

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

## Witness Statement of

GDG [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GDG [REDACTED] and my date of birth is [REDACTED], 1964. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

**Background**

2. I have lived alone at my present address for eighteen years. I have a son [REDACTED] who is 23, to a previous partner. Both my parents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are now dead. I have eight siblings. I don't know their ages but they are from oldest to youngest, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I am the youngest. None of my brothers and sisters were ever in care.

**Life before being put into care**

3. I grew up in [REDACTED] Clydebank with my parents and siblings. I was one of those kids that thought I knew best. I missed school constantly. My parents tried their best, but I was a thief and didn't go to school. I went to the Children's Panel a couple of times and I remember the Children's Reporter, a Mr Knox, saying it would be good for me to go into care. It was 1972 and I was eight years old.
4. It was the Children's Hearing decision that I be put to St Ninian's Residential School, Gartmore, Stirling. I was there for about three years and thereafter got released and went to St Columbus Secondary school, which was a mainstream, normal school. This only lasted a couple of weeks because again I wasn't going so through the Children's Panel I was sent to St Philip's in Plains, Airdrie, which was a school for

wayward boys. I was there for a short time before being sent to Bellfield Remand Centre in Dumbarton, which was again only for a few weeks before finally going to St Mary's in Bishopbriggs.

## **Institutions**

### **St Ninian's, Gartmore, Stirling**

5. At first St Ninian's appeared to be a good place to me. There was a swing park, large grounds, lots of fresh air and they kept animals, but it didn't turn out that way. St Ninian's was an old building, castle type scenario and there were little units built as the school set next to it.
6. It was run by the De La Salle monks and Brother MJJ was SNR. The staff were made up of monks, priests and civilian staff, who were like social workers. There were at least 47 to 49 kids there, all boys, from the age of eight to sixteen. I remember one boy called [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], who was a bit older, he seemed to have been there for ever. He looked after the horses.
7. My first experience was being taken there, it was directly from the Panel. I was taken there in a car by strange people, I don't remember who they were. A monk then took me away, I can't remember his name. I then washed, showered and was issued with clothes. I was shown where I would sleep and how to fold my towels and given pyjamas. We all had our own little locker. I remember being told you put your towel over your headboard at night if you volunteered to go to chapel for mass in the morning.

## **Routine**

### *Mornings and bedtime*

8. St Ninian's was split into houses. These were St Patricks, St Georges, De La Salle and another that I can't remember the name of. I was in De La Salle.

9. In the morning you'd get up about seven o'clock, you'd do your housework, dusting, polishing and buffering the floors, then you would go to breakfast. The food was ok, St Ninian's was alright that way. They clothed, fed and watered you. We had a uniform of shorts, snake belts, shirts and pullovers. After breakfast you went to school.
10. You showered at half past four. We got a shower every day. When we were having a shower it was with boys of all ages, up to sixteen to eighteen years old and I remember there were women walking about them. Members of staff.
11. Dinner was at half past five. If it was a nice night you could then go out and play in the grounds. At night time you could build model aeroplanes or do basket weaving, that kind of thing. There were games like table tennis and billiards. Out of school was quite good at St Ninian's.
12. Bed time was about eight or nine o'clock. We slept in dormitories. I can't remember how many beds were in each one and I can't recall how many dormitories there were. We had to say our prayers in the mornings, before meals and at night time. I said mine at that time anyway.

#### *Bedwetting*

13. I started wetting the bed at St Ninian's, I hadn't done it before I went there. If you wet the bed they gave you 'jungle juice' at night before bed. I don't know what it was. You got a clout from the housemaster, or his wife, the housemistress and told not to do it again. If you wet the bed you were given a nightgown to wear instead of pyjamas, probably just to embarrass you.

#### *Discipline*

14. St Ninian's was run under a points system. You got points for the way you made your bed or how you laid things out on your bed. If you didn't do something right you

lost points. You had to get so many points over the course of the week to go home at the weekend. I was quite a good boy and didn't get up to much mischief. I wasn't a bad boy, I was a thief and didn't go to school.

