

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

GDS [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GDS [REDACTED]. My maiden name was GDS [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before care**

2. I've always lived in Lennoxtown. Before going into care, I lived with my parents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and my six siblings. [REDACTED] was the eldest, then [REDACTED], [REDACTED] myself, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Life was hard, like everybody else's. We didn't have much.
3. I was twelve when I was taken into care. I didn't know why I was taken into care. At the time, I was a pupil at Kilsyth Academy. I didn't go to school very often. I was told to go to the headmaster's office. I was told to take my bag with me, so I thought something was wrong at home. When I got there, there were two police officers and a lady who I subsequently found out was a social worker. Her name was Alison Mugle. They said I had to go with them. I had no choice. I was taken from school to Kelburn Park health centre in Kilsyth.
4. When I got to the health centre, I blew a gasket. I just didn't want to go with them. I tried to get away from them, but it didn't work. After that, I was taken to Weedingshall. They just said I was going to a children's home. I didn't know what that was. I didn't know where I was. My siblings stayed at home.

### Weedingshall Children's Home, Falkirk

5. I was taken to the children's home and the police and social worker went away. Secondary Institutions

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

6.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

. Alison Muggle came to see me a couple of times when I was there. I was there for about nine months, then they said I had to move to another children's place. They said it was run by nuns. I didn't know what a nun was.

### St. Euphrasia's, Bishopton

7. I was thirteen when the social worker came to take me to the new place. Secondary Institutions

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

St Euphrasia's was way out in the back of beyond. It was run by nuns. I'd never even seen a nun before. There were about eighty girls there, aged from 12 to 16. We were put into house groups within the same building. We all slept in dormitories; eight girls to a room. Sister Helen Marie was in charge of my house group. All the doors in the place were locked. There were no open doors. I couldn't walk freely through any door. The size of the place in itself was scary. It was always freezing cold.

### Routine at St Euphrasia's

#### *First Day*

8. I remember the massive long drive way and big buildings. The size of it was horrible. It was very different from where I'd been before. I was met by two nuns: Sister

BGR [REDACTED] and SNR [REDACTED], Sister LLW [REDACTED] I was put into a side room for about half an hour, then they came and told me where to go. By then, the social worker had left. I had to go and get showered and have my hair checked by nuns, then I got my uniform. They told me that I wasn't allowed my socks and shoes in case I ran away. After that, I just remember bells ringing. Other girls came along the corridors. I think they were going for lunch. I was put into one of the lines and that was the routine from then onwards.

9. If you had any possessions when you went in, they were taken away. You never went out the place once you were in. I was given a number when I went in. It was on my uniform and things like that. I was number [REDACTED]

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

10. We were woken up by bells at six in the morning. A nun would stand at the door and we had to kneel at the side of the bed. We were expected to pray. You had to get washed and dressed and then go to the chapel. After that, you went for breakfast and then school.
11. Sometimes there would be civilian staff doing the night shifts. We had to be in bed for nine o'clock. You had no other option but to abide by that. There were two sinks in the dormitories. We were given a time to bathe because there were so many lassies. We had to wash every night. There were always nuns sat outside the dormitories. If we needed to go to the toilet, we had to chap the door and ask. We couldn't open the door unless we had permission.
12. The nuns would come around and check you were in your bed. They would shine a wee torch. It woke me up a hundred times a night.

#### *Food*

13. All the girls ate together in a large room, but there were different tables for the different house groups. At breakfast, we were given cereal, tea and milk. At

lunchtime, we were given mince, potatoes, things like that. The food was okay. At dinner time, it varied. It was often just a sandwich.

### *School*

14. There was a school in the place. The school was ridiculous. School's supposed to be for learning, but all we learned was religion. I wasn't a Catholic, so I didn't know the half of it. We were never taught maths, English or anything like that. The nuns who were in the house groups would also teach at the school. After school, we went to chapel and then we had dinner back in the hall.
15. We had to do sewing classes at school. We made robes for vestries and embroidered them. It wasn't like going to an ordinary school. It was mostly religion and work.

### *Work*

16. On Saturdays, we'd be woken up by the bell and we had to clean throughout the day. We had to do all the corridors. They were tiled, so they had to be brushed and scrubbed.
17. Some of the older girls worked in the laundry after school. I worked there for a couple of weeks before I left. It was hard work, especially the pressers. You had to fold things a certain way for the presser to come down.

