

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IHL

Support person present: No.

1. My name is IHL. My surname when I was born was IHL, but my mother changed it to IHL when I was about six years old. My date of birth is 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born and brought up in the countryside near Dundee. When I left school, I started as an electrician's labourer, with a view to becoming an apprentice electrician, but that never worked out. After that I had a few jobs, including in a slaughterhouse for a while, in an engineering plant and then with a building preservation company, where I stayed for a few years.
3. In the late 1990s, I applied for a sessional post at Rossie School, Montrose and I started there, as a sessional worker, on 21 December 1998. I worked as both a sessional worker at Rossie and with the building preservation company for a few years, until I started full-time at Rossie in 2001. I remained at Rossie School until May 2024, when I became a [REDACTED] with the Moore House Group, which provides a number of services for young people throughout Scotland, including residential care.
4. I had no qualifications before I started at Rossie, however, after starting there full-time in 2001, I studied for an HNC in Childcare at Arbroath College, as it was at the time. Shortly after that I attained an SVQ3 in the same field.

Rossie School, Montrose

5. Rossie School is located about five miles south of Montrose and is situated within extensive grounds. In the grounds are a lot of houses and, when I started, there was an old building that stood very tall, which comprised a school and a care part at one end and some unused areas at the other. In that old building were three units where the young people stayed, called Lunan, Dalhousie and Tay.
6. Down the bottom was another building called Glenmarkie, where there was a swimming pool. They were building a new education block at the time I started, which connected the old building and Glenmarkie, but I'm not sure when that was completed.
7. The purpose of Rossie School was to house young people who had come through the children's hearing system and, at that time, the Scottish Courts system. Rossie was considered to be a stepping stone for youngsters who had perhaps had a difficult time in the community, albeit the youngsters who had come through the courts system had obviously been sentenced to be there. Rossie would look after them and try to do some work with them with a view to trying to get them back in their own communities.
8. I was a bit overwhelmed when I first started there. There was a children's home just down the road from where I had grown up and I went to school with some of the children from it. I was therefore aware that children were being looked after, but the idea that children were going through the court system was totally alien to me.
9. The culture of the youngsters was fine, but I think children at that time were a bit different to what they are today. There was no social media and I always felt I knew where I stood with them. It seemed as if there was less emphasis on mental health difficulties, it was more the case that these youngsters had got into trouble, been taken away and had eventually been put into secure care. I think the thresholds the social work departments had at that time to meet the secure criteria were a lot lower than they are now.
10. The youngsters came from all over Scotland and predominately from the bigger cities. As I remember, very few came from little villages or towns. There certainly appeared

to be a gang culture, especially with some of the younger ones who had come from Glasgow. It didn't seem to be the case that boys from each city would stick together, it was more the case that boys from different areas of the same city might fall out. I remember some had to be placed in Dalhousie and others couldn't be placed in Lunan, because they knew each other and there might be difficulties and that sort of thing.

11. The culture of the staff, however, was questionable, I think. I still recall my first shift as a sessional worker and a lot of the staff not even speaking to me when I arrived. Instead, I might just get a glower from some. It was as if I was going into their environment and there was no welcome. Some people were really nice, but I do still recall that standoffish feeling amongst the staff who considered themselves to be the leaders, those who perceived they had authority over everyone else.
12. There were female care staff, but it was mainly male and I would say the attitude of the staff toward the youngsters was very authoritarian. A lot of the youngsters would refer to the staff as "Sir", but that was just their culture, it wasn't the case that staff were instructing them to call them that.

Employment at Rossie School, Montrose

13. I learned about the post as a sessional worker at Rossie through a friend of a friend, who was working as a classroom assistant there. They said the school was looking for people, so I 'phoned up and got an application form sent in the post. I didn't have any experience of working with children before and I didn't have any qualifications either, however, there was no requirement for qualifications as a sessional worker.
14. As I recall, it was a full application form, including details of my employment history and that sort of thing. I had to provide two references, I think, so I approached my employer at the time, but I don't recall who the other was. I believe it would have been written references, but I'm not sure because I never saw them. Any references would have been provided directly to the school.
15. As a sessional worker, I was required to go in on evenings and at weekends. The role involved taking instruction from staff, perhaps taking a young person out to football, or

taking them home on leave. It also involved playing snooker or pool with them, or cooking their supper, all that sort of thing. The role did not involve any key-working tasks.

16. I didn't have any awareness of a secure care setting when I first started at Rossie, but I got on really well with the youngsters who were in there at that time and I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the various tasks I was given and, for that short space of time, I felt that I could be a youngster again and didn't have to think about all the additional stresses of adult life.
17. I remained a sessional worker until 2001, when I commenced full-time employment as a residential childcare worker. In 2005, after gaining my qualifications in childcare, I became an acting team leader and then a substantive team leader around 2007. In 2011, the chief executive at the time, Richard Murray, decided to employ full-time duty managers. Prior to that, the duty manager's role had been fulfilled by house managers or team leaders. I applied for the position and became a duty manager in June or July of that year and I remained in that position until I left Rossie in 2024.
18. I actually applied twice for the full-time role but wasn't successful on the first occasion. I didn't need any qualifications for the position, it was just my experience as a sessional worker that was required. I can't remember who interviewed me, but I think there would have been one of the house managers on the panel.
19. I had to complete a probationary period, which I think was for one year. I can't remember the word that was used at the time, but I would have had a coach, which is what staff acting as mentors are called now. I felt supported and I felt that, after having been a sessional worker for three years, I had a good enough insight into what was required.
20. I passed the probationary period, although I don't think there was any sort of appraisal at the end of it at that time. In fact, in all my years at Rossie I think I had two appraisals. One was around 2018 and the other was in 2023. After going full-time in 2001, I was given an induction into the role about four years later, which I think lasted about an hour-and-a-half.

