

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KFH

Support person present: No.

1. My name is KFH. My date of birth is 1978. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I left school in 1994 and went to Anniesland College where I spent two years studying Childcare Education, which is a nursery teachers' qualification. I went on to complete my SVQ level three or four in social care.
3. I was working as a nursery teacher when I applied for the post at Kibble. I worked at Kibble for three or four years. I can't remember exactly when I was at Kibble, but I know I left there about twenty years ago. It's so long ago now that I couldn't give you any exact dates.
4. From Kibble I went onto my current position, working in a social work department, where I've been for nearly twenty years. I have also completed further study in social care through that role.

Kibble, Paisley

Recruitment at Kibble

5. The job at Kibble was advertised in the paper and with the qualifications that I had at that point I was working as a nursery teacher. I enjoyed it but I was finding it very repetitive and a bit boring, so I was looking for something more challenging. Kibble was certainly that.
6. I went to Kibble to be interviewed for the post and that was the first time I'd seen the place. I can't remember if I went there more than once before I started. I think I had to provide references, but I really can't remember.

The institution

7. Kibble was in Paisley, although I couldn't even tell you the exact address now. It was a boys only residential school with children placed there from all over Scotland.
8. It had different residential units where the children stayed and they went to the onsite education department through the day, Monday to Friday. There were also day boys who came into the education department, Monday to Friday. They would get taxied in and back out at the end of the day because they couldn't manage mainstream school.
9. The main purpose of the school was to reduce the risks within the community that the young people were causing. A lot of the young people that were coming to Kibble had a lot of charges against them and were out with parental control. They were putting themselves and other people in the community at risk, so they were coming to Kibble to keep themselves and others safe.
10. I enjoyed Kibble as at that point I was young and enjoyed being hands on with the young people, carrying out activities in the unit with them. I wouldn't say it was a job that you could do long term because it was very taxing. We did shift work, dayshifts and backshifts, although you might be due to finish a shift at 10:00 pm or 11:00 pm

but then somebody would kick off and you couldn't leave. Sometimes you wouldn't get home until 1:00 am and you were expected to be in again at 8:00 am for a dayshift. It was hard work. There was also a separate nightshift team who only worked nights.

Culture at Kibble

11. Kibble was a very male run situation back then. I would say that now, looking back at it as an older female, it was probably very sexist. Working there as a young female, there was a lot of the men taking the kids out to play football and I was told to get the supper on for when they came back in. Nowadays, you just wouldn't get that but back then, when I was twenty-two or twenty-three, I just accepted a lot of that.
12. The staff on a whole were nice and nobody was horrible to you, but there was a real sexism about Kibble and that went from the other staff members all the way up to the males who were in management.
13. In general, it was a nice atmosphere when I worked there. There was a lot of joking and laughing with the young people. Overall, there was a lot of good actual working relationships and the boys felt safe. A lot of the boys were lovely boys but they just came from really quite poor backgrounds and didn't have a lot of opportunity. Even basic skills like brushing their teeth. I remember in particular one of the boys [REDACTED] who came from Aberdeen, and he was a tiny, wee blond boy with this paperwork that made him sound like he was awful. He was only about eleven, he was really young there. He had all these criminal charges against him but actually when he came in, nobody had ever told him about brushing his teeth. I took him to the dentist and the dentist described his teeth as cottage cheese as he'd never been taught how to brush his teeth.
14. For a lot of the boys, basic needs were never being met at home so you were having to do that sort of stuff with them which really shouldn't have been your role. A lot of them were missing basic care and basic needs so you could see how they ended up in the lifestyle that they did. They got a lot of that care from the female staff, where the

male staff probably were more activities and football orientated. The female staff were important because they did a more nurturing side for these boys that they never got.

15. There was no secure when I worked there but there were two sexualised units. They were for young people who had sexualised behaviour but I didn't ever work in them. I did once do an overtime shift in there and I didn't do it again. It wasn't somewhere that I was comfortable with. The boys in there were big teenage boys and would do things like masturbate onto their hands and come out to shake your hand. It was really quite unpleasant and being a young female in there, I just knew straightaway that I was a target for them, so I didn't do another overtime shift in there.