15. There would have been a punishment for running away from St Ninian's but I never tried to run away because it was in the middle of nowhere with open fields all around you.

#### *School*

16. The school hours were basically like normal school but schooling was a problem for me. I hated it as a kid, hence I had the time to go out and steal. My first experience in the classroom was not being able to spell my own name. Nothing registered.
17. The first teacher I recall was either called Douglas McDougal or Dougal McLeod, I can't remember exactly. He was a bully. I remember I couldn't spell carbon monoxide so he 'rag dolled' me, dragged me about classroom by the ear. He taught science, maybe English and maths. I'm sure at some point he taught me the first three chords on the guitar. I found out later in life that he became a headmaster at one of these schools.
18. It's funny how it affects you over the years. If you committed any little misdemeanour he would smack you over the back of your head with his knuckles. It was a daily occurrence. He didn't just do it to me. Everybody got it.
19. Nothing I learnt at school sunk in. Mr McKenna was nasty, he taught woodwork. If you did something wrong in his class he 'rag dolled' you. He only did it to me a couple of times but he did it to a few boys, just little boys, grabbed them by the arms and threw them about the room, slapping them.
20. I know there was a priest who taught music, he gave guitar lessons. I don't know his name but he was ok. You don't remember the good ones, only the bad ones.

21. We used to do cross country running and football. I wasn't into sport but I joined in because you had to or you'd face the consequences if you didn't.

#### *Holidays*

22. We were taken to a camp every year during the summer holidays. I'm not sure where it was. They'd take us to a reservoir and let us swim. It did have its good points.
23. After the first three weeks at St Ninian's, I went home at weekends. On the Friday I got dropped off by minibus at Buchanan Street and got the train home to Clydebank. On the Sunday my sister dropped me back off at Buchanan Street and I got picked up again by minibus.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

24. I was there on my birthday but don't remember anything ever being made of it and I was always at home over Christmas.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

25. When there was going to be an inspection things were just like you see in the movies, everybody cleaned up the place before anyone came. I don't know who they were or what they were there for, nobody spoke to us. We just knew they were coming because we had to clean up.
26. In the first three weeks at St Ninian's I didn't get home so my mum and dad must have visited but I can't remember apart from the one time. I remember Brother MJJ told me that my mum and dad were there. He had come and got me. He put his hand out, I still see it. I was so relieved that it was my mum and dad because I thought he was taking me into his room again. I think that was it with visits. Due to the fact that I was going home every weekend I didn't get any others.

27. I would have had a social worker during my time at St Ninian's, I've had social workers throughout my time in care, but I don't know who it was at the time and can't remember any visits from them. I don't remember the person at all.

#### *Medical Care*

28. If there was any health care I can't remember it. If there were any problems they'd take us to the nurse. I do remember hurting myself once and I was taken to her and got patched up. My foot had got stuck under the roundabout at the swing park. I can't recall any dental care.

#### **Abuse**

29. As I said, the teacher who was called Douglas McDougal or Dougal McLeod used to hit us on a daily basis, throwing us about his class or hitting us on the back of the head with his knuckles. My dad smacked me, but nothing like that.
30. I learnt to tie my laces on the third attempt because the first two times I couldn't do it I got a slap in the face from my housemistress. That was a shock to me, that was all new to me. Her husband, our housemaster, and her stayed in the gatehouse, they were quite old and had been there a long time. It never goes away, it never leaves you.
31. One time I was in the toilets with two other boys, I can't remember their names, and we were mucking about as boys do, saying things like, 'mines is bigger than yours', that sort of thing, and the housemaster came in and slapped, kicked and punched the three of us all the way down the hall.
32. My name got called out one morning by Brother MJJ, I think this was an introduction. I remember one boy said it's your turn to see 'bawjaws' this morning. So I went into his room and he put me on his knee. I was sitting on his knee and he was bouncing me up and down, I could feel him rubbing my leg and I know it's not normal. I looked down and saw this and I turned round to look at him and he kissed

me on the mouth. He put his tongue in my mouth. He molested me and it wasn't nice. No molestation is nice. Brother MJJ was like SNR. I can still see him taking my hand. I can still see his hand.