21. As a full-time residential childcare worker, I worked five days in a row. If I started on a Monday afternoon, I would then do Tuesday morning, then Wednesday afternoon, Thursday morning and then Friday afternoon. The other week would be Monday morning, Tuesday afternoon, Wednesday morning, Thursday afternoon and Friday morning.
22. We also had to fulfil mandatory weekend work, but I can't remember how that fitted into the cycle. We had to work a Saturday and a Sunday, 10:00 am to 10:00 pm. Some people would work 9:00 am to 10:00 pm, but the youngsters would stay in their beds until the staff starting at 10:00 am came on. There was also a backshift that started at 2:00 pm at the weekend. Nightshifts were worked by a separate team, who only worked nights.

Structure and recruitment of staff

23. The staff structure at Rossie School comprised a chief executive, who I think was Tony Thomson when I started. Then there was a deputy chief executive, however I don't know what his role was. There was also a head of education and there were house managers. I don't recall if there were team leaders when I started, but they certainly came in, as did the positions of acting team leaders and duty managers.
24. Each of the three units, Lunan, Dalhousie and Tay, had a house manager and two shifts. I remember the house managers when I started were Grace Walton, Geraldine Macarthur and either GGE or Bill Wardley-Smith. They were both house managers of Dalhousie, but I can't remember who was there when I started.
25. I didn't have any dealings with the chief executive or his deputy and couldn't comment on his leadership style, but as you came down the positions, the style was very authoritarian. There would be a decree that something needed to be done and it would get done.
26. As I became more senior, around 2016 or 2017, I started to have some involvement in the recruitment of staff. I think I was on three interview panels in total, which all

comprised of three managers. I also went through the applications, assessing each and giving each a score to see if the person was fit for interview.

27. I don't know if there was a recruitment policy and I was certainly never trained in any selection process. Instead I relied on my own knowledge and experience when I was handed a bundle of application forms and asked to go through them. I think the first time I was on an interview panel I was made chair of the panel, but that was, I think, because I was the only person who could be there for two full days. I was nervous about it, but I'm quite confident in my approach to things and it went well.
28. The interviewers were all provided with a bit of paper with the questions on it from the Human Resources Department of Rossie. When the applicant answered, we would each write in what they were saying and marry the answers with the questions. We would then score them on that and if they got to a certain score, they were considered appointable. The panel would then decide, after discussion, whether to offer them a position or not. As chair, I would have the last say, if the other two panel members could not decide.
29. Each applicant was also obliged to provide references as part of the application process, which I think went to human resources. I don't recall having sight of the references at the interviews, however, I would have knowledge of the applicant's previous employment from their application form.
30. I don't recall there being any volunteers or unpaid workers at Rossie.
31. My responsibilities as a duty manager were to ensure the safe management of the building and to make sure the young people and the staff were safe. If there was an incident, my job was to manage that incident.
32. At first, the shift pattern was such that everybody worked what was known as 'six and three', which was six shifts on and three days off. There were three shifts, A, B and C. At first Susan McGurk was duty manager of A-shift, Graham Brown was duty manager of C-shift and I was duty manager of B-shift. Susan left and a guy called

Dave took over her role. There were also duty managers on nightshift. They never worked during the day, but on occasion I would work a nightshift for overtime.

Training

33. In 2002, I was trained in CALM physical intervention techniques and, I think around 2013, I was put on an instructors' course. In my role as a duty manager, I had to be a CALM instructor to be able to manage and observe other staff safely applying physical interventions.
34. Along with the other duty managers, who had also completed that instructors' course, I was then able to deliver that training to new staff and refresher training to staff who had previously been trained.
35. However, the opportunities to take that training were very few and far between because there were another two CALM instructors who were more office-based and they took most of the courses. I had an active role on the shift and often it wasn't possible to remove myself from my shift because of staffing issues.
36. I think there were policies concerning the training that new members of staff would receive as part of their induction. Part of the conditions of our employment were that we would be CALM trained and that we would undertake the HNC and SVQ in childcare.
37. I am certain that there will be policies regarding ongoing training, but I do not know what they would be. There was a training team, called the 'Learning and Development' team, although I don't know what their remit was. They were based in Rossie and consisted of between one and three members of staff at various times. There were a number of new staff in the houses in need of training, but it wasn't the remit of that team to do so.
38. I was involved in the induction of new members of staff. When a new member of staff started, I would meet them and go through an induction book with them. I would show them the physical layout of Rossie, including where the fire escapes were and how to

safely manage the doors. I would show them where the muster point was in case we had to evacuate and I would show what we would have to do if we had to evacuate one house, two houses, or all three houses.

39. After carrying out that induction, I would hand the new member of staff over to whichever mentor had been identified for them in whatever house they were to be working.

Supervision/appraisal/staff evaluation

40. At first when I became a duty manager, I didn't have anyone to supervise, but that changed and after a while I did. However, latterly that changed again and the duty managers were given sessional workers to supervise. That was actually very difficult, given our role as duty managers and our responsibility for dealing with incidents, or meeting visitors. We were each given a list of perhaps twelve sessional workers and trying to supervise a sessional worker who might be coming in once every three weeks was very difficult.
41. I did offer to do it on Microsoft Teams with the sessional workers I was responsible for, but they didn't want to do that, even though I said I would pay them. They considered it would have too much of an impact on their home life.
42. I didn't have any responsibility for completing an appraisal for any of the sessional workers. However, if I had concerns about a sessional worker, I would relay those concerns to my line manager who would then deal with it. At that time my line manager was Tom Morman, who was a house manager.
43. There was a policy on supervision, which detailed how often you got supervision, depending on your role. I think if you were care staff, a team leader or a duty manager, you were supposed to get supervision every four to six weeks. Each formal supervision meeting would be recorded and you would get a copy of what was said.

