying she was incompetent, but I often had to make allowances for her, because she didn't have the experience she should have had. I know that [REDACTED] Mrs [REDACTED] the revered Miss GXJ [REDACTED] had been SNR [REDACTED], and I never heard anyone say a bad word about her.
16. The staffing structure when I started was abysmal. Before I had arrived, the girls had been involved in a mini riot and there were still marks on the doors where coffee cups had hit them. In all my time there I never witnessed anything like this. From the start, I saw that the girls were quite rebellious. This was possibly something to do with [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who happened to be at Moray House at the same time as me, but he did a residential care course. I had met him a couple of times at Tynepark when he visited with Mrs [REDACTED]. The only member of staff I remember was Ma Mcleod. She worked alongside two or three other young women. At night, there was one night supervisor, who started at 10pm. There would also be one member of day staff who

slept on site and was available for backup if required. The only other name I remember was Mary. I was very conscious that we were understaffed.

17. After qualifying I went back to Balnacraig. Mrs [REDACTED] had been my line manager for just under a year, but SGQ [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] and supported my application for this course. SGQ [REDACTED] turned things around at the school for the better. I don't remember getting any appraisals from Mrs [REDACTED]. One of my jobs was writing the reports for the girls for the children's hearings. Although I had done the work, Mrs [REDACTED] would sign them. This annoyed me, as I did not think it was right. When SGQ [REDACTED] [REDACTED] his attitude was that I had done the work, so I should take the responsibility and sign it. This was the start of a very good relationship I had with SGQ [REDACTED].
18. I was SNR [REDACTED] until Balnacraig went co-educational around 1990. After that, SNR [REDACTED] post was created. I continued as SNR [REDACTED] but added 'social work' to the title. [REDACTED] came in as SNR [REDACTED] head of education. SGQ [REDACTED] SGQ [REDACTED] in March 1992 and at that point [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] to the SNR [REDACTED]. I didn't have the same casual relationship with KRK [REDACTED] that I had with SGQ [REDACTED]. When KRK [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] came in as SNR [REDACTED] of education. [REDACTED] is about nine years younger than me. I am still friendly to this day with [REDACTED] and see him regularly even though I retired 25 years ago. [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] when I retired in 1999. I spent a lot of my time representing the school at the children's panel because of my previous experience.

Personal Influence

19. With Mrs [REDACTED], our relationship was always SNR [REDACTED] to SNR [REDACTED], and I knew my place. With SGQ [REDACTED] I was always aware that he SNR [REDACTED], but we had a friendship as well as a working relationship. We sometimes played pool together.
20. I cannot really say how much influence I had in relation to [REDACTED] of the school. All I can say is that when a placement was coming to an end, the praise I

was receiving on behalf of the school from the social workers and the girls' parents was a reward in itself.

Policy

21. I am not aware of any written policies in relation to the care, including residential care of children.

Recruitment

22. There was no written policy in relation to recruitment. Initially, we probably depended on people who knew the applicants and accepted their references. There were no police checks done, but this changed after a member of staff was dismissed.
23. I have forgotten the name of this individual who was a member of staff. He had made arrangements at the weekend to meet a girl who was home from Balnacraig on weekend leave. He lived in Perth, and the girl lived in Dundee. The mother of the girl had found out, and I think the girl's father warned him to stay away. The member of staff was dismissed by SGQ and members of the board. I can't remember when this would have been. I am sure his family was known to the social work department. He worked there for less than a year.
24. I seem to recall he was a friend of someone who already worked at the school. There would have been an interview because we wouldn't employ someone without a personal interview. I think when he joined, rudimentary background checks were done to ensure his suitability. I remember, after he was dismissed, we persuaded the social work department in Perth to make it possible for us to have details of his offending history. He might have had something on his offending history like shoplifting or a breach of the peace. There was nothing to indicate he was a risk to children, otherwise we would have queried this with his referees who had given him a clean bill of health.

There wasn't much else we could do because we had already sacked him by that point.