### *Leisure time*

18. We got recreation for an hour at night. We would stay in our house groups and we were allowed to talk to each other or watch the telly. Sister Helen Marie was great. She couldn't talk to us during the day because the other nuns were there, but in the evening she would come and sit beside us and ask us what we were doing.

19. On Sunday, we had a bit of leisure time in between going to the chapel. There were books in the house groups. Each house group had a room next to the dormitory with a telly and things.
20. There was a courtyard. We were allowed out occasionally. We would just sit and blether.

#### *Uniform*

21. All the girls wore the same uniform. You were given a couple of sets. It was a green skirt, a v-necked top and a blouse. The uniform had your number sewn on. They never called us by our first names, always our second names or our numbers. We all had ups and downs with that because we all had first names.
22. For the first twelve weeks, I didn't have any shoes. Nobody did. You knew all the new girls by their blue feet. After the first twelve weeks, we were given sandals to wear.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

23. Birthdays were never celebrated. Christmas was just constant chapel. You weren't allowed home.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

24. Visitors were allowed once a month, on a Saturday. I never got any visitors. I wasn't encouraged to keep in touch with my family. I saw my social worker about three times. I never saw her alone. A nun would always be present. I never had the opportunity to tell her what was going on.

#### *Medical care*



25. There were two nurses there. They stayed there the whole time. If you needed to see a nurse, a nun would take you to the nurse in the convent.

*Running away*

26. I tried to run away after I'd been there for months. All the dormitory windows were screwed down. It took me about two months to gradually unscrew the window screw. Once I got it open, I didn't realise how high it was. I tried to climb down the drainpipe but I fell and broke my leg. The nuns did their checks during the night and I wasn't there. They found me lying underneath the window. I was taken to hospital to get it x-rayed. I got it plastered and then I was taken straight to detention.

**Abuse at St Euphrasia's**

27. The first time I was disciplined was at school. I'd only been there a couple of weeks. I was given paperwork about Our Lady. Of course, I didn't know who Our Lady was so I couldn't write about her. I put my hand up and asked who the woman was. I thought Sister **BGR** had broken my four fingers, she came down so hard on my hand with a cane. She was good at doing things like that. She took me to **SNR** **SNR** office and said I was impertinent and ignorant. Sister **LLW** said, "She will be. She's not one of our flock, yet." I didn't know what that meant at the time. That went through my head for months, but then I realised it was because I was a Protestant. She was right. I'd learned it all by the time I left.
28. We would be disciplined if we didn't do things the way the nuns wanted. Everything had to be their way or no way. If you were out a bit from the line or carrying on in the classroom, they would just come up and crack you. That happened every day. We were either given a rap around the back of the head or, if your hair was long, they would get a hold of your hair and twist it. We always got slapped to the back of the head. They were good with the cane. They would have that with them all the time. That could happen at school, in the dining hall, in the dormitories, in your house group. It happened anywhere, because they were always there. Sister **BGR** was

the worst. SNR [REDACTED], Sister LLW [REDACTED], was also strict. I learned as the time went on what I could do and what I couldn't do.

29. They didn't tell us the rules and they weren't written down anywhere. You were just supposed to follow the rules as they told you them and that was it. You went down the left side and up the right side when you walked; you couldn't walk in the middle. If a nun came, you had to stop. You learned from the other lassies. They would shout at me by my last name or my number. That got to me a few times and I would answer back, saying that I had a first name. It didn't make any difference.
30. If I answered back, I'd be put in the detention room. It was up the stairs, right at the very end. It was horrible. The first time I was put in there, they kept calling me by my last name and my number and I lost it a bit. I was told to strip. If I didn't strip, they would hold me down and strip me. I had to take all my clothes off before I went into the room. I was given a blanket, one of the jaggy army ones. I was just left in the room. It was quite small. There was one small window at the top. I was locked in and I wasn't allowed out, not even for the bathroom. There was a bucket in the room. The length of time you were in the room depended upon what you'd done. You could be in there for a couple of hours or you could be in there for days.
31. The worst time was when I was in there for two days. I'd been in the home for a number of months when it happened. One of the nuns clattered me at the back of the head and twisted my pony- tail. It hurt. I turned and grabbed her veil and unfortunately it came off. I was given food in the room, but I couldn't eat it. How could I eat when there was a bucket at the side? I didn't see anybody when I was in there. The nuns would come and open the hatch, have a look in and shut it again. For months after that, I didn't open my mouth. I didn't talk to anybody. I just did what I had to do. I learned to cut myself off.
32. There were two detention rooms, one at the back and one at the front. Other children were put in there as well for answering back or refusing to do something. You would hear them screaming along the corridor on the way there. You learned to try and stay out of the detention room because it was freezing. It was used throughout my