Policy

- 44. I did not have any involvement in, or responsibility for, the writing of policy in relation to the care of children at Rossie.
- 45. I am aware of policies changing over the years after legislation was changed, for example when SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) was introduced. Sometimes entirely new policies were introduced, sometimes existing ones were modified.
- 46. I remember one time a watch I was wearing got damaged at work. It was a nice watch and expensive and Rossie had to pay for the repair, which was several hundred pounds. After that, the jewellery policy changed and we were made aware of that very quickly. Otherwise, you wouldn't be made aware that there had been changes until you went to look for a particular policy, although in my last couple of years we did start to get emails saying policies had been updated.
- 47. On occasions we were given a policy to review, although that wasn't something that was done as standard. You would be given the chance of suggesting changes, but that didn't necessarily mean any suggested changes would be implemented.
- 48. I'm not sure if all policies were available online at first, but eventually they were all put on the school intranet, which all staff had access to. If you needed to check something, you could find it on there. The job of duty manager at Rossie was always busy though and it was often the case that you would only go looking for a particular policy if you had to for a specific reason. It wasn't humanly possible to retain all the information contained in all the policies.

Strategic planning

- 49. I did not have any involvement in, or responsibility for, strategic planning in relation to Rossie School.

Living arrangements

50. I lived in Forfar when I started at Rossie School, however there were a number of houses within the grounds and I think there were staff living in them at that time. I think there were about fifty houses in total, but I'm not sure how many were occupied by staff and who the staff were.
51. Dormitories were no longer used at Rossie by the time I started, each young person slept in a single room, with the door locked overnight. However, I think it was the case when I started that one key fitted all of the door locks and the secure care staff, managers, cleaners and education staff would all have keys to the children's residential areas.
52. The three units, Tay, Dalhousie and Lunan were set up differently because it was an old building. For example, if you entered Tay Unit, you would walk in the bottom door and on one side there was a kitchen, a shower room, a storeroom and perhaps three bedrooms. On the other side there were five bedrooms, an area where staff could hang their jackets and at the top was an office on the left side and a communal area where the young people could watch TV. Beyond that was a snooker room. All staff that could access Tay Unit would, therefore, have access to all those bedrooms.
53. Upstairs, Dalhousie was very similarly set out with a long corridor that had bedrooms and other rooms off it. There was also a back staircase that joined Tay and Dalhousie, which would take you into what was called the play barn. Lunan had a couple of entrances, one that was up the main stair, past the manager's office and, again, it had a long corridor with several bedrooms off it.
54. Overnight, each unit would have one member of night staff on duty and there would also be another member of staff who would work 10:00 pm to 3:00 am and cover all the units. If a young person was in their room at night and they needed the toilet, the staff would radio for another member of staff to come from another unit, unlock the young person's door and let them out of their room to use the toilet.

55. There was also an on-call manager on duty overnight. That duty rotated and whoever was on call would take a school car home with them in case they were called out. The on-call manager could be a team leader, a house manager, or a shift manager.

Discipline and Punishment

56. We never used the word 'discipline'. When I started, we would use terms such as 'a measure of control', or a 'sanction'. If a young person misbehaved, they might have their television taken out of their room at night, or if they had community access, their outings might be restricted. Having community access would mean the young person had got to a stage within their secure care journey that they were able to access the community with a member of staff. Restricting going to the swimming pool was another possible sanction, as was accessing the play barn. The use of any particular sanction depended on where the perceived risks were and the individual young person.
57. The use of any particular sanction should have first been authorised by the duty manager, after the staff on shift, who would know each young person, had decided what the best way forward was.
58. There was a 'Measures of control book' in each house and any sanction issued should have been recorded in it. All staff had access to that book and it was the responsibility of whoever was putting the sanction in place to complete it. The member of staff would then sign the book and the duty manager would sign it too, to confirm that they agreed with whatever the sanction was. That book was kept in the staff offices in each house, but it wasn't always signed. There were a lot of blank spaces in it.
59. When I started, there was a folder that the staff called 'Yellow Perils', because of the colour of the paper. It was a kind of 'idiots guide' as to how things should be done and what was expected of each of us. I think there was a policy, or a code of conduct on discipline in that folder. I can't remember for certain, but I would imagine each staff member had their own copy of that folder.

60. No child, to my knowledge, had any disciplinary role or responsibility. I have, however, heard staff make reference to the existence of peer pressure.
61. There were physical interventions, or restraint, but there was no physical discipline that I am aware of.
62. I have been provided with a statement given to the Inquiry by IJT [REDACTED]. I note that IJT [REDACTED] states he was at Rossie around 2005 to 2006.
63. At paragraph 142 on page 25 of his statement, IJT [REDACTED] has said '*They had a mad room downstairs. It was underneath the Lunan Unit. There was nothing in there except a mattress and a toilet. There was a window. It was like a police cell. When you first come into that place, they put you in that cell to search you. They used the cell as a punishment too*'.
64. When I started, the staff called that the 'Segregation Suite', which was not a term I coined. It was where the young people on admission were taken to be searched. It wasn't used as a punishment as such, although I am aware of young people being moved down there because their behaviour was so out of control, we couldn't keep the other young people safe. When any young person was moved down there, we would explain that we then needed to look at ways of moving them on because we couldn't safely reintegrate them.
65. I can understand why IJT [REDACTED] might look upon that as a punishment because it wasn't a nice place, however it was not a punishment. It was, I suppose, how I would imagine a police cell to be, albeit a bit bigger. There was a concrete bed on the floor, which had a mattress and a window set high in the wall, which was impossible to see out of. As I recollect, if any young person needed to go to the toilet, they had to be let out of that room into a small corridor, off which was a toilet.
66. No young person was ever left down there on their own, there would always be a member of staff with them. The length of time a young person would be there varied, however. I am aware some youngsters were down there for a number of days, but it would always be for the shortest time possible.