Training and policies

25. When I first started at Balnacraig, the Board and SNR made the assumption that I was qualified for the role I had undertaken and did not need any training. I didn't get any sort of induction training and was just really thrown in at the deep end.
26. After a year or so I found out that I could get a fully paid secondment for two years at Dundee University to do a social work diploma. I wasn't actually qualified to do this course but when I was interviewed, they said that because of my background and experience, even although I didn't have a degree, I did have a professional qualification, so they were willing to accept me. The Scottish Education Department even agreed to pay for the course. I did the course full time, and qualified at the end.
27. When I first arrived at Balnacraig, the supervisors were called senior assistants. At some point this title changed to group leader, of which there were four. They each had their own team, and they were responsible for this team. By that time the group leader would have had some kind of qualification.
28. When I arrived, the staff did not need any specific qualifications. It was introduced at some point, that staff being recruited needed to have a certain qualification, but I can't remember what that qualification was. It was close to when I was going to retire in 1999. It may have been called something like a Level 3 SVQ in dealing with adolescents in a residential setting. Those already in employment were required to obtain this qualification to continue working in their role. I did not come from a teaching background, so I arranged for someone to be hired to come in and do this training to the staff. His name was Ron Adam and he had been the deputy head of a school some time ago. Although I organised this, I had to sell the idea to SGQ that he

would be much better to teach staff than I would have been because I was not a natural teacher.

29. When Ron Adam came in, if there were students on placement with us on their college courses, he also became responsible for their supervision.

Discipline and Punishment

30. We had a visiting psychologist and a visiting psychiatrist who saw the girls individually when they arrived. They advised us on how we should treat each girl.
31. Where a child absconded, it was guaranteed that they would not be allowed to go home the following weekend. If a girl ran away and managed to get home, and the social work department had to pick the girl up, then this could be extended to two or possibly three weekends without home leave. When I first started, girls who had run away were put in pale blue nylon sleeved overalls. This was to deter the girls from running away. In some of the statements from girls who had been at Balnacraig, which the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry sent me, they talk about being given blue tracksuits. I don't remember them, and it would seem silly to give tracksuits to girls who might run away.
32. There was also a room, but I can't remember what it was called, where girls were locked in for a period of time. Mrs [REDACTED] didn't get angry with girls because I don't think she could have coped. Instead, she would instruct staff to take girls to this room. Sometimes, the girls would be in this detention room for a day or two and only got out for their meals and to use the toilet. I am not sure what the maximum time a girl would be in there for.
33. All that was in this small room was a bed, a chair and a table. There was a window in this room, but it was made from shatterproof glass. Staff would check on the girl every half hour at least, and there was constantly staff moving about in the corridor. If they were in there because they had kicked off, once the staff were happy they had calmed

down they would be allowed out. Girls would sometimes be put in there if they had absconded, or if they had been behaving badly. I can't think of an example of bad behaviour that would cause you to be put in there but running away may have been a reason. SGQ [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] person who could authorise a girl to be held in the detention room. This room was phased out after SGQ [REDACTED] arrived.

34. Apart from the girls getting put into confinement, or getting their home leave stopped, I am not aware of there being any other form of punishment. SGQ [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] person who could authorise any sort of punishment. There was no written policy about the use of this room, or in general in relation to punishment and discipline.
35. I cannot remember any occasion when any girl was being violent or initiated a fight with staff. The only thing I saw like that was seeing girls who were physically struggling with staff and them being physically restrained. Corporal punishment didn't happen, and there was never any type of physical punishment. If there was any physical punishment by the staff, I never heard of it happening, even the child never mentioned it.
36. All girls should have got home leave every weekend, and it was split into two groups, group A and group B. There were, of course, family circumstances where some girls didn't get any home leave. It might have been that Balnacraig was their only home. There was never an empty school at the weekend. There were always girls there and the staff would always organise something at the weekend for the girls to do. I think SGQ [REDACTED] and I would work alternate weekends to provide some cover.
37. My memory is that every Thursday evening, after the school classes had finished, we had a meeting. I would be sitting with SGQ [REDACTED] and seated down the side of the room were the teachers. Each girl would then be asked to stand up and state their case for getting home leave that weekend. SGQ [REDACTED] would then ask the assembled staff in general, if there was a reason to stop home leave. SGQ [REDACTED] would then make the decision, but a lot of the time the girl would know the answer before she asked. I would imagine the details of being refused home leave would be recorded somewhere and

include who wasn't going home and why. I think this would have been recorded in the daily logs.

