

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HPU

Support person present:

1. My name is HPU. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born at Simpson's Maternity Hospital in Edinburgh and stayed with my parents and my siblings. I was two years younger than me, three years younger, and was four years younger than me. We lived at Broxburn until I was six or seven years old and I have memories of walking along the canal path to Broxburn Primary School.
3. My parents were going through a divorce, so I moved with my mum and my siblings to Moredun in Edinburgh. Then, we got a main door house in Gracemount and lived there for three or four years, before we went into care.
4. My life at home was like any family, we had our ups and downs. I had friends in the scheme and I had a good relationship with my siblings, and I thought, a good relationship with my mum. We didn't see my dad at that time.
5. I started attending Gracemount Primary School and then got moved to Gilmerton Primary School. I was moved because I was having problems at school. It was partly to do with the people I was hanging about with, but I did have a mind of my own and I started skipping school when I was twelve, when I had just gone in to first year at

secondary school. That's when I got introduced to the Social Work Department and The Children's Panel system. My social worker was at the Gilmerton office in Edinburgh. I can't remember the first social worker's name.

6. My mum and I had to go up to the Young Persons Unit every week for one-hour sessions, like counselling sessions. They were trying to get to the bottom of why I was skipping school. This went on for about a year.
7. My mother was having a relationship with a married man called [REDACTED], when my siblings and I were still in her house. He went back to his wife and kids, and she blamed us. He did go back to my mother after that, and it turned out that this man went on to abuse my sister. She reported it years later. I don't know what the outcome of that was, but my sister no longer speaks to my mother.
8. I started getting into bother when I was skipping school, I got reported to the police a couple of times for minor offences. My mum made threats to leave us, but I didn't take her seriously. Then, one day, I saw her walking down the path from our house, with my sister and a suitcase. I woke my brothers, packed a bag, and told them that we had to get out, as I knew the social workers would be coming up to get us when they knew that my mum had left us.
9. I took my brothers and we went to a workman's hut between two golf courses at Braid Hills in Edinburgh. We stayed there for about two or three days, then we were caught by the police. They took us to the police station, then we were taken by a social worker I hadn't met before, to Wallhouse Children's Home at Torphichen. I can't remember if anyone told us what was happening.
10. I was at Wallhouse from [REDACTED]/80, Howdenhall from [REDACTED]/81, Millpark from [REDACTED]/81, Howdenhall from [REDACTED]/81, Abercree House from [REDACTED] 1982, Canaan Lodge, Morningside, from [REDACTED] 83, Howdenhall from [REDACTED]/83 to [REDACTED]/83

Wallhouse Children's Home, Torphichen

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Howdenhall Centre, Edinburgh

23. I can't remember much about arriving at Howdenhall, it was at night and the place was in darkness. I went in the front door, down a corridor, then upstairs. All the doors locked behind you and you had to wait for the next one to open. I got put in a cell with no mattress and the toilet was made of metal. They put me in there and then they threw my bedding in. I was locked in all night and the next morning, I got taken down for breakfast. I had to sit down with someone, asking me why I thought I was in there.
24. Mr PAQ and Mr zGFG were SNR and there was also a Mr EWA EWA we called him. The boys were kept on one side of the building and the girls on the other side. There was a block for the really young kids, then the juniors, and then the senior children. The dormitories had two or three beds in them. They tended to use up the smaller rooms, and keep the rest of the block locked off. The youngest children there were about six or seven years old, and they were there for all sorts of reasons, like skipping school, or getting in trouble with the police. I tried not to ask too many questions. I used to hang about in the senior's room because I smoked. I can remember some of the boys who were there, but I didn't really ask their second names. There was a , and a boy .
25. I tried to settle in to the routine but I kept getting moved. I went from Wallhouse, to Howdenhall, then Millpark, then back to Howdenhall, then Abercree, then Canaan Lodge, and then finally back to Howdenhall. I don't know how long I was at Howdenhall the first time.

Routine at Howdenhall Centre

Mornings/bedtime

26. You got woken up by somebody banging on your door, got dressed and went downstairs for breakfast.

Washing/bathing

27. We did shower every day, but I can't remember what time of day. Everyone went up to the showers and stripped off. I can't remember what the order was for having a shower, if it was youngest first or oldest. The showers were open, no partitions or curtains.