67. At paragraph 145 on page 25 of his statement, IJT [REDACTED] says *'The staff would drag you downstairs from the unit and fling you in the cell for hours. The staff were horrible people and they were horrible to you. They'd put you there for arguing with them. The staff would do stuff and you would shout at them. Then they'd hit you and put you down in the cell. They hit you anywhere they wanted. The way the staff treated us in general was bad. They basically locked us in a room and left us there until we calmed down. The staff put us in that place but then they were shouting and telling you to bolt'*.
68. I never witnessed any of that. I can say that when a young person was out of control and their behaviour was being managed, they were put in a room and the door was locked. That was known as 'single separation' and it was used to keep that young person safe, to keep the other young people safe and to keep the staff safe.
69. The sort of behaviour that would result in single separation would be violent, aggressive, destructive behaviour, bullying or intimidation. A young person would not be put into single separation if they looked the wrong way at somebody. There were criteria that had to be met.
70. They might also be put into single separation if there was a suspicion they had contraband on them. A cigarette lighter, for example, was probably one of the most dangerous things a young person could have in the old building.
71. There were strict rules we had to follow regarding single separation and there is now more awareness of its use being a restrictive practice.
72. I have never witnessed a young person being thrown in a room and told to bolt.

Restraint

73. If a young person needed to be taken down to the segregation suite, a team of staff would do so. All of that team would be trained in CALM physical interventions.

74. The level of the intervention would depend on the situation. The higher up the scale, the more staff there would be to manage it. If a young person was being taken down the stairs, there would be either two or three staff doing so. One would be on each arm and they would be walked downstairs. If there were three, the third would be observing.
75. The way I would manage a situation whereby a young person appeared to be out of control would be to invoke a de-escalation process. I would have someone with me and I would talk to the young person and try to bring the level of their agitation down. If that wasn't working, or if there was a physical threat to someone or to property, I would communicate with the other member of staff present and tell them what I was going to do and I would put the young person in a safe hold.
76. A safe hold would be both members of staff holding onto the young person's arms and wrist in what is called a 'figure-four' and walking with them. You would be close in to their body so that they couldn't get out of the safe hold. You would always stay away from the joints and hold onto the meaty parts of their arms. We did not use pain-compliance, instead we used the relationship we had built with the young person to try to de-escalate each situation.
77. They would not be taken to the floor. If a young person was in a safe hold and they were struggling violently, they may end up on the floor, but that would be led by them. There are moves within CALM whereby a young person could be safely taken to the floor, but they would only end up on the floor because they were out of control and fighting and because it is the safest place for everybody to be.
78. If a young person does end up on the floor, they would be held in a seated position, or prone. I was trained in how to safely hold a young person prone and I was trained to deliver prone. Prone is when a young person is lying face down on the floor, with one member of staff holding one arm, another holding the other arm and another holding their legs.

79. Additionally, there would be another member of staff observing and managing the situation and making sure that everything was okay. If, for example, the young person said they couldn't breathe, that member of staff would instruct the others to release the young person and let them up.
80. Previously, the young people had to get let out of their rooms at night to go to the toilet. If there was a known history of problems with a particular young person, there would be sufficient numbers of staff on duty overnight to allow for that. After 2007, each young person had an en-suite room so they wouldn't be out of their rooms ordinarily. Additionally, however, from 2007 there were routinely six or seven staff on duty as well as a night manager.
81. Restraint was used regularly at Rossie, but I would be unable to say how often I was involved in restraints. Restraint was not something that was used for power or control over a person, but, given the environment, there was a need for it. Restraint was used to keep people safe.
82. Latterly, perhaps in the last ten years, a week was spent on CALM training as part of the induction process. I had been employed at Rossie for four years before I was given any physical intervention training. Prior to that, which was 2002, we were always told that our duty of care kicked in and that if somebody was in trouble you would help them until somebody who was trained in physical interventions came along and took over.
83. Before it became part of the induction process, I think training was held every two or three years in CALM physical interventions. That may not be entirely accurate though, because that was a process I did not have much to do with. I do believe that there were opportunities for all staff to be trained, but it would be the case on occasion that there were untrained staff on duty. That would simply be because a course hadn't come up in the time since they took up employment.
84. The week-long CALM training itself consisted of two-and-a-half days theory, two days practical work and the last half day was for assessment. The training was carried out

by employees of Rossie who were qualified CALM instructors, however the assessment was carried out by a CALM verifier who had not been part of the training.

85. The initial training lasted for a year and Rossie were good at carrying out refresher training. The CALM verifiers would keep a record of who had passed and who had not and it did occasionally happen that people failed certain moves. If that happened they would have to redo them, but the failure rate was very low. The CALM verifiers were always very impressed with the training Rossie staff were given.
86. There would have been a restraint policy in as much as to ensure we followed CALM guidelines. I am also aware that latterly there was a restraint reduction policy.
87. CALM is not about strength, it is about the techniques used. I don't recall seeing excessive restraint being used, but I do recall there being very violent young people who were difficult to restrain. CALM is a great tool if the young person is compliant. If the young person is not compliant, it can be very difficult to restrain them and, to the untrained person, it can appear as if the techniques used are excessive.
88. An accepted part of the job is that you don't get the level of protection that the young people do. When I started at Rossie, if a young person started to punch you, kick you, or bite you, you would phone the police and report it as an assault. However, I realised very quickly that there was no point in doing so. I never wanted to criminalise a young person, but I wanted to feel protected and I did not consider the system or my managers were doing so.
89. In a secure unit, we were dealing with a lot of young people who were out of control and we were containing them. In the community that young person was an individual problem, but in somewhere like Rossie, there were many young people to deal with.
90. I am aware that at paragraph 148 on page 26 of his statement, [redacted] says *'Strip searching always happened at Rossie Farm'*. He continues at paragraph 149 *'There were a lot of restraints. The staff grabbed you and put you on the floor. They put your arms up your back and your head on the floor. You got carpet burns'*.