Restraint

38. The staff were taught to restrain children using a physical hug. There was no external training in restraint, and I think it would just be picked up by staff on the job. I was in the lucky position, because of my police training, that I personally knew all the permissible restraints which I could have used on the girls, and all the restraints that weren't permissible. I never saw any girl being restrained where I thought the level of force being used was excessive or inappropriate. I was never aware of restraints, or the level of force that was used, as being an issue. Restraints were infrequently used.
39. I have been asked if I was aware of restraint training called Therapeutic Crisis Intervention or TCI. I have never heard of that.

Recording of Discipline/Punishment/Restraint

40. I am not aware of any punishment, discipline or restraint being recorded anywhere, although it may have been recorded in the daybook where staff recorded events on a daily basis.

Child protection arrangements

41. There was no written policy in relation to child protection when I arrived. When Ron Adam came in to train staff and help them obtain their level 3 certificates, as part of that qualification, child protection would be included in that training.
42. There was absolutely no guidance or instruction on how to handle, and respond to, reports of abuse or ill treatment. I don't think there was anything in place, certainly

there were no policies, to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff, or other adults, towards children at Balnacraig. It was all very ad-hoc and there was nothing in writing.

Abuse

43. I am not aware if Balnacraig had a specific definition of abuse that applied in relation to the treatment of children. Basically, I think the assumption was that it was down to common sense whether something would be classed as abuse. In my time at Balnacraig I don't remember ever seeing any behaviour, including excessive or inappropriate corporal punishment or restraint of a child, which I considered to be abuse of a child or children. I know there were times when SGQ [REDACTED] said things to naughty girls, and I can understand why they might have considered it to be abuse. I can't think of a specific example of this. All I know is that SGQ [REDACTED] wanted [REDACTED] a happy school.
44. I never, as SNR [REDACTED], received or had to deal with any complaints of abuse or ill treatment of children at Balnacraig by either staff or other children. If there was ever any incident, I might have been made aware of it, but I have no memory of any of the pupils coming to me with any kind of complaint about a member of staff. I was never aware of any incident being referred to the police in my time at Balnacraig.
45. I do recall one incident when we were sitting in SNR [REDACTED] study. One girl, whose name I can't remember, stood up and ran out the door and down the street. She apparently ran to the police station and alleged to the police that bruising on her face had been caused by SNR [REDACTED] SGQ [REDACTED], who had slapped her. It turned out she had been slapping herself on the face all the way to the police station. The other girls in the room would have seen that she ran out the building without anyone touching her. The police did an investigation, and no action was taken against SGQ [REDACTED]
46. I am not aware of any member of staff being dismissed, for any reason, or any member of staff resigning, because they were the subject of any kind of complaint, when I was

at Balnacraig apart from the member of staff who planned to meet a girl at the weekend which I have already mentioned.

47. If any child was being abused or ill-treated at Balnacraig, I would have thought it would have come to light at, or around the time it was occurring. I don't know, if there had been abuse or ill-treatment, whether the girl would trust the management enough to report anything as they may be worried that it would be covered up. This may prevent the girls from complaining. By no stretch of the imagination was everybody always happy with the staff. If the girl herself didn't want to talk to staff about it, there is a good chance that one of the other girls would speak up and I would get to hear about it from that girl or from other staff. I don't recall any child ever approaching me saying they had been hit by another girl. I remember some girls calling other girls bullies, but they couldn't justify or expand on it to me. In situations like this, there are always the strong and the weak. Sometimes I could spot the weak ones but not always the strong ones.

Allegations of Abuse

48. I have never previously been the subject of any allegations of abuse or ill-treatment of a child or children at Balnacraig when I was in post as SNR

Convicted Abusers

49. I do not know of any person who worked at Balnacraig being convicted of the abuse of a child or children at Balnacraig.

Leaving Balnacraig

50. I left Balnacraig in December 1999, after being there for 25 years, as I decided it was time to retire. When I told the chairman of the Arbroath children's hearings that I was about to retire he told me that I shouldn't let all my experience and knowledge be

wasted, and that I should become a [REDACTED] I took that as a great compliment. As a [REDACTED] my job was when a child disagreed with the panel's decision it would go to an appeal. This would be held at a further panel, or in front of a sheriff, and both would involve advice from me. In this role I had far more involvement with children and their families in this process than I ever did when I was at Balnacraig. [REDACTED] was the most rewarding job I ever had.

