

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KHG

Support person present: No

1. My name is KHG. My date of birth is 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born and brought up in Paisley. I stayed with my mother, father, and my siblings, and .
3. My father worked as coal delivery worker for about ten to fifteen years. He also worked at a scrapyard business on a part time basis. My mother spent most of her life bringing up the family.
4. There wasn't a lot of money in the family and we were always out stealing bread to try and feed ourselves. Sometimes the neighbours would give us food to keep us going. It was a hard life at that time. There were lots of times when I wasn't going to my primary school, St Fergus.
5. When I was about seven years old and had ran away I was usually caught by the police and taken back home. There were other times when I had ran away that I would get caught breaking into some place, arrested by the police and the social work would put me into Cardross overnight until I was picked up by the police and transported to a Children's Panel. I would be in Cardross for a few days and then back to the Panel and allowed home again. There was never any abuse when I was in Cardross.

6. During that next few months there were times when after being arrested I was placed in Bellfield Remand Home. This was also just overnight before being taken to the Juvenile Court and then released back to the family home. There was one night when I was in Bellfield and I made an attempt to run away. The man in charge was an ex-prison officer and he dragged me back by the hair and battered me. That was the only time there was any issue with Bellfield. I was there two or three times, usually two to three weeks, but once I think it was there for about six weeks.
7. Around the time when I was about eight years old I was told that I was becoming unruly. Mum and dad were also taking my socks and shoes off me when I was at the house to try and stop me going out and getting into trouble. It did not stop me and I would climb out the window and run away.
8. When I was eight and marked as unruly the social work department were already involved and I was referred to the Children's Panel. Mum and dad took me to the panel at Paisley. At the end of the hearing mum was crying and dad was saying there was nothing he could do. The Panel recommended that I needed a place of safety and that I was to be placed into care at St Ninian's. A social worker took me to St Ninian's from the panel.

St Ninian's, Gartmore

9. When I first arrived at St Ninian's I saw it was a large building. There were two lion statues at the entrance gate. As you entered the front door in front of you were the stairs to the left leading to the dormitories. I called them the stairs to hell. On the ground floor were units, De La Salle House, St Andrews House, St John's House and the Chapel.
10. Upstairs was St Patricks dormitory, where I slept. Also in that dormitory was where the night staff would stay. The toilets were on the same floor just to the left of the stairs. There was another dormitory up another level but I don't know the name of it.

11. The classes for St Ninian's were to the right side of the main building. In that building there were some flats where some of the staff stayed.
12. St Ninian's was run by the De La Salle Brothers, and along with the Brothers they had civilian staff helping out in different roles. I was introduced to Brother ^{HJS} who was ^{SNR} and ^{SNR} Brother ^{HFT}. They told me that my brother had been good while he was at the school and they expected the same standard from me. was in St Ninian's and he was there for about six months before he was released. I was placed in the same dormitory as him. Later my younger brothers and were also sent to St Ninian's.
13. There were about a hundred boys in total in St Ninian's. I think the age ranged from about eight up to thirteen. I remember some of the boys from my time there being and There were the brothers and even after they finished their time they were allowed to come back and spend some weekends there. I can also remember one lad called who had to have extra help as he had some sort of learning disability.
14. I can remember some of the other staff there, ^{SNR} was Mr ^{GXC} and there was a Miss McKenzie. Both those members of staff were good to me throughout my time at St Ninian's and they could not do enough to make my time there as nice as was possible.
15. Some other staff were Mr McKenna who was in charge of woodwork, Mr and Mrs Dougall they were both teachers, Mr Buchanan, Brothers ^{MJO} and ^{MBZ}

Routine at St Ninian's

First day

16. I was sent to St Patricks House as my dormitory. Along with my brother [REDACTED], I think there were five of us in that dormitory, but I can't remember the ages of the other boys there. I had my bed and at the side of it we each had a locker.

