

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HTG

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HTG. My date of birth is 1967. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. The first three or four years of my life I was brought up by my mum, and my grandad in Easthouses. It was about that time that mum met my step dad, who was an executive with Ferranti. We stayed at Dalkeith along with my brother four years younger than me and later my sister who is eight years younger. I did not find out was my step dad until many years later. I always thought of him as my dad and still do.
3. Mum and dad were allocated the house under a scheme named Scottish Special – Incoming Workers. It was designed for workers moving into the area, working in the area and requiring housing.
4. While I was at Newbattle High School, about twelve or thirteen I started to rebel against my parents. At school I was involved in an incident where I ended up hitting another pupil with a hammer. I also threatened someone else with a hockey stick. I got suspended for this.
5. A child psychologist came to see me at school, but I was able to pass all the test they asked of me. I was good at school and this showed during those tests. After this

visit I was sent to a child psychologist at the young people's centre in Morningside. This would have been when I was about twelve or thirteen.

6. I ran away on many occasions but one that comes to mind was when I stole about £100 from the newspaper delivery money that I had collected and I was on the run for about two weeks.
7. I was sent to various children's panels but after each appearance I was returned home to my parents. I was involved with the local police who would take me to some youth clubs in an effort to keep me out of trouble. Friends of my dad also came to the house to talk to me to see if there was something they could do.
8. When I was about thirteen or fourteen my parents I was grounded for trying to write notes to get off school and kept me locked in the house as a punishment. I climbed out of the window and onto the roof of the house. The police were called and got me down. I was taken to Newbattle police station and then transferred to Howdenhall Assessment Centre.

#### **Howdenhall Assessment Centre, Edinburgh**

9. When I arrived at Howdenhall it was probably about eight or nine o'clock at night. Most of the residents were in bed by that time except for maybe three or four older boys who were still up and about.

#### **Routine at Howdenhall Assessment Centre**

##### *First day*

10. The building itself was very large in area and was on two levels. The boys were in a separate area from the girls. There were about twenty or thirty boys within the centre. The bedrooms were small dormitories on the top floor and each of the rooms

had bunk beds, with some single occupancy rooms. I think there was three of us in the room when I arrived. All the doors within the building were locked including the bedrooms, you could not even open the windows. If you needed the toilet during the night you had to ring the bell. On that floor there was an office where the night shift could hear if the bell went.

11. On the ground floor were the main staff office, dining hall, classrooms, recreation room and a nurses room.
12. There was a vast range of reasons for the residents to be there. In the boys area we had some who were involved in the murder of a homosexual male at Calton Hill. Others for stabbing someone. We had one posh boy from North Berwick who was there for truancy. He was really quiet and was having difficulty dealing with his time there. Others were there for housebreaking and some there because their parents were not able to look after them.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

13. You were supervised by two members of staff but they rotated on a shift basis. Staff would waken you in the morning and you got ready for your shower. If you did not waken right away they would come back a few minutes later and throw a bucket of water over you. It didn't happen to me but I saw this happen to others. That happened to me a couple of times. We then showered, dressed and downstairs to the dining hall for breakfast. As the girls were in a separate section in the building they entered from a different door from the boys. You also sat at different tables from the girls. Everybody from our table would collect the food from a service hatch and we said grace at the table.
14. After breakfast, if you were a smoker, you were given cigarettes. Before you were allowed any cigarettes the staff required a letter of confirmation from your parents saying this was permitted. You would be allowed about five cigarettes per day and smoked them in the recreation room. After your smoke break you were lined up and

allocated a job to complete within the building. This could involve cleaning the hallways, kitchen or toilets, but everyone was given some sort of job.

#### *Bathing/showering*

15. The staff were always present when you were showering, just to make sure you were washing yourself. They didn't come into the shower to check, just stood outside. The showers were in cubicles with no screens or doors.

#### *Clothing / uniform*

16. Some of the clothing I wore on arrival I was not allowed to wear within the unit. There were no shoes allowed, it had to be trainers. If you did not have any you were given sandals from the store cupboard. Likewise if you did not have a change of clothing you would be given a pair of wide bottomed jeans and a polo shirt from the cupboard. You would need the change of clothes when yours were sent for cleaning.

#### *School*

17. After completing your allocated jobs in the morning you attended school which was held within the building. The teachers came in from the outside and were independent of the staff. Your first class in the morning would be after the cigarette break at eleven o'clock. You would have this one lesson before lunch time. Most of the classes you were separated again from the girls but there was one subject, but I can't remember which, where we were in the same class. A lot of the children there had problems with reading and counting.
18. At the technical drawing class I was pulled aside by the teacher because I was able to complete all the tasks without much difficulty. At one stage he said I shouldn't be there as I was so far ahead of the others and gave me the same test as the 'O' grade which I passed with no problems.