Helping the Inquiry

51. I did not see or hear of any abuse while I was at Balnacraig. My impression, as to why these allegations of abuse have not come out before, is that a whole lot of former pupils, who are now women, are refusing to accept their culpability for ending up at Balnacraig in the first place. They have decided, amongst themselves, using the Balnacraig [REDACTED] and have been feeding off each other and are hitting back at the place they can blame for spoiling their childhood.
52. There is a lot recorded, showing that girls who were in Balnacraig, had a lot of things happening to them, prior to their admission to Balnacraig. Similarly, they had a lot of things happening after they were discharged from Balnacraig. It would appear that the social workers were not aware of all the things that had happened to these girls. Some were sexually abused by family members, or friends of the family which, obviously the social workers knew nothing about.

Applicant allegations made against me

[REDACTED] HOB [REDACTED]

53. [REDACTED] HOB [REDACTED] has given a statement to the Inquiry. I remember [REDACTED] HOB [REDACTED], because she was from Perth, and was a dead ringer for a pop singer at the time. [REDACTED] HOB [REDACTED] not only got home at weekends but quite often also got home through the week. Another reason I remember [REDACTED] HOB [REDACTED] was because, one time another girl absconded and went

to HOB's house. I went there with a member of staff, Ma McDonald to collect her. I had sat in the living room, and when I stood up to leave, their Alsatian dog went for me. HOB got up and stood between us and stopped me from getting bitten. HOB got bitten on the leg.

54. At no time did I ever sanction or punish HOB, as far as I remember. She was one of the good girls. I definitely never abused her.

55. At paragraph 48 of her statement, HOB has said,

"A game we used to play was called murderball. The girls would get split into two teams in the recreation room. The aim of the game was to get the ball, which started in the middle of the room into the other team's corner. It was a brutal game. God forbid if there was a girl in the other team who hated you. We used to beat the crap out of each other it was a bit like rugby but there were no rules. Another member of staff and Mr GHG both liked this game."

56. In response to what she said about murderball, I must have been putting on a pleasant face because I hated the game. SNR SGQ liked the game and he wanted it to go ahead. I don't remember it being abusive, but it wasn't a game for girls, and it wasn't something we should have been teaching the girls. I wouldn't have said that the girls beat the crap out of each other, but it was very unladylike. I don't remember girls using it to settle differences if they hated each other.

57. I remember telling SGQ that I didn't think it was suitable for girls, but he laughed it away saying that the girls loved it. I suppose it might now be classed as abusive, but I can't say that at the time I thought it was, and it never occurred to me that it might be considered as that. I just thought it was unladylike and wrong. I probably hated the game as much as the girls did.

58. HOB [REDACTED] goes on to say the following at paragraph 60 of her statement,

"The only thing I really didn't like about Balnacraig was the way another member of staff and Mr GHG [REDACTED] interacted with some of the girls. There was one girl who used to sit on the other member of staff's knee and was all over him. He would sometimes try and encourage me to sit on his knee or on the arm of the chair beside him. I refused. Other girls did the same to Mr GHG [REDACTED] this was inappropriate and it was wrong. There was another girl and she used to sit on Mr GHG [REDACTED] knee."

59. I can understand how it looked, but this was something that happened. My recollection is that if a girl came to sit on my knee, she would be the one to make that choice, and not me. There would be other girls in the room. I was never alone with a girl sitting on my knee. Whether it was right or wrong is for other people's interpretation.

60. A very senior social worker from Forfar, whose name I have forgotten, once said to me that he had visited the school, and there was a girl sitting on SGQ [REDACTED] knee. The senior social worker told me that this wasn't appropriate. To an outsider this probably did seem inappropriate but to the children who were wanting a place on the pecking order, it was better sitting on my knee, and it all felt normal. Nothing happened when the girl was on my knee other than banter.

61. The passage of time hasn't affected my recollection of this, as it is clear in my head that nothing happened with these girls. In relation to the girls sitting on my knee, I don't see this as any different to my fourteen-year-old family relation wanting to sit on my knee. I didn't see it as abuse.

62. HOB [REDACTED] goes on to say the following at paragraph 61 of her statement,

"The other member of staff and Mr GHG [REDACTED] used to call me BB, which was short for boobs and bum."