Mornings and bedtime

17. The staff woke us up between seven and seven thirty and we would get washed and dressed. We then headed down to the dining room for breakfast, before we headed for classes. We were in the classroom until lunch about twelve thirty. It was then back into the class room until between four and five in the afternoon. We then got changed into day clothes before our evening meal. Before we went to bed we might have some leisure time then given some cocoa, before lights out somewhere about nine o'clock. That was the main routine for weekdays.
18. At the weekend if we did not have any leave we were allowed to go to the swimming pool at Kirkintilloch and we all went to the chapel on Sundays and maybe a walk.

Mealtimes/Food

19. I had no issues with the standard of food. The lady who handed out the clothes on arrival, was also the cook. There was usually a choice of two or three different meals available. Each of the houses were segregated in the dining room by glass partitions, but they only allowed one house in the room at a time.
20. There was a member of staff on duty to supervise meal times. If you did not eat your food you would get a slap, some of the others would use a slipper to hit the boys. This was from most of the Brothers on duty.

Washing/bathing

21. We were allowed to have showers maybe twice a week. There were staff at the door to the room but I am not sure why they were there. It may have been just for supervision to make sure there was no trouble.
22. Sometimes Mr McKenna would stand right at the door and watch each of the boys as they had a shower. As it was open planned he could watch them all. There was usually about ten boys of all ages using the showers. The other staff were usually out of sight.

Clothing/uniform

23. On the first day at St Ninian's I was taken to see Brother MJO who then issued me with shoes for my stay there. There was a lady helping him and she handed out the clothes and uniform I had to wear. We were issued with denims, shoes, trousers, shorts, coloured T-shirts and a jacket. When it came to chapel on a Sunday we were asked to wear shorts. The clothes were changed once a week, as you handed clothes over you were handed a fresh set back. Each house was allocated different coloured clothes. St Patricks wore green, De La Salle yellow, St Andrews blue and St Johns red.

School

24. I did not get on well at the school there as it never stimulated my interest. After the four or five years I spent at St Ninian's I still could not read or write. There was a female teacher, I don't know her name, but she did not seem to care whether you carried out the work or not. The Dougall's did not come to St Ninian's until my last year there. Even when they arrived I was still not interested in learning. I don't blame it all on the teachers, because I was not interested in learning.

Healthcare

25. I was only ill once during my time at St Ninian's and I had to spend time in the sick bay. This was situated in a room near to the dormitory and was run by the lady who issued the clothes. I did not see a doctor at any other time.
26. We were taken to Stirling for dental appointments for regular check-ups. One of the staff would be tasked with taking us in the minibus. I did refuse some of the visits as I did not like going there.

Religious instruction

27. We did have to say prayers in the morning and Grace at meals. When you said your prayers there was usually one of the Brothers or one of the staff supervising us. Sometimes they would walk up and down the dormitory to make sure we were saying them properly. I can't remember if anything happened if we did not say them properly. If not on weekend leave we all went to chapel on a Sunday. I did my Holy Communion during my time there. I think all the boys there were Catholic, but I am not certain.

Leisure time

28. During our leisure time we played some board games, books, comics, snooker, music or sit and watch television. In the summer we could spend some time in the garden and play football in the park. Sometimes the staff would organise the houses to be involved in tournaments. Brother MJO sometimes took boys out for walks and on some occasions out with ponies.

Trips and holidays

29. Once a year everyone went to Dunbar for a week. We were all housed in a local chapel and slept with mattresses on the floor. Some of us were allowed out on a boat for the day and others were allowed just to hang around the town.

Birthdays and Christmas

30. We were all sent home for Christmas, usually about two weeks before it. The staff did give us some sweets, but there were no toys. I don't remember any other celebrations and that included birthdays, but I was at home for mine.

Visits/Inspections

31. I do not remember any social workers coming to the home but Brother HFT acted like a social worker. He was always asking if everything was alright or if we needed anything.

Family contact

32. My mother did come once while I was there. I think it was on sports day. If we were allowed weekend leave we might go in the minibuss or there might be a single decker bus. We would be taken to Buchanan Street Bus Station. We then had to make our way to the train station. We had to be back in the afternoon so we could get fresh clothes and a shower.