My role at Kibble

16. I can't remember exactly what my role was called in Kibble but something like a support worker. I was there to support the young people in the unit during my shifts. Your duties would depend on what shift you were doing. I did either an early shift or a backshift.
17. The first unit that I worked in was down the bottom of Kibble. I got moved up to North unit which was a smaller unit and for a short time I worked in Uist.
18. I think there was a six-month probationary period but I can't remember the exact details. There was no induction training, you were just thrown in. I was in Skye unit to begin with. You were basically told who you were on shift with, they were told you were new and that was it.
19. I had been working at Kibble for a year or so when there was a thing called 'Men Can Care' which was an initiative to try and encourage men into care settings jobs. Kibble certainly didn't need that at the time. More men were brought in through this scheme and they went through a big training programme. I remember thinking that I hadn't got anything like that sort of training. I was just basically put in and that was it.

Staff structure

20. Every unit was different in terms of numbers of staff. Each key worker was allocated to a young person and in Uist, it was a one-to-one unit, Skye was a ratio of one key worker to three young persons, and North was either one key worker to two or three young people. Every unit was different and it depended on the needs of that unit. The sexualised units were one-to-one as well I think. There was a unit manager in each unit who you'd report to.
21. John Harte was in overall charge of Kibble but I couldn't even describe his leadership because he didn't involve himself at all. It was like he was higher up and you were just lower down, he wasn't interested. He was quite an abrupt man and he certainly didn't come across as approachable or friendly. He was in a high up post and worked there for years. He was married to the woman who was high up in the education side of Kibble but I can't remember her name. It all felt a bit like 'who you knew' there, very much cronyism.
22. There were two other managers, PCB [REDACTED] and KDH [REDACTED] and all three of them were pally. I can't really say much about the staff structure upwards as they really didn't involve themselves. We just knew that 'such and such' worked high up but they would never engage with you and it really wasn't well run in that respect.
23. There were others in higher management who were all male as well. There was definite sexism. They treated you like you were just there to do the bits that they wanted you to do.
24. I didn't ever have to manage any staff. As far as I was aware, there were no volunteers at Kibble either, it was all employed staff.

Recruitment of staff

25. I wasn't ever involved in the recruitment of staff.

Supervision / appraisal / evaluation

- 26. I don't remember getting an annual appraisal. There was very minimal support.
- 27. I didn't ever supervise any member of staff. I was a support worker so that wasn't something that I did in my role.

Policy/Strategic Planning

- 28. I wasn't ever involved in any policy development or strategic planning at Kibble.

Children / Routine at Kibble

- 29. Children were placed at Kibble through the social work department who would have to put in a placing request. I wasn't part of those decisions or discussions at Kibble. My knowledge now though is that if you are trying to place a young person somewhere, it is dependent on their needs. They would likely be on a supervision order and part of that supervision order would be a named place of safety. A Looked After Child (LAC) review can make that decision and if you were changing the placement of the young person, that would need to be a hearing.
- 30. Every young person would be different, probably the majority of young people would have gone through a hearing before they came to us and Kibble would be the named place of safety. Sometimes it would just be the decision of social work but every case would be different and I wasn't involved with that when I was at Kibble.
- 31. Most of the young people that I worked with in the units were there because of their own behaviour.
- 32. Every unit had different numbers of children in them. Clyde, Skye, and North were probably the biggest and they had nine boys in them each. I'm not sure how many were in the sexualised units, but there were two of them. Uist had three or four boys

in it. There were day boys as well who just came in for school. I didn't have any involvement with the day pupils. If their behaviour was unmanageable at school the education staff dealt with them.