91. I have never seen a strip search in my life, however I can understand why IJT IJT has used those words. The search process of a young person when they were first admitted, or when they returned from leave, or because there were perhaps suspicions they had contraband, might appear that way.
92. The young person would be instructed to go into a certain room and would be handed a house coat and told to take all their clothes off. We would then close the door while the young person took all their clothes off and we would only open the door when they had done so and were fully covered by the house coat.
93. We would then go into the room with a metal detector, which we would sweep over the young person. We would also search their clothes and we would search the room, if we considered it necessary. We would also ask them to show us they didn't have a pair of boxer shorts on by lifting the edge of the house coat and showing us a bit of skin. We did that to ensure they weren't hiding anything in their boxers. When we were happy, we would leave the room, telling them to get dressed again and close the door. That procedure was still in operation when I left Rossie School.
94. If a young person refused to comply with this process, they would be put into single separation. The potential risks of them having contraband, or a weapon, were too great. Even under those circumstances, there would not be a strip search, instead we would seek guidance from whichever senior member of management was on call.
95. With regard to IJT's comments on restraint, staff did not ever grab a young person for no reason. Staff responded to the behaviours they were faced with. The conduct and the level of violence displayed by the young person dictated what happened and the level of restraint that was required. If that involved the young person being on the floor, they may well get carpet burns, but that was because the carpets were rough. They would not get carpet burns because staff were dragging them across the carpet.
96. Furthermore, their hands did not go up their back, they were kept at their sides. I am aware that police officers do that, but I have never seen care staff do that.

Concerns about the institution

97. To my knowledge, Rossie School was never the subject of concern, within the institution itself or to any external body or agency, or any other person, because of the way in which children and young people were treated.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

98. There was a process in place if any child in Rossie, or another person on their behalf, wished to make a complaint or report a concern. I think it was already in place when I started as a full-time worker, but I wouldn't necessarily have been aware of the process when I was a sessional worker. I think that process was still in place when I left as well.
99. A complaint might initially be verbal and it would be the responsibility of the staff member receiving it to record it. They would do so either in the log book, on a complaints form, or in an email, or in the young person's case notes. There were lots of ways in which complaints were recorded, but you might also try to deal with the situation, for example if it was a complaint of bullying by one young person on another.
100. I didn't receive many complaints, but I did receive some. If a young person came to me with a complaint, depending on the nature of the complaint, I would fill in a 'Child Protection Concern' form and submit it to the child protection officer. If it wasn't a child protection complaint, I would record the complaint and pass it on to my line manager. If the complaint was about my line manager, I would pass it further up the tree.
101. The young people also had access to the complaint forms, which they could complete anonymously. They would be handed out by staff and the young person could fill it out, put it in a sealed envelope and give it to the staff. The envelope would then be put in reception for whoever could most appropriately deal with the complaint. Some young persons used that process more than others. I suppose it depended how they felt their needs were being met.

102. If a young person had filled in a complaints form themselves and swore in it, that form would be ripped up. I don't what would have happened about the complaint, but it is my understanding it would not be investigated.
103. A minor complaint would be handled at the lowest level. The house manager would most likely deal with a minor complaint. They would read the complaint, ask whatever questions were deemed necessary of the staff, look at any CCTV recording, if relevant, and then feedback to the young person. I don't know if the young person would have much input into the outcome of their complaint, however if they weren't satisfied with the outcome, their complaint would go further up the management chain.

Trusted adult/confidante

104. 'Who Cares? Scotland', which is an advocacy agency, would come into Rossie regularly and meet with the young people. I think they probably came in weekly. There was another agency too, possibly a children's rights officer, who came in frequently as well.
105. Social workers also came in every month or six weeks and if a young person asked to see their social worker, they could come outwith those regular visits. Families could visit too and so these were all people the young people could access and speak to about any worries they had.
106. 'Who Cares? Scotland' and social work both had set days they would visit and they would advertise that they were coming. A lady called Monica Hodgkinson from 'Who Cares? Scotland' was very much an advocate for children's rights and she would speak on her own with the young people. Everything she was told by them would be confidential, but if the young person had told her of some issue with the staff, she would speak with the staff and try and resolve the issue.
107. Generally, the relationship between the care staff and the social workers and other visiting agencies was quite good. I would describe it as an honest relationship and, certainly in my experience, there was nothing that gave me cause for concern.

108. When I started at Rossie, each young person was permitted three outgoing phone calls a week. They were allowed to come into the office and phone whoever they wanted to speak to. As the calls were made from the office, they were not confidential because there would always be a member of staff there. That member of staff would dial the number out and would remain in the office with the young person.
109. There is now unlimited access to the phone, which is cordless. They can have as many phone calls in or out as they want and they can take the phone into their en suite bedroom, if they want. Social workers can request staff sit in and monitor certain phone calls, but other than that, they are private.
110. I'm not sure if any young person did raise concerns with 'Who Cares? Scotland' or with their social worker over the years. Any conversations they might have had would be very confidential and if any more serious concerns had been raised, it would have been brought to the attention of more senior management.
111. Staff interactions with families were generally quite good, although sometimes the interactions families had with staff could be strained. Sometimes the families viewed the staff as 'turnkeys', or prison officers.
112. When I started, family visits tended to be more at the weekend. They could pick a time they wanted to visit and they would have an hour slot. Now the families can visit pretty much any time they want, as long as they give twenty-four hours' notice. We needed that notice period to book a room and to ensure there were sufficient staff on duty to support the visit.
113. Some of the young people at Rossie are from England and so their families have a long distance to travel. Families, therefore, sometimes have longer than an hour and sometimes they stay overnight and visit on two consecutive days. Friends could also visit with families, if the social worker agreed. If they were under eighteen, they generally were not allowed to visit, though. I don't know what the reason for that was, that was a social work decision.