Discipline

33. Discipline was usually on a points system. Each week you started on ten points and for every time you were thought to have done anything wrong you lost a point. Points lost during the week meant less pocket money or if you lost too many points you could have weekend leave cancelled. I never got the belt and I don't remember anyone else being given the belt.

Running away

34. I did run away from the home once. I was not aware there was a new member of staff and he had a Hillman Hunter car. He saw me and my pal walking along the road. He offered a lift to us and without thinking we got in. That was when he took us back to St

Ninian's. There was no physical punishment when we were back, but we lost a couple of weekend privileges.

Bed Wetting

35. Bed wetting was not something I had a problem with. I did see that some other boys had wet the bed. Whoever that was had to stand outside the night watchman's room. I don't know what happened when they went in. I never needed to get up during the night so I don't know if there were any restrictions.

Abuse at St Ninian's, Gartmore

36. In the woodwork class if I was thought to be doing anything wrong Mr McKenna would grab a piece of wood lying around and hit me over the head with it. At that time I thought I could look after myself, I was from a big family and a rough area, but you can't fight back when someone uses something like a piece of wood. I did try to defend myself a couple of times, but he always won.
37. Anytime Brother **MJO** saw you doing anything wrong he would throw a book at you. I also saw him punching some boys or throwing books at them for things that in his eyes he thought they were doing wrong. One of the ladies that worked there, I don't know her name, heard the commotion one time and spoke to him to get him to calm down, because he was getting out of control.
38. When I was in the maths class being taught by Brother **MBZ** if he thought I was not doing my work properly or misbehaving in the class then he would come up to me, make me stand up and punch me in the rib cage.
39. Mr Dougall was the music teacher and his wife worked at St Ninian's as a teacher as well. If she did not like something, she would not do anything herself, but she would tell her husband, for him to take some sort of action. His punishments involved ensuring that the shorts you wore were pulled up very high exposing your backside.

He would then slap you on the bare skin, several times. It wasn't just me he hit, he also hit some of the younger boys.

Reporting of abuse at St Ninian's, Gartmore

40. I did not report any of the abuse I sustained at St Ninian's, but I felt that was my choice. I am not sure if I had gone to anyone, whether that would have made any difference. I just chose not to tell anyone.

Leaving St Ninian's, Gartmore

41. When I reached the age of thirteen I was told my time there was up. It was Brother HFT that told me my time was coming to an end. He told me about a week or maybe two weeks before I was sent to the Panel. After being at the Panel I was released and allowed to go home.

Life after St Ninian's, Gartmore

42. When I returned home my mum and dad had separated. As a result I stayed for different periods with some of my siblings. It was not long before I returned to my old ways and was getting into trouble with the police and not going to school. There were days when my dad would take me to the school, but as soon as he left I was off again. I was only out for three to four months before social work took control again.
43. When I turned fourteen I was sent to Longriggend on remand for three weeks. They were not happy with me being there as a young thirteen year old had quite recently committed suicide in there. After that I was back in Juvenile court and received a twelve month sentence. Initially I was sent back to Longriggend but that was only until a place could be found elsewhere. After two weeks there I was transported by prison staff to St Marys.

St Mary's Kenmure, Bishopbrilggs

First day

44. When I arrived at St Mary's in Kenmure I was introduced to Mr Forbes who was in charge of the place and SNR Mr KDN. Once more I was aware that my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had spent time at St Mary's and I was told that I needed to behave as they did or that I would end up in the closed block, where there were more restrictions.
45. St Mary's was a big stone building. As you entered the front door the offices were off to the left. To the right side was an assembly room and a dining room. There was a set of stairs leading to the bedrooms.
46. The other staff I can remember were Mr Shields, KHE, Geraldine and Bill Franks, who did most of the cooking. There was a lady, HPP, who was a baker and Mr McGee who was responsible for the issue of pocket money. The last two were zHXC and Mr Maguire who took the boys for boxing lessons.
47. Geraldine was the housemistress and I could talk to her about anything. If she saw that you were upset or seemed to be having a problem she would try her best to sort it. She was replaced by Mr Shields who was an ex-police officer. Sometimes he would listen to your problems but there were other times he could not be bothered with people.
48. St Mary's was all boys and there were probably somewhere in the region of one hundred inmates. I think the age range was from about twelve through to sixteen. There were four houses in total and I was placed in St Patrick's. I can't remember the names of the other houses.
49. In the upstairs dormitory there about sixteen to twenty boys in each of all different ages. We all had a bed and a three drawer unit. The dormitory was separated into five sections, each of which were separated by a partition. Each section was again divided

into two sleeping areas. One had a single bed and the other area there were three beds.