Daily routine

33. If you were coming in on an early shift, your role was to wake the boys up and get them to get into the shower. The boys were actually very good at that, they had good hygiene. It was quite a strict routine and I don't remember ever having an issue with getting young people to take a shower.
34. After their shower they'd get ready for school and you'd get them breakfast. Then you would walk them over to the education part of Kibble. They would come back for lunch and then back to school for the afternoon, before they came back to the unit for the evening. Although, during that time, if they had kicked off a school, you would be going over to bring them back and try to calm the situation down. If you did get any spare time during the day you were writing case notes or doing telephone calls to social workers or family.
35. The backshift was different because you were starting at about dinnertime. The young people would either be having their dinner or just finished their dinner so you would be doing the evening routine. They had a games room and two or three of them were allowed in there at anytime and that was their favourite thing to do. They'd go in and sit and game on the computer but they'd be sitting in there smoking too. The young people could smoke at the time and you had to be in this wee room with them, as they weren't allowed to be on their own. The door would be open and you'd be keeping an eye on them but thinking about it now, it was just a haze of smoke. There was a smoking room as well and I think nearly all of the young people smoked.
36. When things went smoothly, that would be their routine. They'd be doing their gaming and then based on their age, they'd have a certain time to go to bed. They all had their own rooms so they'd go and get themselves showered and ready for bed. They would then chill and watch a film.

Mealtimes / Food

37. There were different cooks that would come in to Kibble. For dinner and supper, the cooks would bring the food into the unit so we didn't really need to prepare that. There was a kitchen in each unit so the boys could go and get themselves something if they wanted an extra sandwich or toast. That was the normal routine.

Sleeping Arrangements

38. In all of the units, the boys all had their own rooms.

Weekends / leisure

39. Weekends were different because there was no school and some of the boys would go home. There were always boys who didn't get home leave, for whatever personal reasons that was. We would do activities with them and would take two or three boys on a day out. They were always fun because I don't think they'd had that at home. We'd go to the cinema or one of the favourite things they liked to do was going to Blockbuster video shop. They'd pick computer games that they wanted to play all weekend or they'd choose a movie to rent and we'd go and get snacks to have with the movie. Weekends were mostly quite chilled because the units were quieter. We'd maybe only have two or three boys in over the weekend, compared to your nine or ten during the week.

Schooling

40. There were several different parts to the education department, for example there was a mechanic bit that had a garage. A lot of the young people really enjoyed that. They learned all about cars and mechanics.
41. There was also a main school where they had small classrooms for the young people. I wasn't involved with the education side so I don't know much about it but there were

the usual subjects like English and Maths. My involvement was mostly walking the boys to and from there to the unit.

Review of Care/placement

42. There were LAC reviews with social workers where I presume their care was reviewed but only the management staff went. I'm guessing at that as nobody actually sat with me and described what had gone on at the meetings. I would only hear little bits from overhearing conversations or little bits they wanted to tell you. I didn't ever go to any reviews, but I did write a few reports for them. They thought I was quite good at report writing so I remember that they would ask me to write the reports for the meeting but then they would go and take credit for it.

Discipline and Punishment

43. My time at Kibble was before everyone had mobile phones, so for the young people, their main thing was the computer room. A punishment might be that they didn't get to go into the computer room or they wouldn't be allowed to go out to play football. Consequences were generally things such as; they couldn't take part in an activity or go to Blockbusters at the weekend to pick their games to rent.
44. As a key worker, you had autonomy to implement a punishment. If someone was the subject of a disciplinary measure, the key worker would be responsible for recording that on their case folder. You'd write up what had happened that day or night and that meant that all staff knew what was going on.
45. I didn't ever witness any physical discipline at all. I can't even remember if there was a written policy about discipline.

Restraint

46. We did separate training on restraints but that wasn't straight away. That was done on certain dates when a training day was organised. I remember doing restraint training and minibus driving and those were the two things I had training on.
47. There was very little input on how to deal with the young people if their behaviour escalated, which looking back now was really poor. You just took guidance from the experienced staff members and by watching them. There was definitely no particular training in how to help young people emotionally or for example, those on the autistic spectrum. You could only base your practice on your own knowledge.
48. Now, having worked in social work for twenty years, and having known the backgrounds of the young people at Kibble, especially when they're at a level to have been placed in Kibble, then it's a pretty bad case. The young people were likely going through real trauma and neglect and probably a lot of abuse as well. To get to that point, it's quite a high tariff case so these young people are there for a reason and the staff should have been trained a lot more on backgrounds.
49. There were two different restraint programmes while I was there. Part of our training was about de-escalation. I remember the initial restraint training and at that point you were allowed to do a face down restraint. Then, at some point after that, I think there had been someone who had died somewhere else from a face down restraint, so it became face up restraint only. Even when you were trying to take a young person in a standing hold, you would link your arm through one side, a colleague would do the same on the other side, and the young person would be facing backwards. You almost had to lift them to walk them away. Nothing was to be face forward or face down at all.
50. I remember Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) being discussed but I don't remember it being in place at Kibble when I was there and I don't remember anything much about it.