63. I have no recollection of calling her BB. SGQ was more likely to make up nicknames. I didn't. I can't say SGQ didn't call her that, but I certainly didn't. If she had been called BB, I would certainly say that this was inappropriate.
64. I cannot say if the passage of time has affected my recollection of calling her a nickname because I cannot remember doing it but it is not something I would have done.
65. HOB goes on to say the following at paragraph 63 of her statement,
- "If two girls were fighting in Balnacraig you would be made to put boxing gloves on in the recreation room and fight it out. Another member of staff and Mr GHG would make you. They would make you do this even if you didn't want to fight. The fight sometimes only stopped when there was blood but not always."*
66. I do not accept where she said 'they' would make you do it. I did not make the girls fight. SGQ said this was a way to stop the girls from fighting. I disapproved, and probably had words with SGQ expressing my feelings, but admit that I didn't do anything more about it. I am not sure whether this made any difference as SGQ was unto himself. Where HOB said that the fight sometimes only stopped when there was blood, there is no way that this happened because I would have stepped in and said that enough was enough.
67. Further on in that paragraph HOB says that two girls were boxing, and SGQ was trying to stop it, but they kept on fighting. I don't believe that SGQ would have difficulty stopping the girls fighting. He was a lot of things but if he wanted it to stop it would have.
68. My feelings on boxing were the same as murderball, in that my old-fashioned ideas didn't consider either to be appropriate for girls. I knew there was no point trying to stop the boxing or the murderball because SGQ was SNR.

69. GCR has given a statement to the Inquiry. At paragraph 93 of her statement, she has said,

"I turned sixteen in 1985 and I went to my last children's panel in 1985. Mr GHG came with me. I remember the panel saying I was to go back to Balnacraig, and they would review it again when I turned eighteen. Mr GHG told them that there was nothing more they could do for me at Balnacraig and the panel then decided that I should go back to my mother's."

70. I can't really remember GCR or picture her, but I think she was from Angus. What she has said in that paragraph does not help me remember her. I have never recommended to any children's panel that there was nothing further to offer a girl following the panel insisting she should remain in Balnacraig. If she had turned sixteen, there is no way that they wouldn't review her again until she was eighteen, because she couldn't be there for two years without there being a panel in that period of time. This could not have happened.

71. I never sanctioned or punished GCR and I can say that even though I don't remember her.

72. GCR goes on to say the following at paragraph 90 of her statement,

"I got taken back to Balnacraig in a police van after running away one time and was assaulted by Mr GHG when I arrived back. He grabbed me by the throat and pulled me out of the van and then pushed me into the main building. The police and staff members would have seen this but must have thought it was okay because they said and did nothing. I ended up lashing out and kicking Mr GHG".

73. She has said that the police stood by when I grabbed her by the throat and pulled her out of the van. That was not the way that I worked. If there was difficulty getting her out of the van I would have asked the police for assistance. There is no way any sane

person would assault a child who is in the presence of the police. From my memory I have never grabbed a girl at any time by the throat. As far as I am concerned GCR GCR has an incorrect memory.

74. The passage of time has not affected my memory. Although I cannot remember GCR, this doesn't mean I wouldn't have remembered pulling a girl by the throat from a police van. It simply was not me. There is no explanation that makes sense to me that would give her a reason why she would say this about me. If I had been trying to manhandle a girl, I would have gone for the arm and put it up her back and would never grab somebody by the throat because that would be dangerous.

75. I would accept that if this had happened it would have been classed as abuse, but I would also say that if it had happened, as she has described, the police would have done something about it.

GHE

76. GHE has given a statement to the Inquiry. I remember GHE. She was a Yorkshire lass and was a bit of a pain. Because SGQ was from Barnsley I thought they would get on well.

77. At paragraph 92 of her statement, she has said,

"I jumped up onto the chair and put my foot to the window. Unfortunately the window closed in on me. Mr GHG then came up and started shouting at me. He pinned me up against the wall by my throat. I remember his face was close to my face and he was spitting in my face."

78. Basically, this never happened. I am not saying that I wasn't cross and didn't have an argument with her, but there is no way I pinned her against the wall by her throat and spat in her face. As far as I am concerned, I was always professional. There were times where I might grab a girl by the arm but never by the throat. What she has described would not be my way of dealing with someone who was out of control.