114. Staff also had an involvement in children's panels. I attended several over the years and I found it quite a daunting experience. I think it's a better system than that which exists in England, but it is a very formal process. A table was put between the panel and everyone else and this panel would make a judgement on the young person's future. I used to wonder how the young person I was accompanying must feel, if I found it daunting.
115. When a young person comes into secure care, the order keeping them there is reviewed every twelve weeks and so staff would have to do a report for each of those reviews. I completed a number of such reports over the years.

Abuse

116. When I started Rossie, 'abuse' was not a word that was ever used. I wouldn't be able to put a timeframe on when I first became aware of the terminology, but to me the term meant battering somebody or sexual abuse. Getting a smack as a child was not something I looked on at the time as abuse, instead abuse was something that happened at a higher level.
117. I would define abuse as any treatment that could be considered harmful, or potentially harmful, to a person. That would include physical abuse, mental abuse and sexual abuse. We as care staff are there to help the young people, we are not there to be their enemy and as care staff, it is important to be aware of how we are presenting to a young person and what we say to them.
118. I don't recall a specific definition of abuse being communicated to staff, but I think attending various training courses and carrying out your own research over the years builds up your knowledge and understanding. I think it more the case that my knowledge of what constitutes abuse has been drip fed to me over the years.
119. I witnessed one incident of abuse about twenty years ago. I walked into a bedroom in Lunan to find a member of staff had a young person by the throat. I don't know the context of what had happened to lead up to this. I don't think the boy was harmed physically and I don't recall if he had any marks on him.

120. I can't remember the first name of the boy, but it began with a [REDACTED] and his second name was [REDACTED]. He would have been thirteen or fourteen at the time. I don't remember the second name of the member of staff and whether he was care staff or sessional, but I do know that his first name was KVR [REDACTED] and that he was only employed briefly. He had been a Royal Marine before and I know that he was English, mid-forties, tall and that he had a moustache and lived in Arbroath. I know that because I reported the incident, KVR [REDACTED] subsequently left Rossie and my manager advised me afterwards to stay away from the town.
121. I reported what I witnessed verbally to my line manager at the time and I think I followed it up with a statement. There was an investigation, but I don't recall whether I was spoken to as part of that investigation and I don't know if the police were involved.
122. I have not seen any other behaviour that I considered to be abuse of any kind taking place at Rossie over the years.
123. I have received reports of abuse by staff from young people. Around eight years ago, I was duty manager and responded to an alert call, which comes out if a member of staff presses a button on the top of their phone for assistance. I attended and a tall English lad from either Manchester or Liverpool reported to me that he had been punched in the face, or the head, I don't recall which, by a care worker called KWF [REDACTED] KWF [REDACTED]. There was no visible injury and there was no evidence to back up the allegation as the boy told me it had happened in his bedroom when there was only him and this member of staff there. I don't recall what the boy had said had been the lead up to this.
124. I removed KWF [REDACTED] from the house and reported the incident to one of the more senior managers. There was an investigation, but I don't think there was any evidence to confirm what had happened. However, I later heard through the grapevine that KWF [REDACTED] decided because of the investigation process that enough was enough and he left.

125. I think that most of the time, if any child was being abused or ill-treated, it would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring. There was a big staff group and different shifts and latterly, when we moved into the new building, there was CCTV. I thought that having CCTV was a great thing because it provided an extra level of protection, although I'm not sure all staff felt the same way. I think there was perhaps a suspicion of what the intents of the management were.
126. I do think, however, that abuse could have happened and gone undetected. I think there will always be opportunities for abuse to occur and I think that it is fair to say that of every establishment.

Child protection arrangements

127. By the time I left Rossie, we received child protection training yearly and it was updated regularly, as legislation and practices changed. I don't recall that the training had always been every year, it may have been, but if it was not, I'm not sure when we did start to get it every year.
128. The training included guidance and instruction on how children in our care at Rossie should be treated, cared for and protected against abuse, ill-treatment or inappropriate behaviour towards them. We would also know about child protection through supervisions with line managers, through other training and through team meetings. If any member of staff had concerns about a child or about another member of staff, they could raise their concerns at those meetings. All staff were aware of the whistleblowing policy.
129. I don't know if I, as a manager, had discretion in such matters. I had a process to follow and I always did so because, if somebody reported something to me and I did nothing about it and then they reported it to somebody else, I would be putting myself at risk. I cannot speak for other managers or staff.
130. There were a number of systems in place to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff towards children at Rossie. I'm not sure whether it was 2007 or 2009 that we moved into the new building and CCTV cameras

were put in. There were also electronic locks on the doors, which were opened by a fob that was individual to each member of staff, although sessional workers would share a set of fobs. Wherever you went, you had to scan your fob to open a door and that was recorded on a computer. Each member of staff also has a phone that connects to 'locator plates' all around the building.

External monitoring

131. The Care Inspectorate visited regularly throughout my time at Rossie. I would say they probably visited annually. I recall some of them were Susan Barrie, Lynne Ellison and Beverley someone, whose surname I can't recall. They led teams of other people, however in my role as duty manager, I didn't have a great deal to do with them because I didn't actually work in the houses.
132. As far as I was aware, the opportunity was there for the Care Inspectorate to speak with the young people, both individually and in a group and I believe they did. In my early years, I also spoke with the inspectors, but not in the last fifteen years, since I was promoted.
133. I am aware that the inspectors give feedback to the chief executive, who then passes it on to the managers. Most of the time we staff had to read the inspection report from the Care Inspectorate website, unless it had been a glowing report.