19. After school, if the weather was fine, we could play football in the grounds outside. Other times we could go for a run with two or three of the staff and it was usually to Fairmilehead and back.
20. Our leisure time was made up of football or if the weather was not great we just watched television or listened to records. Home computers were just coming out and we thought this was fantastic.

#### *Inspections/ Review of Detention*

21. After my first week at the Assessment Centre I was sent to a Children's Panel for a review. I was supposed to be there for a further six week assessment but ended up staying between three and six months.
22. As is it was an Assessment Centre we did not have any separate visits from social workers, the only other involvement was a Children's Panels.

#### *Visits/Holidays*

23. My mum and dad did visit me at the centre. We were put into a room so we could speak freely. I just ended up shouting at them, even as they left the room and were leaving the building I was still shouting.
24. I was quite lucky while I was at Howdenhall as my parents would take me out for a couple of weeks to allow me to go with them on holiday to Spain in 1982 during the time of the World Cup. Other kids there did not have that advantage.

### **Abuse at Howdenhall Assessment Centre**

#### *Running away*

25. I did run away from the unit. After either six or maybe twelve weeks I was allowed home leave, which was either one day or an overnight stay. After being at home I told my mum I was going to visit a pal. I got a bus and went into Edinburgh and stayed with other people who previously stayed at the centre. Some of those nights away were spent outside in parks.
26. One of the buildings I stayed in was full of people and many were sniffing glue. I was on the run for about a week and when I had enough I went to a police box at Register House and told the officer I had been on the run from the Assessment Centre. A car picked me up and took me back to the unit.
27. As a punishment when I went back I was put into a cell for two or three days. The room had a toilet in it and there was a mattress on the floor. There were plastic windows which overlooked the yard outside. Any food we had was given to us within the cell. I never left there.
28. One day the staff told me they heard that I was planning to run away again. Four of them came into the leisure room where I was relaxing. They each grabbed a limb and carried me to the cell. Mr GQB, one of the members of staff, was one of the people that carried me. I asked them why I was there and I was told that Mr HTY or HTY, I am not sure his exact surname, had instructed them to put me in a cell. I told them I thought he was a bastard. HTY or HTY was SNR SNR of the centre.
29. When I was put in the cell my shoes were taken off me and after about five minutes HTY came in. He told me that he had been informed I called him a bastard. Without any warning he started punching and kicking me to my arms and legs. He kept this up until I eventually said I was sorry. The beating went on for a few minutes. I was very sore after that but did not need to see a doctor. I was in the cell again for two or three days.
30. HUO was another member of staff and because he was overweight we used to call him HUO. One day I had done something wrong and was taken to the cells.



He came into the cell and threatened me and maybe pushed me, but nothing like the treatment from HTY [REDACTED]. I was more scared because of his build. He actually turned out to be a good guy.

31. One of the first residents I was aware that had been in the cells was [REDACTED]. He was brought back from the cells. He told us he had been beaten when he was in there. He had lots of bruises and had a black eye.
32. There was an incident in the leisure room. One of the residents, [REDACTED], was getting a hard time from one of the guys involved in the Calton Hill murder. I think his name was [REDACTED] and he kept annoying [REDACTED]. Staff were aware something was going to happen and deliberately walked away. When they were out of sight, [REDACTED], who was the much bigger and older guy, gave [REDACTED] a hammering.
33. There were the [REDACTED] brothers who were residents and they were both homosexuals. The staff would tell everyone about the boys and what they had been doing in their sex lives.

#### *Bed Wetting*

34. Although bedwetting did not affect me there was one young boy who had a problem with it. He was having a real bad time with his life. Instead of helping him the staff would take the mickey out of him. Most of the staff joined in with the ridiculing of the boy.


#### **Leaving Howdenhall Assessment Centre**

35. Just before I left Howdenhall Pam, my support worker, was aware that I was a Glasgow Rangers football fan and one day she took me through to Ibrox to watch a game. She told me if I was to go to Midfield this was the type of activity that they would sort out for you, it included getting season tickets for this or similar activities.

36. Sometimes I appreciated my time in Howdenhall as everybody was treated the same. We all had the same things at the same age and it cut out some of the competition in life.
37. While I was at Howdenhall, I was visited by staff from Midfield House. I had been assessed and they thought I was suitable for transferring to their facility. Pam McMillan was to be my support worker there. She came and I was transferred to Midfield House.

### **Midfield House, Lasswade**

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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52. At the end of my time at Midfield the Children's Panel gave me the option of returning home or going into a supported accommodation flat in Bonnyrigg. I decided to go home and stay with my mum and dad.