79. The passage of time has not made me forget the circumstances of this incident. This girl was very hostile to authority. From my memory of her, I wouldn't be surprised at her making up false allegations because she hated being at Balnacraig. I think she may have made these false allegations to get back at me or at the school. Within her statement GHE also talks about doing her GCSE exams at Balnacraig. This is not correct as we don't do GCSEs in Scotland. This is another example of something that she said that wasn't true.

80. I accept that if what GHE said had happened, then this would be classed as abuse.

81. GHE goes on to say the following at paragraph 100 of her statement,

"Some of the activities that they made us do at Balnacraig were abusive. I remember we were made to play a game called murder ball. It was a physical game where anything went."

82. I have already expressed my disapproval of murderball in response to allegations made by HOB.

83. GHE goes on to say the following at paragraph 102, 103 and 105 of her statement,

"It was well known that both Mr GHG and another member of staff had their favourites amongst the girls. Being a favourite meant the girl had to sit on the chair arm next to them in their offices and accepting them being touchy-feely." (para 102)

"I remember times when I'd walk in and the favourites would be there sitting on the arm of the chair with Mr GHG and the other member of staff's arms around them. Their arms would be around the favourite under their bust and the favourite might have their hand round Mr GHG's or the other member of staff's neck." (para 103)

"Both Mr GHG and the other member of staff were very touchy feely. That happened with me. They always had their hand either on your thigh towards your rear or rubbing

about under your bust. I remember times when they'd look you up and down and stare at your bust or your arse when you were walking." (para 105)

84. If a girl was sitting on my knee or on the arm of the chair, I may have, in fact probably would have, had my arm round her waist but I wasn't touchy feely. What I am absolutely certain about, is that I would never have a girl on my knee if there was only the two of us in the room. If I had been doing anything inappropriate, I am sure something would have been said at the time. I would never have had my hand on a girl's thigh towards her backside. Doing that in a room full of girls, who would have seen everything that was going on, would have been stupid. I frequently had girls sitting on my knee or the chair arm with my hand round her waist but not sliding down towards her backside. All I can say is that it didn't happen in the way that she described.
85. In relation to looking the girls up and down, all I can say is that this wasn't the way that I worked.
86. What this girl has said, maligning Balnacraig, doesn't surprise me. She didn't want to be at Balnacraig, and she hated it. She also blamed us for her not being able to sit her GCSE exams, whatever they are, because they are English qualifications.
87. I can only think that she has made these allegations out of nastiness and to hit back at the school. If, what she said did happen in relation to being touchy feely, then that would be considered to be inappropriate and abusive. I don't remember ever sanctioning or punishing her. I never abused her.

HCN

88. HCN has given a statement to the Inquiry. I remember HCN. She was a very bonny girl. We had a funny kind of relationship in that she liked to pretend that she didn't like me, but admitted to me that she did. At the weekly meetings, where the decision was made if girls were to go home or not, she would get involved in banter

with me. I have never sanctioned or punished her that I remember. I never abused her.

89. At paragraph 101 and 102 of her statement, she has said,

"Most of the time one member of staff was the only adult in the office with the girls, although sometimes Mr GHG would be there as well. I wasn't aware of anything indecent happening at the time, but more recently, after I joined a group, I saw that other girls made comments about the other staff member's behaviour. One girl mentioned that another girl had been moved from Balnacraig while I was there because she had made allegations of sexual abuse against this member of staff. I don't know if anything else happened, but this girl also commented that Mr GHG was sleazy too" (para 101).

"Looking back now, I know the other member of staff's behaviour wasn't right and nor was it right that Mr GHG asked me to be his au pair and had a slow dance with me" (para 102).

90. This is another person who has called me sleazy, but the only good thing is that it wasn't HCN who said it and it was someone else on . I have never been comfortable with those chat groups and have never joined any. I had no idea back then, and even to this day I have no real idea what a chat group is.
91. I remember one time, I got a very distressed call from SGQ, who said he had happened upon a chat where ex Balnacraig girls were being abusive and saying nasty things about him. He never mentioned me at all. He asked me what I should do, so I told him to switch off and to not look at it again. SGQ didn't say there were any comments about me, but I am not sure if he had seen any he would have told me.
92. On the occasion she says I asked her to be my au pair must have been at one of the Christmas leaving events where I may have said that to her. This was the only time that I danced with the girls. I don't remember saying this to her, but I can't deny it. If I

did say it when she was leaving Balnacraig, it was the sort of thing that I might well have said. If I did, it wasn't meant to be abusive, and would probably have been more jocular. At the time I wasn't aware of her horrendous background otherwise I wouldn't have said it to her.