Record keeping

134. Record keeping was probably very good at Rossie. I recall back when I started that we all used to complain that things were recorded in triplicate. Everything was always recorded in more than one place.
135. I did have concerns that when staff recorded how a night had been, certain managers would re-word what had been entered on the computer. To me, that changed the context of what had happened the night before because they would re-word what had been typed to make things seem better than they were.

136. When entries used to be recorded in the daily log book, they couldn't be changed, but when we started using the school intranet, everybody had access. Whatever had been recorded was not protected and so it was possible for these managers to do so.
137. I don't have specific examples, but there was an occasion when I had been aware of an incident during the night and when read what had been entered the following day, it had been changed. What was written was not what had happened. I spoke to the staff about it and I was told that one of their managers, either John Barker or Blair Nicholson, had changed the entry.
138. I was told this happened on a regular basis and I don't know how many managers may have done this. I raised it with my managers, however nothing was done and I wouldn't be surprised if it is still going on.
139. I don't recall if there was a policy on record keeping. I would imagine there was because we did have certain tasks to complete, but I cannot be certain.
140. I would think that if there was a record relating to an allegation of abuse that was held online, access would be restricted and only certain managers would be able to access it. Before records were recorded online, there were locked filing cabinets, but I don't know where the records within those cabinets would be kept when we moved over to computers.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

141. There have been occasions I have been asked to give a statement or my version of events relating to certain incidents, but I don't now recall what they were. I have never been part of a team that investigated any allegations of abuse or ill-treatment by staff or others towards children at Rossie. I was trained to do so, but I never actually did so.
142. If there was such an investigation, it would generally initially be carried out internally by Rossie management team.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

143. I was never involved in the handling of reports to, or civil claims made against, Rossie School by former residents concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

144. I have given statements to the police in relation to assaults by young people on staff or on other young people at Rossie, but no police investigations into alleged abuse at Rossie come to mind. I don't recall ever giving a statement to the police in relation to a child being abused.
145. I have never given a statement to the Crown and I have never given evidence at a trial concerning alleged abuse of children at Rossie.
146. I am aware, however, that there is a live investigation ongoing at the moment into alleged abuse at Rossie. I don't know any of the detail, but what I do know is that a member of staff I worked with over a number of years, has been accused of the sexual abuse of a young girl that occurred five or six years ago and that the case is in the process of going to court.
147. The member of staff was a residential childcare worker called IPB [REDACTED] and he was on my team. All I know is that when he came into work one day in 2022, I was instructed to take him through to a room where the deputy chief executive and the human resources manager were sitting. Afterwards, I was instructed to show him out of the building and, although I don't recall his words, IPB [REDACTED] did tell me that he believed the management were trying to get rid of him. He was told to go home and was suspended. I believe he has since been sacked in relation to another issue whereby he hadn't followed correct procedure, but I know nothing of this other issue.
148. I would be very surprised if there is substance to the allegation of sexual abuse because I know IPB [REDACTED] and I know his practices, however it is not for me to judge.

Convicted abusers

149. I do not know if any person who worked at Rossie was convicted of the abuse of a child or children there.

Other Staff

GGE

150. I am aware that the Inquiry is interested to know if I recall a member of staff by the name of GGE.
151. I do recall him. He was a house manager of Dalhousie unit and then he went to work on nightshift. He wasn't my manager because I worked in Lunan and that is all I really recall of him.
152. I think my time at Rossie would have overlapped with his in the early 2000s. He might have been at Rossie when I started as a sessional worker, or certainly very soon thereafter. He was older than me, but I wouldn't say a lot older. I think he was from the west coast. My recollection is that he had children and left Rossie to become a house husband.
153. Given the nature of my role, I would have been in his vicinity when there were young people about, but I don't recall what he was like with them really. What I do remember of him is positive in that he would always encourage his staff to get the young people moving and get them doing things.
154. I never saw him discipline a young person and I never saw nor heard of him abusing a young person.

Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry

IJT

155. At paragraph 147 on page 26 of his statement, IJT has said, *'There was a guy called IHL. He was horrible. He was kind of bald and a wee, solid guy. He'd fling you about and drag you down the stairs.'*
156. I don't remember IJT at all and I certainly never sanctioned or punished any young person in such a way. I have no recollection of ever throwing any young person about or dragging any young person down the stairs.
157. His description does not match me. I am about six feet tall, with a full head of hair and I have never been bald. I have also previously been described as 'skinny'. I think he is getting my name confused with another member of staff. The only other member of staff called [REDACTED] that I recall is [REDACTED] but he was a teacher and he was taller than me.
158. I do accept that it would be abuse if a child was treated in the way described.

Leaving Rossie School, Montrose.

159. It hadn't been my choice to leave Rossie School when I did on 5 May 2024. I did so because I didn't feel safe and I consider that I was pushed out of the door and lost all faith in senior management. I can't prove that, but I am certain.
160. I had been involved in an incident in January 2020 in which, as I tried to restrain a boy called [REDACTED], who was struggling violently against me, the rotator cuff in my left shoulder was damaged. [REDACTED] had been on home leave and returned and he always struggled to manage his emotions when he returned. As I recall, he was damaging furniture and, along with other staff, I had to go in to hold him safely until he calmed down. He's a pretty well-built guy, however and, as I was holding him, he kind of lifted himself up, causing my shoulder to pop. I don't think it was intentional.