Concerns about the institution

51. I wasn't aware of any concerns about Kibble and didn't have any concerns myself while I was working there.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

52. I don't remember there being any guidelines about recording if a young person came to you with a complaint but there could have been an official complaints procedure. I certainly don't remember having a discussion or guidelines put to me about that.
53. I don't remember there being a specific induction for young people when they came into Kibble so I think it was more that, if something happened, you would tell them about how they could make a complaint. It was so long ago, that in regard to any of the paperwork, I can't remember.

Trusted adult/confidante

54. The children should have been able to approach and speak to any staff member. If there was an issue with a staff member, then it would have been the unit manager that a young person could speak to. They would also have their own social workers that they could speak to outside of Kibble.
55. I don't remember if there was anybody independent. I know through my role now that there are independent organisations, but I'm not sure if they had that at Kibble as I wasn't involved with that then. They possibly had Who Cares workers, but I'm not sure.
56. I don't remember there being specific guidance in relation to telling young people what they should do or who they should speak to if they had an issue with anything but I do remember as a worker, and other workers as well, talking to the young people and going through the unit rules and guidelines. I would explain what the role of the keyworker was and what that meant and that if they needed to speak to you about anything, they could. You'd make them aware of the unit manager too and that they could speak to them. Part of your role as the key worker was to go through the day-

to-day life in the unit with them but I don't remember specifically outlining guidelines though.

Allegations of Abuse

57. I don't remember being made aware of any guidance or guidelines on abuse or being made aware of the definition of what constituted abuse.
58. I don't remember guidance on what we were supposed to do if we saw anything that we considered abuse or ill-treatment of a young person. I can only talk for myself, but if I had seen anything that caused me concern, I would've gone to see a unit manager about it. If it was the unit manager who caused me concern, I would probably have approached another unit manager but there was a lot of cliques there with the male staff so that would've been difficult.
59. I don't remember any staff or managers talking about abuse at Kibble and I'm not sure if it was part of any of our meetings. I don't remember regular staff meetings, there was just the odd one.
60. Looking back, I certainly didn't witness any abuse at all during my time there. There were restraints, however when working in that environment, the young people are very abusive and are very damaged. I can't imagine how you could work in that sort of environment when you're being spat on, threatened, kicked and punched, and how you could physically stop that without having to go hands on.
61. The male staff were the ones that did most of the restraints. Most of the young people were the same size or bigger than me and I couldn't have handled them. I was involved with a few but didn't have much impact as I wasn't very strong. I never ever looked at any of the staff involved and thought that the staff were abusing the young person. I definitely didn't ever see that.

62. You would have young people who were unhappy because they'd had a consequence put in place. That could be because of something that had happened, for example, they weren't getting home that night or weren't being allowed to do an activity and they would come to me to moan and groan about it. I would talk to them about it and explain the reason why and chat it through with them and they'd generally understand.
63. I would like to think that any young person could've come to me and said something if they were being abused or that I would've seen something. I definitely didn't see abuse going on. I wouldn't have worked there if I'd seen abuse.
64. One of my first jobs, I was working with adults with learning disabilities and I just wasn't happy with the way one member of staff spoke to them and her manner with them. I went straight to the manager. I can honestly say that in Kibble I didn't witness anything that made me take a beat like that.
65. However, there wasn't really anybody in Kibble that I felt that I could have gone straight up to like that. There weren't many people who were approachable. We had this male manager who you just knew was there, knew his name and what he looked like, but he had no involvement with anybody.
66. If I'd seen something that concerned me I probably would have spoken to other staff to get advice from them. There was one female unit manager, Ruby. She was quite a stern woman but she didn't put up with any of the sexist behaviour from the staff so I probably could have gone to her. She worked in the one-to-one unit. I know she would've dealt with anything you took to her.
67. About a year after I left I was made aware of three male managers who were suspended and the guy that used to be my unit manager, PCB was one of them. They had been involved with the restraint of a resident and they'd broken his bone. I wasn't there then so don't know any details about it but that's the only thing I'm aware of. I don't know if the police were involved with that or not as I had left by that point and only heard about it through someone else.