Food

28. The food was OK. It was basic fare, I wouldn't say it was terrible. I don't remember being without anything to eat.

Schooling

29. We went to what was called the "Classroom." However, I wouldn't call what we did there, "Schoolwork." I would ask questions about why I was not getting an appropriate level of work to do, as the work they gave me to do was below my level, simple arithmetic, or reading. I just did some colouring-in, it was a mixed age group. However, I don't remember things being that way during my later times at Howdenhall. We went to school and after lunch, we would have gym class or play football, then back to the classroom.

Leisure time

30. We got a small amount of pocket money. If you behaved, you would get "Weekend leave" but it wasn't the whole weekend, it was just day leave. They would give you bus fare plus another couple of quid and you were just left to your own devices for the day, nobody would monitor you.

Clothing

31. There wasn't a uniform, in the way you would think of a school uniform but we did have a uniform in that we all had to wear blue jeans and whatever they supplied.

Healthcare

32. You got an examination whenever you went into any new care home, and you just saw a doctor if you needed them. I didn't get much dental care. It was noticed, several times, that there were problems with my teeth.

Visits/inspections

33. There was no counselling at Howdenhall, I feel that nothing was done to address the issues that had led to me being taken into care. At a panel hearing when I was at Howdenhall, my mother said that she didn't want me back. I didn't know that until she told the panel members, when I was sitting right there. The only thing I wanted from her was to sign the form to allow me to smoke. When she signed the form, I got up from the table and left. After that, the social workers stopped insisting on me having visits with her.
34. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both stayed at Wallhouse when I went to Howdenhall. I was never encouraged to have contact with them. Whenever I asked about my brothers, the social workers would go and find out, and then come back and tell me. After a while, I did start getting to see them. I saw [REDACTED] at Moredun and [REDACTED] at Drylaw. I continued to see [REDACTED] when I was at Howdenhall, so I had a close relationship with him, we kept in touch as best as we could throughout care.
35. My last meeting with [REDACTED] was at Barnardo's opposite Edinburgh Zoo, about a week before he was adopted. They told me the week before, that he was being adopted but I didn't know that he was getting taken to Hong Kong. He was adopted by a Mormon couple who had children of their own, and the man was in the navy. [REDACTED] wasn't with us at that meeting. It was difficult for me as a young teenager to say goodbye. I didn't know if I would see him again, I didn't know where he was going, I was upset.
36. I didn't see [REDACTED] again until I was nineteen or twenty. He knocked on my door when I was living at the top of [REDACTED]. He just turned up at our door. He is now happily married, and has great children.

Activities/trips

37. Howdenhall had a big blue bus for going on trips, but I didn't like getting on the bus. They would take the bus out to the park, out by Biggar. It was in the middle of nowhere, so if any of the kids had tried to run off, there was nowhere to go.
38. They had two camps, one at Loch Doune and one at Pea's Bay, but I didn't go to camp the first time I was at Howdenhall, I was either too young or I just didn't get to go.
39. I went to camp the second time I was at Howdenhall. There were a lot of activities like fishing and hillwalking. It was a lot of work for the guy who was in charge of it, and for his wife. I spent the summer there one year. They had a cottage, right up at the tip of the loch. There were other boys there too, about six at a time. It was fantastic there. I was there for about five weeks. I was only supposed to be there for one week but I asked to stay on longer.

Birthdays/Christmas

40. Christmas was very quiet, because some of the children went home. I remember there was a Christmas tree, and we must have got Christmas dinner. I don't think I got any presents or I would have remembered them. The routine at Christmas was kept as close as possible to the normal weekly routine, but you did get to mingle with the girls at Christmas, because they were usually in a separate wing from the boys. There were no birthday presents or cards from the staff. Your friends who knew it was your birthday would give you their best wishes.

Running away

41. I did try to run away from Howdenhall, but sometimes I was just late back. If you did try to run away, you would get locked in a cell. Sometimes, you could be in there for the whole weekend. The cell was designed is so that you couldn't hurt yourself.

Abuse at Howdenhall

42. One of the boys, [REDACTED], his younger brother made an allegation against a member of staff, EWA [REDACTED] I believe now that it was an allegation of sexual abuse. I remember [REDACTED] sitting in the communal room, pulling his hair out.
43. There was a sexual allegation about EWA [REDACTED] at Pea's Bay. EWA [REDACTED] wasn't there after that. He had been in charge of the smallest boys' room. I was in the middle, then the older room. EWA [REDACTED] had been at Dr Guthrie's. He was in his fifties by then. I just tried to stay away from him, all the boys knew to stay away from him.
44. There was an incident I had with EWA [REDACTED] it was possibly during my second time there. It wasn't sexual in nature, it was probably a physical assault but I can't remember the details. I didn't see any sexual abuse at Howdenhall, but it sticks in my memory about [REDACTED] pulling his hair out.