53. I was fifteen when they set a date for me to leave and I returned home and was discharged from the social work. For some time everything was okay.
54. My dad was still travelling all over the world with his work. From his travels he would use various currencies and on return still have some change. He stored this as savings at the house. I stole most of this money and took it to the bank to cash it in. One day, soon after, when I returned home the police were waiting for me at the house.
55. Mum and dad asked me to leave the house. I was about sixteen by then and ended up in homeless accommodation at Newington, the Stopover Hostel at [REDACTED]. I had been phoning them for a while looking to see if they had a room. Eventually one came up and I moved in.
56. When I moved into the Stopover there were probably nine shared bedrooms. At least twelve of the occupants were taking heroin. I had never seen heroin before moving there. Despite being offered it on many occasions there I resisted and have never taken drugs.
57. I stayed at the Stopover for a few months. The dole paid for the accommodation. I was given £39 per week which went straight to them. The staff gave me money each day to get any food. I was there for a while before moving out.
58. I had a pal who stayed in a bed and breakfast in [REDACTED] Edinburgh run by a guy called Berry. The room I was in had four beds but I was an extra person and had to sleep on the floor under a bed. I was out during the first day and when I came back at night I found all my stuff was stolen. The dole money was paid direct to the landlord and I never saw any benefit from it. I had to stay there for a few months because I could not afford to move anywhere else.
59. I contacted the Stopover and was able to get a room there again. They put me back in touch with the social work supported accommodation team. I was told if I

volunteered to go back into care they would find me a placement. I then moved to Calder Grove.

### **Calder Grove, Edinburgh**

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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**Supported accommodation**

64. When I left Calder Grove I was moved with the help of the social work into a woman's house in Cameron Toll, Edinburgh. This was a supported accommodation and the woman, [REDACTED], took in lodgers. She stayed at the house with her husband and son. There were another two lodgers residing there at the same time as me and I shared the room with one of them.
65. I was there for about six months. I left when one of the residents accused me of stealing a tape or something and I leathered him. The family also accused me and a pal who was visiting me of stealing towels. I didn't steal anything but I was asked to leave.
66. I then stayed in supported accommodation for a week in the Portobello area. The guy could only take me for a week as another person was already booked in the following week.
67. I then moved into the [REDACTED] Hotel, [REDACTED], Edinburgh and I stayed there for a couple of months. The rent for this was paid for by the dole under the supported accommodation.
68. After that I moved into a YWCA at [REDACTED] Edinburgh. There were about forty or fifty rooms in the block and I had a locked room there, and a shared kitchen. This was still under the supported accommodation with the social work department. I was there between nine months and a year.
69. I was offered another YWCA placement at Lauder Lodge or a house near where mum and dad were. I moved to the house at [REDACTED], Mayfield, Dalkeith which I shared with a guy, [REDACTED], who is now dead. After [REDACTED] there was a girl that moved into the house that I couldn't get on with. She ended up marrying my cousin. I was in that house from about eighteen or nineteen years old until I was about twenty one.

70. I later told a lie to the council that my brother was looking for a house with me and I got a flat in 1989. I was probably about twenty two then.

### **Life after care**

71. I started work at [REDACTED] Hotel and then moved to [REDACTED] Brewery, before I started working on a community programme in Bonnyrigg. I then moved to a job in a factory in Edinburgh and stayed there for four years before I was made redundant.
72. A few months after getting my driving licence I was driving 7.5 tonne lorries for Boots the Chemist, then Argos. I drove a van for Your Move, showing people around various properties and then worked as a courier. I had a spell with the British Heart Foundation uplifting bags of clothes from people's houses. Then there was a long term job as a delivery driver to the Scotmid shops.
73. When I met my partner [REDACTED] we had both been in long term relationships which had not worked out. Together we set up a private hire company and have been doing this for the last five years. We currently have six of us working in the company and have three cars and a minibus.

### **Impact**

74. I was in a relationship with a woman for twenty three years. It became very abusive on her part. She was always casting my life in care up to me. I was always on edge with her because she was like this and how she viewed my life in care. I have a son who is thirteen but he does not want to see me and hasn't for about the last year and a half.
75. Sometimes my life in the homes makes me feel guilty and that has haunted me most of my life. Whenever I have applied for jobs in the past I always felt inferior to other people trying for the job.

**Other information**

76. I would like to see more safeguards put in place for people looking after children. More detailed information should be used by Disclosure Scotland to ensure more unsuitable applicants are found and disregarded.
77. I have had counselling during my life but this was not for my life in care it was part of my life in general. About five years ago I was on suicide watch but things are better now.
78. At one stage I did apply to be a member of the Children's Panel as I believed my experiences could help in making decisions with children today. Unfortunately they required that I stay away for a week on a course and I could not fit that into my life at that time.
79. 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.

HTG

Signed..

Dated.....

13/4/18