Child protection arrangements

68. I don't remember being made aware of any guidance or policy on child protection or what constituted abuse, but I can't say that there definitely wasn't one. I can't remember there being anything written down about it, or any discussion about it with other staff or managers. That sounds dreadful when working in a place like Kibble and with all of the complexities of somewhere like that but I honestly don't remember.

External monitoring

69. I didn't have any involvement with any external inspectors but there were inspections. The unit manager was involved with those and I wasn't told anything about them. The communication was really very poor. I would only know about the inspections from hearing other people talking about it. I think that the inspectors spoke to the young people but I don't really know. I don't remember any feedback from a manager as a result of those inspections either.

Record-keeping

70. Each child had an individual personal record but it was really just about their daily activities and what the plan was for their week ahead. You would record any consequences or anything that had happened in there. When you were on shift as their keyworker, you were responsible for filling out their records. If I was on the dayshift as their keyworker, then the nightshift person would take over that person for the night.
71. Back then everything was handwritten. You would be allocated three young people as their keyworker so if you weren't working that weekend, you had to make sure that you had written down all the weekend plans for that young person and what was to happen. Full histories weren't given as to the young person's background though. You would only find out bits from other people mentioning things. The unit manager attended meeting but you wouldn't go so they would come back and feedback just bits and bobs

from the meeting. You should have been getting told everything and actually you should've been attending the meetings but that wasn't what happened.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

72. I only remember one young person who made any complaint to me about their treatment by staff. He was in the Skye unit where there was a staff member [KTP] who was a big guy, and he was hands on. I don't know what the young person had done but [KTP] was his keyworker and the young person said that [KTP] had been a bit rough and had grabbed him by the shoulders and thrown him through the door into his room.
73. The young person came to me after that and told me about it. I sat and talked it through with him. I didn't witness it so I couldn't say if it had been too rough or not. I think he was looking for me to help him but I explained that as I hadn't seen it, I couldn't do anything. That wasn't recorded anywhere or passed on as it was just dealt with at the time.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

74. I was never involved in carrying out any investigation nor aware of any reports of historical abuse or civil claims at Kibble.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

75. I wasn't aware of any police investigation at Kibble, certainly not during my time there.

Other Staff

KGK

76. I don't recognise the name. The only KGK I knew was a nightshift worker in North unit, although I don't know what her second name was and I didn't really know her.
77. She would come in on nightshift so we would just say hello in the passing. She seemed to have a good positive relationship with the young people, but I didn't ever do a shift with her or see her working.

KFE

78. I did quite a lot of shifts with KFE in North unit. He was fine but he was one of the ones that you would probably say was quite sexist. He loved football and that was his main thing, so he was always out on the playing fields with the boys playing football.

KDH

79. He was the manager and was a small, bald guy. Him and PCB were really pally. They were the managers and they weren't interested. They just dealt with themselves.

KDK

80. I don't remember anyone called KDK

KFD

81. KFD did shifts with me in North unit. He was fine, I don't remember anything concerning about him. I wouldn't say he was one of the sexist ones. There was nothing that I could say that worried me about him.

zGNS

82. I don't recognise that name at all.
83. Of those staff members that I do remember, I didn't have any concerns about them and their behaviour towards the young people. Some were sexist and part of the male dominated culture, but I certainly didn't see or hear of any of them abusing any of the children.
84. There weren't any thoughts in my head that those kids were being abused. You are talking about really challenging big boys and I witnessed the boys abusing the staff on a regular basis, but I definitely didn't witness staff abusing them. If things were escalating and getting really aggressive, staff would go into a restraint. That didn't happen all the time as that was a last case scenario. When the restraints were going on, it would take three or four grown men to hold one boy down. I didn't at any point, during any restraint that I saw, think that it was abuse.