33. There's a photograph of me, as a young boy in Buchanan Street bus station going back to St Ninian's. Most kids are smiling in photographs. I wasn't smiling. I've never said anything to anybody. I'm hoping I get a bit of therapy out of telling you this, I've never wanted to go on medication. I thought St Ninian's would be good, with the animals and the swing park.
34. There's a photograph of me somewhere in the system when I was at a funeral, I can't remember whose funeral it was. After it we went back to this house, a sandstone house, it was nothing like St Ninian's. I remember going up the drive, we went in and had our sandwiches and juice. I can't remember going back to St Ninian's that day. I don't remember going back. I've read stories about what people do to children so that they can do what they want with them. I don't remember the rest of that day.
35. I can't remember whose funeral it was or who took me. I'd never been to a funeral in my life. I remember being there, or maybe I remember from the photograph. It was a dull day but the weather couldn't have been bad as I was looking for somewhere to play. All I remember is the sandstone house. It's played havoc with my mind for a long time.
36. I remember there was a gardener, I can't remember his name, he was middle aged, he gave us sweets, Murray Mints. One day he said he had a fox in a bag. There was a few of us there. He said he was going to let it go and asked us to follow him. I knew there was something wrong. He put his hand on me and I wet myself, I knew there was something wrong. I ran away from him. I can't remember when this happened.
37. I believed in my religion. My dad believed in religion. At St Ninian's if you volunteered to go to chapel for mass in the morning you folded your towel over your headboard.



My towel went over my bed lots of times when I didn't want to go. I didn't put it there and it wouldn't have been the other boys that done it. We wouldn't play games on each other to get others into trouble.

38. Apart from the first three weekends at St Ninian's, when you are kept there to get you used to it, there were only two weekends out of all my time in care that I didn't get home on the Friday. Once was for smoking when I was nine or ten, I was 'rag dolled' for that. I can't remember who done it.
39. The second time I was kept back a day and didn't get home until the Saturday was because my friend [REDACTED] had an older brother, [REDACTED], who was leaving and he said that I could get his boots. But they weren't his boots, they belonged to St Ninian's, so I got into trouble for this. Either Brother MJO or Brother MBZ gave me a slap and kept me back until the Saturday.
40. Brother MJO was an old bastard. It might have been him or Brother MBZ. At the age I was they all look the same, middle aged, blackish grey hair, glasses and robes on. Whichever one it was he was in charge of the boot room. Everything had to be in its place. One time I didn't clean the boot room to his standard. I didn't really want to do it and didn't do a very good job, so he battered me. I remember the slapping and slapping and slapping. This happened a couple of times.
41. On at least three occasions I went home at the weekend with black eyes and only one of those times was from fighting with another boy. One was when the housemistress slapped me for not being able to tie my laces. The other time was from McKenna because I was useless in his class. I just told my parents I'd been fighting. I didn't know what I was supposed to say. Teachers hit kids in those days, even in mainstream schools.
42. After I went into St Ninian's, and on my first weekend home I realised that I didn't have any friends. Nobody would play with me because I was in care. Their mums and dads didn't want their kids playing with me.