time at St. Euphrasia's. Sister <sup>BGR</sup> was famous for taking girls to the detention room. There was another lady who worked there called <sup>FSH</sup>. She had something to do with the sewing. She was evil. She would take you there as well. It was always her, Sister <sup>BGR</sup> or Sister <sup>LLW</sup> that would take you. They were built like tanks. Detention was the worst thing and the clatter of the heavy steel door. You never knew how long you were going to be in there for.

33. If you tried to do something differently, you'd be disciplined. They would tell you that you'd never amount to anything. You were nothing to them. Sister <sup>BGR</sup> always belittled me. She would tell me I was there because I was bad and that my parents didn't want me.

### **Leaving St. Euphrasia's**

34. I left just before my sixteenth birthday. <sup>LLW</sup> sent for me. Sister Helen Marie was there. They said they couldn't help me anymore and that I could leave. I was told I'd be leaving at a certain time and that was that. I didn't get to say goodbye to anybody. They gave me the clothes I came in with, which hardly fitted, some bus money and just opened the door. They didn't suggest where I could go or give me any advice. I never saw my social worker after I left.
35. I walked along the driveway and tried to figure out where I was. I didn't know where I was. I'd never even heard of Bishopton or Renfrew. I'd never left Lennoxton before being taken to Weedingshall. I saw a bus and asked where it went. It went to Glasgow, so I got on the bus. I'd never been to Glasgow before. The bus arrived at the bus station. I looked around and saw a bus that said 'Campsie Glen'. I knew I stayed in Campsie Glen so I jumped on that bus.
36. I got back to Lennoxton. I asked my mum if I could come back and she said no. I wasn't allowed back in the house. I had nowhere else to go. I was out on the street. I slept in the toilets up the road because they were open all night.



### Life after care

37. I slept in the toilets in Lennoxtown for a few months. I wandered the streets all day and sat in the park or whatever. I'd go back to the toilets at night. I didn't have any food. A supervisor at the local hospital saw me a couple of times. She took me into her office and she gave me a job. She asked if I was sleeping on the streets and I said I was. She got me a room in the nursing residence.
38. I was there for a few months and then I got married to a doctor in the hospital. I was married in 1975. He was a lot older than me. My husband had a house at [REDACTED] so we lived there for a while until we got a house in the village. I worked at the hospital for about a year. I was a domestic cleaner. It was all I knew.
39. My oldest daughter was born in 1975. I had a son in 1977, but I lost him. My youngest daughter was born in 1979. I got divorced in 1982. I have no contact with my ex-husband, nor do my children.
40. I made contact with my family after I had my oldest daughter in 1975. My mum came in to see the baby when I had her. I saw her all the time until she died on [REDACTED] 2015. She had dementia for the last seven years of her life. I don't have any contact with my father. He was at home when I went into care and he was gone when I came back.
41. I live with my oldest daughter, [REDACTED]. I have contact with my other daughter now. We didn't talk for a number of years but she came back into my life when my mother passed. I have three grandchildren. [REDACTED] is nineteen. When she was three and a half, I got joint custody of her with her father. I'm very close to her. I have a fourteen year old grandson, [REDACTED], and a three year old grandson, [REDACTED]. I had four bereavements in a year. My sister died within 12 weeks of my mother, then my niece hung herself and my nephew was found dead. She was 13 and he was 18. It was awful.