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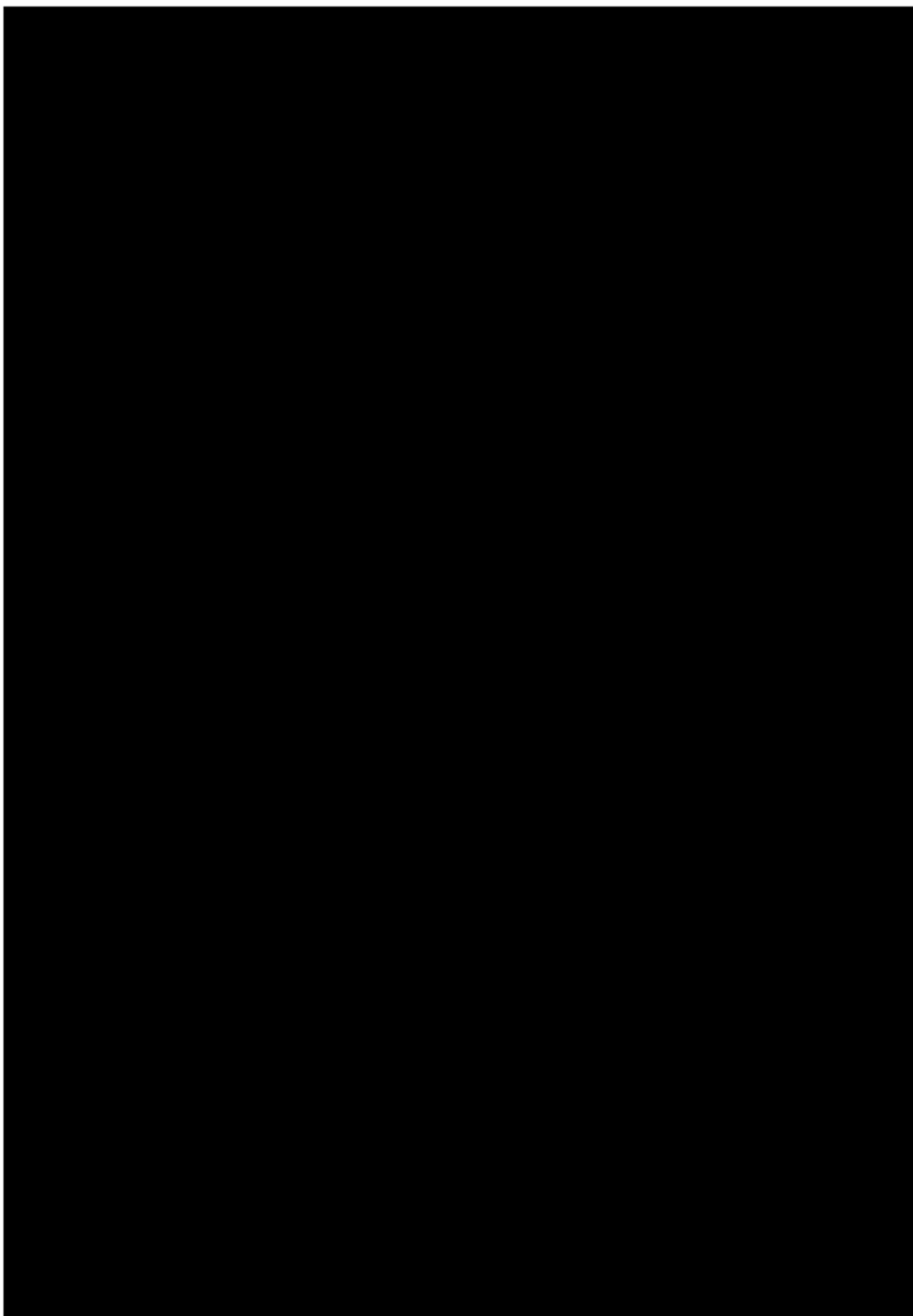
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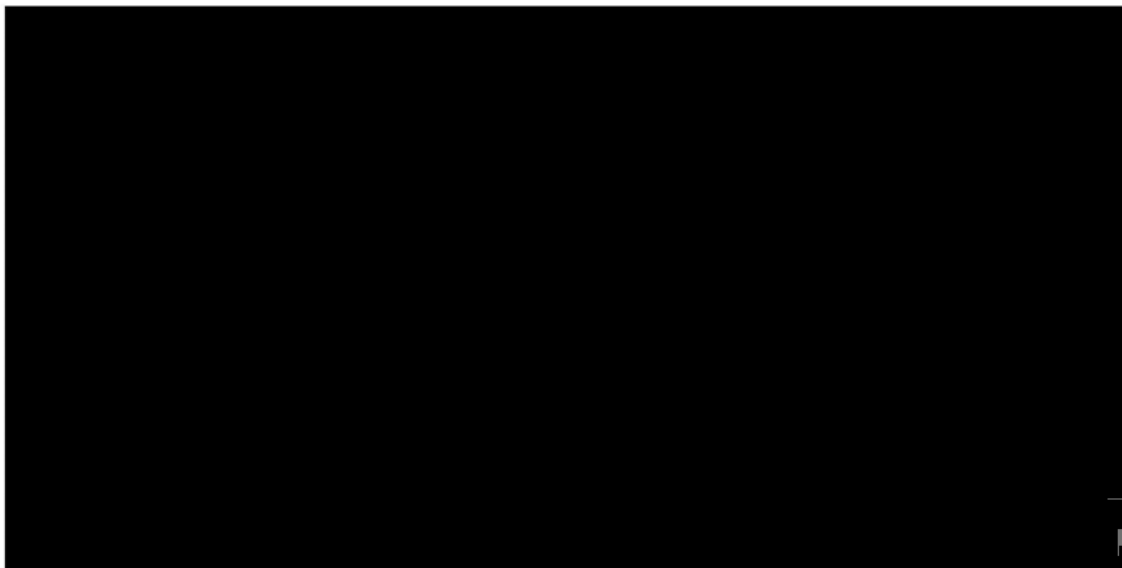
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Leaving Kibble