93. HCN also says in Paragraph 102 that she wanted to be a teacher's pet, and I have worked out that she is talking about SGQ, but she might also have been talking about me.

94. HCN goes on to say the following at paragraph 105 of her statement,

"A short time afterwards, I was sitting in the recce room when Mr GHG told me a member of staff wanted to see me in his office. I went up and all the staff were sitting in a semi-circle and as soon as I walked in the member of staff punched me right in the face with his closed fist."

95. I don't remember this incident because I am 100 percent certain that it never happened. SGQ had many faults, as we all do, but to punch one of the pupils in front of members of staff would have been committing suicide. There were some staff members who didn't like SGQ and wouldn't hesitate in reporting him. SGQ was very proud of Balnacraig's reputation, especially when he was told positive things by the inspectorate from social work services group.

LWB

96. LWB has given a statement to the Inquiry. I am not sure that I know who she is but there were one or two girls from Aberdeen. I think the cruellest thing I would ever have done would have been to speak to her in an Aberdonian accent.

97. At paragraph 31, 112 and 113 of her statement, she has said,

"SNR was Mr GHG and he was harsh, although I have no recollection of him hitting me." (para 31)

"I have a recollection of a belt being used by Mr GHG SNR but I can't remember who and I can't remember if I got hit with it. I do remember him twisting my arm, but not hitting me with the belt". (para 112)

"I was scared of Mr GHG but I don't know why because I don't remember getting hit by him. He used to like us to sit on his knee and I don't understand why I would have done that after what happened to me before I went into Balnacraig. I remember I was in his office with another two girls and I was sitting on his knee laughing. That's not normal. I have no recollection of anything else that might have happened though." (Para113)

98. I believe that the Mr GHG who is referred to in her statement could possibly be me. She refers to Mr GHG being SNR and I was SNR. There was no other member of staff with that name or anything similar.
99. One of our teachers, Moira, her father had been a 'skiveman', which was a school truancy officer, and had a collection of belts. Moira gave me a tawse, which, for a joke I hung on a picture hook beside my desk. It was never used to hit a child. No child at Balnacraig, ever got to feel the Lochgelly tawse from me. It was purely there as an ornament.
100. I don't remember this girl but in any case, I don't remember twisting anybody's arm at anytime at Balnacraig. The only reason that someone may have had their arm twisted would be if I took them in an arm lock and they tried to twist away.
101. If what she said about her arm being twisted did actually happen, then I agree that this would be classed as abuse. I can't recall who she is, but in any case, it was not the way I worked. I was not in the habit of twisting people's arms. I have no recollection of LWB so I cannot say whether she sat on my knee or not. The passage of time has not affected my recollection of these allegations. As far as I am concerned there was nothing to recollect because this was not the way I worked.

102. LWB goes on to say the following at paragraph 116 of her statement,

"After I had been at Balnacraig for a couple of years I told my dad about Mr GHG hitting me and he came down to batter him, but he was restrained. Mr GHG was in his office and someone, I don't know who, stopped my dad from going in."

103. I have no recollection of any girl's father coming to see me in those circumstances. There was only one time a girl's father came from Aberdeenshire and he made a very derogatory comment about a football strip that was on display in my office. At no time did a girl's father come to Balnacraig to batter me and was restrained.

Overall view of Allegations

104. In relation to all these allegations made against me, I don't recognise myself in any of them and don't even remember some of the girls.

Personal Health

105. I had a number of seizures in early 2017 and was hospitalised. I subsequently underwent tests, and it was established that I had mild cognitive impairment. In October 2017, I found out that I had epilepsy. I subsequently asked for a reassessment of my memory in 2019, and I was told then that I no longer had any impairment. What I hadn't mentioned after I did the second test was that I am sure it was exactly the same test they had given me the first time. I think the chances are that I do have mild cognitive impairment and would fail that test if I did it today. I definitely suffer from short term memory loss. I take tablets four times a day, and I have to set an alarm on my phone to remind me to take them.

Other information

106. 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.

GHG

Signed.....

Dated..... 05/09/24