**Reporting of abuse – St. Euphrasia's**

42. I didn't have anybody to confide in at St. Euphrasia's. You weren't allowed to ask a nun why she had done something because you would just get it again. You spoke when you were spoken to, you did what you were told to do, you got up when you were told – you had no say. None. Sister Helen Marie knew what was going on. We would tell her. She was always trying to keep the peace. She was lovely.
43. After I left, I didn't tell anybody about what happened to me until years afterwards. In 2008, there was a girl in the paper talking about abuse at the Good Shepherd home, which was previously St. Euphrasia's. They still had the detention room, but it was called the zombie room. I phoned the Daily Record and told them I couldn't believe that that was still happening in this day and age. They came out and took a story. Maybe if I'd spoken up earlier, it wouldn't have happened to that lassie. But who was going to believe me?
44. The police must have seen the story in the paper. A police officer called Linda Carlisle phoned the Daily Record. The journalist, Janet Burns, sent me a text message on 27 June 2011 to let me know the police had contacted her. It said, "No, it was fine. She didn't give me any info re lawyer so you should give her a call. Just have statement bout when we spoke and confirmed you didn't ask for money." Apparently they got stories before, and people had asked for money. I never asked for any money.
45. The police then phoned me and asked if they could come out and speak to me. They asked me if I could go back to St. Euphrasia's, which was hard. I had to show them where certain things were. It was horrendous. It took me about half an hour to get through the front door. I showed them the dormitories, the dinette, the laundry, the chapel, the assembly, the school rooms, the offices. I couldn't go near the detention room, but I went to the top of the stairs and pointed to where it was. One of the women there let go of the door and I nearly ended myself. It was horrible.

46. The nuns had the cheek to give us a photograph of us standing with the nuns and the priests. I had to point out who was who, to the police. The police kept it and I haven't had it back.
47. Weeks afterwards, the policewoman, Linda Carlisle, phoned me to say they'd gone to Kent and charged LLW with five counts of abuse. She was already sitting with a lawyer when they arrived. I was informed of that in 2011 but I haven't heard anything since. Sandra's written to the procurator fiscal's office in Glasgow three times to find out what happened, but we haven't had any response. I don't know if Sister LLW is still alive. Sister BGR is dead. The police woman took me aback when she said that Sister BGR got her own abuse at the end, the way she died. I didn't expect a policewoman to come out with that.

### Impact

48. I never had any support for the experiences I had in care. My head was messed up after I left. The first time I spoke about it was to Sandra of In Care Survivors. It's hard because it brings things back again. I just had to cope. I just had to get on with it. I've never received support from a counsellor or my GP. I keep in contact with Sandra.
49. I never discussed my experiences in care with my family; it was never brought up. My sisters were a lot younger than me when I was taken into care. They asked where I was and I just said I was away for a while. I never went into any detail. You couldn't tell weans things like that. I never spoke to them about what had happened in later life.
50. There are still a lot of things I can't do. Sometimes, I see something on the telly or lift a newspaper and I can be right back there. My GP says I suffer from depression.
51. I hate shut doors, in case somebody locks them. For years, I had no doors in my house. I took them off. I'm only beginning to draw them over now. Every door you walked through at St. Euphrasia's was locked and unlocked, locked and unlocked.

You had to wait for the nuns to open and shut the doors. Now, I only have a kitchen door and a front door.

52. I can never get a heat in me. I feel like I've been cold my entire life. I never put the heating on. It's just what I'm used to after St. Euphrasia's. When Sandra comes to see me, she's always shivering away. She uses my dogs to give her a heat.
53. The impact never goes away. I can never get close to anybody. I can never trust anybody. I'm wary of everybody, especially anybody in authority.

### **Records**

54. I contacted Sandra six or seven years ago to try and get my records. I was getting a blank everywhere I tried. I tried Weedingshall and St Euphrasia's. St. Euphrasia's told me there were no records there and that they'd been passed on.
55. I always thought I'd been taken into care because I wasn't going to school. Sandra managed to find something out. We got one piece of paper from Stirling County Council. It said, "Suspected pregnancy, ran away to Glasgow." Six words. That was all we got. I have no idea what it means. I'd never been on a bus, never mind Glasgow. I didn't even know where it was. We had nothing when I was growing up. You were lucky if you had a dinner at the end of the day. That was just life. I wasn't pregnant. My daughter was my first child.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

56. Social workers should be there more often and ask the children what's going on. They shouldn't just take the word of the people running the places. I very rarely saw my social worker. More checks should be done. Children shouldn't be put into these places and everybody then assume that they're safe. If I can help one wee wean by coming forward, it'll be worth it.



**Other information**

57. 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.....*9.11.17.*.....