161. I reported it at the time and completed an 'Accident Assault Log' and heard no more about it at that time. I sourced physiotherapy, which I paid for myself, and had six sessions in March of that year until the Covid pandemic hit and the physio stopped.
162. In October of that year, 2020, Rossie decided to hold an investigation into my injury, despite having never even discussed it with me since it had occurred in the January. This was despite my having reported it verbally and filled in the log, at the time. I was put on what is called 'permitted leave' while the investigations were carried out, however I have no idea why. To this day, I do not know what the outcome of the investigation was. In fact, it actually felt as if I was being investigated. I was put on permitted leave nine months after the incident and therefore the CCTV had all been destroyed by then.
163. I was on permitted leave and sick leave for a number of months, before I went back to work in an office for about ten weeks. After that, I was told I was returning to my substantive post, despite my protestations that I wasn't sufficiently fit. So, concerned for my career, I involved my trades union. The union recommended I submit a personal injury claim and ultimately it was settled in October 2023. A new manager had started sometime before then and he, for some reason, took a disliking to me. His name was Kevin Northcott and there were a number of issues with him, including his being very obstructive when I was trying to arrange annual leave. It is my belief that he, Kevin Northcott, and the chief executive, Mary Geaney, colluded to force me out of my employment at Rossie School.
164. Kevin Northcott also obstructed a change to my shift pattern, which I attempted to organise for welfare reasons. Latterly I was working six days on, which involved three backshifts, a sleepover and then two early shifts. For personal reasons, I applied for a flexible working pattern so that I could go home every night to alleviate those anxieties. I worked this pattern alongside two other duty managers and another member of staff from my team volunteered to cover my sleepovers. This made no difference to the duty manager cover Rossie was being provided with, however as soon as the change in my shift pattern was sorted out, Kevin Northcott moved this member of staff onto another shift so he wouldn't be following the same pattern as me and so my sleepover was not then covered.

165. Following this, in November 2023 I was involved in an incident with a resident called [REDACTED]. I think [REDACTED] didn't like me because I had been the manager on shift at the time he had been admitted. He used to threaten to assault me and do things to my family.
166. One day around 9:20 pm when we were on minimum staffing, [REDACTED] started picking furniture up to break it and I put the furniture down. I can't recall what other staff were there, because there were a few, but I do know that Murray Lawson, Ryan Petrie and Mhairi Corbett were all working. One of my colleagues intervened to restrain him and when [REDACTED] was on the floor, he was again spitting at me. [REDACTED] did eventually agree, however, to get up and return to his room and, when we were walking him to his room, he was again turning and spitting in my face, all the way to his room.
167. We got him into his room and shut the door, however he opened the door again and came back out. By that time, another incident was kicking off in the lounge and [REDACTED] continued to spit at me. I put my hand up to block the spittle and, when I did, [REDACTED] put his head down and my hand was then on his head. At the same time, my colleagues were guiding [REDACTED] down to the floor and I kept my hand on his head as he went down, which is apparent on the CCTV. However, [REDACTED] said that I had grabbed his hair, even though I had not. I was the only manager on shift at that time and it was only when the nightshift manager came on duty a short time later that I was able to swap out with him.
168. I reported this incident at the time and filled in all the necessary paperwork and two or three days later I received a phone call from the residential manager, Michael Scanlon. He seemed very pleased when he spoke to me and told me not to come back to work when I was next due on, which was the weekend. He told me I had to attend the following Monday morning, which I did and at which time I was shown through to one of the offices and told to work in there.
169. I asked what was going on and was told there had been an allegation and that the young person, [REDACTED], was covered in bruises. I was told that it didn't look

good. It was at that point that I didn't feel safe working at Rossie School, either personally or professionally.

170. I had never restrained this boy, but I remained working in that office for about three weeks while the incident was investigated by the police and by Angus child protection team. I was never interviewed by either the police or Angus child protection team, but I was made aware that there was no case to answer.
171. The incident was then investigated by Rossie though and I was asked why I hadn't moved away from the situation. I replied that I was the manager responsible for the safety of all the staff and the young persons, including [REDACTED]. I was advised I had a lot of learning to do and told I would be returning to my substantive role, but that I wasn't allowed to respond to any incidents within Annan House. I was also told I was not permitted to restrain any young people.
172. I returned to my role and worked for a couple of days, however on the Friday I became very concerned. I realised I had no management help, other than a 'phone call, if anything went wrong. I didn't feel safe and I didn't feel supported. It was my absolute conviction that if anything happened over the weekend, I was going to be the scapegoat and so I went off sick.
173. I'm not sure of the timings and whether I applied for my current position before all this happened, but I received a phone call while I was off sick from the human resources department of the Moore House Group. They told me they were just waiting for Rossie's investigation to finish. I didn't even know there was still an investigation ongoing.
174. I returned to work and ultimately was only back for four days until left Rossie for my new position on 5 May 2024. During those four days, no manager spoke to me and, with no management support, I did not feel safe.
175. I was provided with references when I left Rossie by Tom Morman and Aileen Ingram. I think they were pretty positive about the progression of my career, but I can't really recall what was said.

176. My new position is as a [REDACTED] within the Moore House Group,. The company had opened a new service just outside [REDACTED] which is a three-bedroom former farmhouse that has been converted to accommodate up to three young people.
177. The new service was originally intended for the use of three neurodiverse young people, however we only have one resident at the moment. I have only been there for about six months at the moment, but I am loving my new job.

Helping the Inquiry

178. I think sometimes people can view events in their lives differently. I think that, especially when you are younger, you may consider you have been harshly treated because somebody has seized hold of you. I also think, however, some people occasionally forget whatever the events that led up to their being restrained had been.
179. In my experience, I have never witnessed a young person being restrained and taken down the stairs for no reason. I can understand how a young person might view events differently, especially if they are neurodiverse and are struggling to process things. We could all witness the same incident, but the way each remember things may well be vastly different from how the others do.
180. I am aware that people have been abused, however I think there is also the potential for people to make false allegations. If someone were to say I did something twenty-five years ago, I have no defence to any such allegation. I know I have never abused a child, but I have no defence were someone to say that I did.
181. CCTV and microphones help, but they are not the answer. We need independent people to inspect institutions such as Rossie. People who are not employed by that organisation, who go there unannounced at all times of the day and night. People who have the autonomy to look everywhere and speak to everyone, including all the young people.

Other information

182. 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.

IHL

Signed.

Dated. 13/12/24