Routine

50. In the morning we were woken between seven and seven thirty. We then got washed and dressed before heading downstairs for breakfast. Apart from lunch we had classes through until around four o'clock. Our evening meal was between four thirty and five o'clock. We then had a short assembly before some leisure time and up to our dormitory before lights out at nine o'clock.

Leisure

51. At the weekend there were no classes and we might have been allowed to go swimming at either Kirkintilloch or Springburn. On a Sunday we were allowed to have a walk within the grounds. Sometimes at the weekend [REDACTED] asked if we wanted to help some disabled people.
52. These were activities if you were there for the weekends. A lot of the people there were allowed home for the weekend but you had to be there for a while before you were trusted enough to be given leave. I think I was there for about five or six months before leave started.
53. Some of the leisure time was spent watching television. One time I was in that room and one of other boys tried to take my pocket money off me. We ended up fighting and a member of the staff, [REDACTED], had to intervene to stop us.
54. Once or twice a week we had boxing lessons with Mr Maguire. During the sessions if he found anyone who he believed was any good, he would arrange for proper training and then some proper fights at Barrhead. We knew what he was doing and we never took this as a punishment.

55. There was also the chance to go for a walk up the Trossachs any summer evening or at the weekends. A member of staff would go with you.

Bathing

56. As far as bathing was concerned we were allowed to use the showers any time we wanted, but everyone had to have at least two showers in the week. The staff tried to make sure we used the facilities at least twice a week. The staff did supervise it, but always from the outside, never inside the shower room. They were only there to make sure there was no trouble.

Food

57. Food within St Mary's was really good. If you did not like what was made Bill Franks would offer to make you something to your liking. That was not just me he did that for others as well.
58. There was one time when I was in the dining room and had taken a second cup of tea. One boy got upset and tried to stab me with a knife. A second boy poured the pot of tea over me. Mr ^{KDN} dealt with it. I did have some burns but no one gave me any treatment for it.

Clothes

59. All the clothes we wore were supplied by the staff at St Mary's. it usually consisted of denims, shoes, jumper, shorts, T-shirt and a Jacket. Unlike St Ninian's, the clothes were all different colours and it did not matter what house you were in, there was not set colours.

School

60. Any school work took place within St Mary's. I seem to recall we were being taught Maths, Geography and English. When I was in the class I still had no inclination to learn anything.

Family contact

61. I did not have any visits from my family, but I did get home leave at weekends. After five or six months I was allowed out from Friday afternoon until around seven o'clock on Sunday night. On the Saturday, my dad who was working delivering coal, got me a job helping out.

Discipline

62. If some of the staff were of the opinion that you had done something wrong there were different punishments. That could range from a slap on the jaw, loss of some or all of your pocket money or weekend leave cancelled.

Abuse

63. I remember when I was about thirteen or fourteen and at a weekend, [REDACTED] and I were taken to the cinema. When we were there [KHF] the student looking after us, sat between both us boys. She was heavy set and in her late twenties. As we sat watching the film [KHF] grabbed both of our privates and masturbated us as we sat there. After leaving the cinema she was taking us back to St Mary's in her Mini. On the way back she pulled the car into a turn off. She then had full sex with both of us in the car.
64. [KHE] was a Housemistress and in her late thirties. She was heavy built, with ginger hair and spoke with a lisp. She would ask me to help with the laundry. When I

was helping her she made me have sex with her. This happened on two or three different occasions.