**St Philip's, Airdrie**

43. I left St Ninian's in 1976, roughly. I was eleven or twelve years old by this time. I was released home and went to St Columba's secondary school for a couple of weeks. I don't know why I was released from St Ninian's.
44. Things just carried on as before, I wasn't going to school and I was thieving, going into shops and stealing, breaking into shops, breaking into people's houses. As I said I didn't have any friends my age so I mucked about with older kids and I was very easily manipulated. Due to this I went to another couple of Children's Panels and through another Children's Hearing I was put to St Philip's in Airdrie.
45. St Philip's was another all boys home. All the places I was in were all boys. It was a Catholic institution but not too religious. It wasn't an order that ran it, more social work type people, local authority. The school was within the grounds of the home, like St Ninian's.
46. I didn't like St Philip's, I just didn't want to be there, it was intimidating. I don't know how long I was there but I wasn't bad because if you were well behaved you were given little chores to do, depending on how trustworthy you were. I got to look after the dog.
47. I ran away a few times with other boys. I stayed in Hamilton a couple of times and Possil a couple of times. I stayed at the homes of the boys I ran away with. I didn't like the regime at St Philip's, it was more like the police and I'd had bad experiences with police.
48. A couple of times when I ran away I went home and my parents thought they were doing the right thing and would take me back to St Philip's. The punishment was getting the belt over the backside while you were bent over a chair. You kept your trousers up. This was done by the headmaster, I think his name was Mr Kane.

49. But the punishment wasn't fair sometimes, for instance when I went to hospital to get my appendix out I was at home for a week after the operation. When I returned I got the belt for absconding. I'd been in hospital.
50. The only notable thing that happened at St Philip's was that I got my appendix out when I didn't need to. I was constipated but was too embarrassed to say and as time went on I got too scared to say anything, so I was getting stomach pains and I got my appendix out.
51. It got to the stage that St Philip's didn't want me there anymore as I kept running away. So, on one occasion, when I absconded, they didn't want me back. St Philip's were sick of me so I was sent to Bellfield Detention Centre.

#### **Bellfield Detention Centre, Dumbarton**

52. Bellfield Detention Centre in Dumbarton was a short term place. I can't remember who was in charge. I was only there for a few weeks, maybe six in total, I can't remember exactly. It was ok there.
53. I remember that the punishment there was to be kept in a cupboard, sometimes all day. One time I got into a fight with a boy called [REDACTED] and I got put into the cupboard for a couple of hours. It was smaller than a police cell and had one small window. There was nothing in the room and I was locked in. We called it the cooler. I don't know the person's name who locked me in but he had a comb over.
54. It was a closed building, you were locked in there but you were allowed to smoke. As it was a short term detention centre, after about six weeks I was sent to St Mary's.

#### **St Mary's, Bishopbriggs**

55. I went straight from Bellfield to St Mary's. I didn't really have any problem with St Mary's, it was alright. The staff were fine, they weren't bullies. It was a local authority establishment. There were about thirty boys, their ages were from about twelve to

sixteen. I think the school staff and residential care staff were all mixed. Everybody mucked in. I can't remember exactly but I don't think you had to wear a uniform. The school was on the same site as where you stayed and you could 'dog' school easily. I can't remember getting any punishment at St Mary's.

## **Routine**

### *Mornings and bedtime*

56. The routine in all the places I was in was pretty similar. In the morning you got up, washed and went to breakfast then school. You were responsible for cleaning up your own area. The dormitories were just rows of beds, I don't know how many were in each dorm. You had your own locker next to your bed. Showering was a daily thing.
57. The longer you were in St Mary's you went from a dormitory to a single room, which were just off the dorms, and lastly to a different building where you had your own separate room. This was to get you prepared for leaving the place. During my last year I was put in the building where I had my own room. I started going home at night. One night a week, then two, then three and so on until you were going home every night. Everybody was given chores to do but they varied, you were on a rota.
58. Unlike St Ninian's, there wasn't much to do at St Mary's after school. You couldn't leave the place but you could 'dog' school and wander around the grounds or sit in a storage room all day.

## **School**

59. Throughout my time in care I only remember two good people. They were near the end of my time in care, at St Mary's. MHF, who was like a teacher/social worker type person. He taught me to read and write by throwing away the books and doing the crosswords in newspapers. He was strict but fair and I liked him.