163. I left Kibble to go onto another job. I had been wanting to leave Kibble for about six months to a year before I left. I couldn't leave until I had another role to go to, as by then I had bought a flat and couldn't afford financially to just leave. I do remember at times standing at the door of Kibble just thinking that I didn't want to be there. I was burnt-out by that point. I wasn't enjoying it anymore. I did enjoy my time there but during my last six months or so, I realised that I needed to move onto something new.
164. I got a job working as a social care officer for a local authority and have been there ever since.
165. I remember meeting a Kibble staff member maybe two or three years after leaving. He was still working there and I was saying that I was glad I had moved on and that I couldn't go back to it. He made a comment and I didn't question it at the time but it was something similar to, "But you left under a dark cloud though didn't you?". I've always remembered that and wish I'd asked him what he meant. I wasn't aware of any dark cloud. He wasn't saying it in a nasty way but I've never ever to this day known what he meant by that. I left because I wanted to, because I'd had enough and because I'd got a new job.

Helping the Inquiry

166. I don't know about any allegations of abuse that have been made about Kibble so I couldn't comment on how they could have happened. I never witnessed or heard about abuse of any kind, other than the one incident I mentioned. However, a lot of the male staff were out on their own with the boys so there could have been stuff that I didn't see, but nobody came back and said anything to me about it.

167.  I couldn't say how that would impact those involved, but I just know that I didn't witness anything during my time there.

168. Going forward, I think there needs to be more training for staff and more support for staff, as well as the young people. I also think there needs to be ongoing training around restraint to keep everyone safe.

169.  I would like to think that there's been lessons learned from things like that and it would never happen anymore.

Other information

170. 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.

KFH

Signed.....

Dated..... 27 November 2024