65. There was another lady, [KHI] was her surname. I think she was a cleaner there. She was in her late forties and her brother worked there as well as a gardener. She was about five foot seven, average build. I was out the back one morning, just where the tractor was kept. I was having a cigarette when she came in. I could smell the drink off her and she was describing how she had a new boyfriend and it was non-stop sex between them. I don't know why she was telling me, but she started playing with me and we had full sex. I was about fifteen by then.
66. There was a student, I don't know her name, who also worked opposite Leisureland in Paisley. She was a thin girl with long hair and in her late twenties. One Saturday night she was working at the home and she kissed me full on the lips when I was on my bed, but it did not lead to full sex. She later became the girlfriend of one of the members of staff called [REDACTED].
67. I did not report any of those incidents to any of the staff. As far as [KHE] was concerned there was no one else who was aware of it.

Leaving St Mary's

68. I was home one weekend and I was arrested by the police for arson. I was sent back to Kenmure until my appearance at court. I was then sent back to Kenmuir pending my sentence. I was then back at court where I was sentenced to three years as a result. Initially I was sent back to Longriggend for two weeks, before I was eventually sent to the Young Offenders Unit at Saughton.

Young Offenders Unit, Saughton , Edinburgh

69. At the jail the food could be terrible. If you did not like anything that was being served you either ate or did without, there were no other options.
70. I don't know who the Governor was but I was introduced to a woman, Val, who was in charge of the education side. I found that when I went there that the teachers were really good. I talked to them about the problem I had with no writing skills and they were all understanding. If I was having any difficulty understanding any of the reading subjects being taught, Val would help me. She took her time to explain things, until I fully understood the questions being asked. She also spoke with some of the other teachers and they too, took time to help me.
71. Before I left the prison I was able to read and write quite well. During my time there I wrote letters to my family.
72. I did get a visit from two of my brothers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but I think they were also coming to see a pal who serving a sentence.

Leaving Young Offenders Unit, Saughton, Edinburgh

73. I spent seventeen to eighteen months in Saughton before I was paroled. I was seventeen when this happened. I can say that my time in Saughton was a really positive experience.

Life After Care

74. I went home again and stayed out of trouble for about fourteen months. I was then back to my old ways and was back in trouble. I was about twenty years old when I was sent to borstal for two years. It was not until I turned thirty five that I got myself sorted out and did not get into trouble again.

75. Not long after being released from borstal I met my partner, [REDACTED]. From our relationship I have three children, two girls and a boy. Although we split up after nearly ten years, we are still friends today. I think going back and forward to prison was one of the main reasons it did not work out. She did come to see me when I was at Perth Prison, but I told her to stop coming as she had very little money and was wasting it on me and I told her to spend it on the bairns.
76. In between my times in prison I worked on building sites. I also spent a lot of my adult life working in scrapyards. Some years ago I decided I was no longer going to work for other people and set up my own scrap metal business.

Impact

77. Like me, most of my siblings ended up in the prison system. After my son was born I tried to make sure my children have always been looked after.
78. I have thought about counselling but I have never followed this up. I might follow up this in the future but I am not sure I need it.

Reporting of Abuse

79. About two years ago I received a letter as the police were making enquiries into both St Ninian's and St Mary's. Initially I was interviewed by female officers from London Road Police Station. I told them about the physical abuse but nothing about any of the sexual incidents. I later went back to speak to them about those incidents, but when I went back it was a male officer and a female officer that were interviewing me and I never got the feeling they were the slightest bit interested and did not take me seriously. I later tried to find out what was happening. The person I spoke with told me they could not find any record of my statement. As far as they were concerned the

matter was closed. I did not feel they were interested in my experiences and more about checking me out. They made me feel like a criminal.

Lessons to be Learned


80. Both St Ninian's and St Mary's never taught anything about what was right and wrong. Maybe if it was part of the teaching it might have changed some people, maybe not me because of my family background, but someone would have benefited. There was no rehabilitation in either place.

Hopes for the Inquiry

81. I would like to see the people who abused me dealt with in the right manner. I can't see that it was just me that these things happened to. There will be more boys affected in the same way it has affected me.

Other information

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 18/6/21