60. The other person was also at St Mary's, his name was LYT [REDACTED] and he was like a maintenance man. I can't remember his surname, he was a nice man too. He taught you practical things like repairing sockets and changing light bulbs, making curtain rails, that sort of thing. There was only one boy I remember, [REDACTED], who sat his exams, while I was in care.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

61. Similar to St Ninian's, I was at St Mary's on my birthday but don't remember anything ever being made of it and I was always at home over Christmas.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

62. It was the same as at St Ninian's, you knew when there were inspections because you had to tidy up when they were coming but the inspectors never spoke to you.
63. I had a female social worker when I was there, she was a nice woman, I can't remember her name. On the days that she was at St Mary's she dropped me off at the dual carriageway near my house at the end of the day. I didn't feel I could discuss anything with her. Staff were staff.

#### **Abuse**

64. There was one dodgy member of staff at St Mary's who worked in the kitchen. His name was Bill Franks. I think he was really gay but didn't want to come out. When we all went into the kitchen in the morning he would look you in the eye and say things like "Did you have a wank last night?" and "You were masturbating this morning weren't you". He was saying this to all the boys, even the little ones.
65. When you were doing the dishes he'd rub himself up against you. I was thirteen or fourteen when I went to St Mary's so I could look after myself a bit more. If you called him a few derogatory names he left you alone.

66. One night Bill Franks was in the room upstairs and he had a young boy on his knee kissing him on the cheek. When this incident happened, which was in the TV room, there were a few boys in. They were taking it in turns to sit on his knee and he was kissing them on the cheek. I thought, I've been there, it's not happening again.
67. I asked what he was doing there at night, which was unusual. He said he was doing overtime. By rights he was the chef, not a social worker but it was skeleton staff at night and that night he was it, supervising eight to ten of us. I stayed in the room but I wouldn't sit on his knee. I only knew what he was up to through past experiences. By that age I was old enough and brave enough to look after myself. I read in a paper years later that he got seven years in prison for molesting a boy.
68. St Mary's had a no smoking policy but he let you smoke in the cupboard in the kitchen. He would follow you in there, so I'd have my cigarette and get out as quickly as possible.
69. On one occasion at St Mary's I was loaded with the flu and I lay in bed, sleeping. I was still in the dormitories at this time and I was off school. I woke up and this boy was on top of me with my shorts down, trying to force himself in me. His name was [REDACTED]. It was flesh on flesh. Somebody came in and disturbed him so he stopped. That wasn't happening to me, it had already happened at St Ninians. That's how I know what happened to me at St Ninians. I didn't know. I didn't have a clue.
70. I reported it to a member of staff, my housemaster, I can't remember his name. He just told me to go and play. I might have told my housemaster about St Ninian's if he had been interested in my report about [REDACTED].
71. It was in St Mary's that I discovered alcohol and drugs. My housemaster found me lying on the ground twice and asked if I was alright. The second time he found me I had a bottle of poppers in my pocket. I had taken this and was out of it. This was my first experience of drugs. We did have a bit of freedom in St Mary's.

72. Everybody smoked at St Mary's and the safest place to hide your tobacco and cigarettes was down the front of your shorts. [REDACTED] used to put his hand into everybody's shorts when they were sleeping and steal their tobacco. You didn't know until the morning. He was older and taller than everybody else. I fought with him a few times when we fell out. Apart from that St Mary's was alright, St Mary's was fine.
73. As I said, St Mary's was the first place I tried poppers as well as sleeping tablets, cannabis and alcohol. When we went swimming to the baths we would get a bottle of Old England and get drunk. [REDACTED] brought the cannabis in to the school.

### **Reporting Abuse**

74. Apart from telling my housemaster at St Mary's about the incident with [REDACTED], I've never reported any abuse to anyone.

### **Leaving the Institution**

75. When I reached sixteen it was time to go. I left St Mary's and I went back home to live with my parents but it didn't last long, maybe about six months, maybe less. I tried to join the army but I was told that my test results were the worst that recruitment office had ever seen. I then tried to get a job and went on a couple of government placements.