Millpark, Craiglockart, Edinburgh

45. I was about fifteen when I went to Millpark. I don't remember being informed I was going, or being asked about it. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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When I went back to Howdenhall, there would be a panel within five days, because your supervision order would require to be changed. There would be a social worker at the panel, but not always my social worker.

Abercree House, Newton Stewart

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Canaan Lodge, Edinburgh

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Life after being in care

78. I wanted out of care and I complained about being in care. I wanted something like Stopover, supported accommodation for people leaving care, but there was nowhere like that which had places. I even visited Stopover myself but there were no rooms. I managed to get a B&B and called an emergency panel. The agreement with social work had been that we were going to look for a place for me to be self-sufficient. The decision was made that because they didn't know where I was going to be placed, that I was to be kept under lock and key, so I went back to Howdenhall Assessment Centre and I wasn't allowed out to look for work. I wrote a letter to John Stark the head of the Children's Reporter's office in Edinburgh, stating that I was being restricted in my movements, and not being assisted in getting a job or somewhere to stay and I asked for a panel. I was told to see a lawyer but there was a panel three weeks later and I was just kept locked up until then.

79. At the panel, I stated that I was aware the supervision order was ending and I was aware the social work was there if I needed them. The supervision order ended and I went back to Howdenhall, gathered up my belongings and went to a B&B.
80. I did go back to the social workers a couple of times, the first was because I lost my B&B place. I had a couple of my friends up in my room. We weren't drinking or doing anything. I said we had done nothing wrong, but the guy asked me to leave. I asked the social work for assistance, and they did help. I got some cash for bus fares, that was about all I asked for, but I listened to them when they tried to point me in the right direction.
81. Life after care was a rocky road. I got mixed up with the wrong people, got mixed up with drugs. I realised I didn't want to be mixed up in these things and I turned my back on a lot of people. I met my partner [REDACTED] and realised that she was a more important thing to have in my life. We met when I was 18 and I was a father by 21.
82. I worked in the building trade, on a garage forecourt, and I did agency work. When [REDACTED] was pregnant, I got a full time job through my agency contacts. I was in the building trade for twelve years, specialising in repairing buildings. We had our second child four years later, when I was 25.
83. We lived in the same house in Edinburgh for 25 years. However, there were problems with drugs and people walking up and down in front of the house selling drugs, so we moved away from Edinburgh, but I kept working as an HGV driver.

Reporting of abuse

84. I have never reported to the police what happened to me. I do have contact with my brother [REDACTED] but not with [REDACTED] anymore. [REDACTED] had a daughter, [REDACTED] My partner [REDACTED] and I were involved in [REDACTED] life from when she was approximately one year old. She made allegations of abuse against my brother [REDACTED] when she was sixteen. Her mother didn't believe her, and I am so sorry that things went un-noticed

by us. A couple of years later, my brother [REDACTED] tuned up with evidence of child images on [REDACTED] laptop. We went together to the police. By the time the police got to [REDACTED] house, [REDACTED] had destroyed his home computer records, but the police managed to find evidence on his computer at work. He went to jail for the images on the computers, but not for what he did to [REDACTED]. My brother [REDACTED] changed his name to [REDACTED] something, that was before he was convicted. We found out that he was looking after someone's house that was getting renovated, and that he was taking his niece there. We reported that to the police too, after the report was made regarding the computer images. We didn't report it at the time, because we didn't recognise the likely nature of this behaviour.

Records

85. I got my records about three months ago. I had been talking about getting them for a while but from reading them, there is no depth, explanation or analysis of the issues relating to my care, or of the complaints I raised about care.

Impact

86. I feel that my experiences in care had an effect on my education. I was quite clever, quite capable, but I fell to bits. My potential was noticed several times, but I was lacking a loving figure throughout my childhood.
87. I never wanted to burden my gran with what was happening. She was getting on in life and she wouldn't have been capable of looking after us, although she would have tried to do it.

88. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

89. I find it difficult to form relationships, to trust people. It has affected my relationship with my kids. I keep myself at a distance, I don't let people in. It can be quite lonely but I can share my feelings with my partner.

Hopes for the Inquiry

90. People are blind to what they don't want to see. I hope there will be an acknowledgement of what happened, an understanding of what went on, to find out how it was ever allowed to happen, to examine the failings of the system and what should have been done differently. I should have been monitored more closely in care. There should have been more effort made to find the right place for me. Life could have been so different.

Other information

91. 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..... HPU

Dated..... 23/11/2018