### **Life after the Institution**

76. I left my parents and stayed at one of my older sisters in Drumchapel for about a year, but I was getting drunk, taking drugs and had the police coming to her house. I had to leave due to my lifestyle.
77. Alcohol helped. It helped with my anger. At sixteen or seventeen I'd get a wee carry out, go down to the local school and get drunk and break a few windows, kick in a few doors. When I was eighteen and went to pubs, I'd get drunk and get into fights. It

was hard for my family, coming home drunk or the police coming to the door at five or six in the morning as I was in a cell for fighting or stealing.

78. I then stayed with my sister [REDACTED] for seven or eight years before I got my own council flat, but I wrecked it. I left and went down south, where I lived rough for a while. When I came back up the road I got into a bit of trouble, fighting with football supporters.
79. I haven't worked for two years due to arthritis and muscle wastage. I can't even turn a steering wheel sometimes. It was really heavy graft. If you're doing that and not eating every day it takes its toll.
80. When I was 26 or 27 I was lying drunk on the street and got scooped up by the police, handcuffed and put into the back of the car. I managed to get out of the cuffs and out of the car and I would've got away but I was too drunk. I was taken to the police station and dragged into my cell. I was lying there and I said to the officer, kick a man when he's down, so he did. He kicked me about the cell and broke a couple of my ribs.
81. This was a turning point for me, this and the birth of my boy, [REDACTED]. I didn't want kids but it happened. I was in a relationship of convenience. I was running out of places to go.
82. My alcohol days are gone. I still take cannabis, it keeps me calm. You could count on one hand how many drinks I've had in twenty years. Nobody ever really bothered me when I was drunk. This was mostly when I stayed with my sister in Dumbarton when I was getting in to trouble for fighting or stealing.

### **Impact**

83. I felt as though I didn't deserve to be put into care and there are things that happen to you as a kid that you don't think you'd take with you, but you do. My mum was



dying, breaking her heart and I couldn't cuddle her. It's very hard. I can't cuddle my sisters. I hate being cuddled, I hate shaking hands. That's what it does to you.

84. I've never had any support or help. I don't want it. Nothing is going to change. You've just got to get on with it. There's no-one I'd approach, I have never told anyone. Years ago my mum and dad heard about St Ninian's but I said I was alright. I told them I was one of the lucky ones.
85. Every now and again you think about the time in care, it rears its head. When I see media campaigns it pops up. When I saw a programme on TV about a boy who had been abused I was sitting with my sister and I said, 'that was me', 'that was me'.
86. Everybody is different, I'm just trying to get through life as quickly and quietly as possible. This doesn't go away. It never goes away. When I saw that young boy on TV I thought of speaking to the Inquiry.
87. I went to my doctor and he asked how long I've been feeling like this. I told him all my life. When I'm in one of my moods I just don't care. I think that's what my background has done for me. I think that's what it's done to me. I can't touch, I couldn't touch my mum when she was dying. I don't like being touched.
88. Most of the time I'm quite approachable but I have mood swings. I've wrecked two flats and lots of guitars with built up anger. Is it related to abuse or am I just an idiot? I think it is related to abuse. Other people make you who you are, especially when you're young.
89. All of my brothers and sisters have children so I was used to being around kids. I was a great uncle. I am a good dad. I left [REDACTED] mum when he was five or six. I was never violent with her. I have never hit a woman in my life. I had problems with relationships, now I don't want one. I could never change nappies, I felt uncomfortable. I shouldn't feel uncomfortable, I've done nothing wrong. It never goes away.

90. I will probably never have a drink again. [REDACTED] is 23, I haven't drank since he was about three. I'd either top myself or somebody else. I've had motor bikes and fast cars and sometimes hoped I'd have an accident. You don't try to but you go through the scenarios.
91. These places should never exist because people can't be trusted. I don't believe in kids being taken from their parents.
92. I had to go through all sorts of custody battles to see [REDACTED]. I told the judge he was wrong and got kicked out of court. I told the lawyer that you can't tell me this is in the best interests of the [REDACTED], I know because I grew up in care. These places shouldn't exist.

### Records

93. I have never tried to recover my records
94. 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.. GDG .....

Dated.. 29/5/17 .....