

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Trevor SWISTCHEW

Support person present: yes

1. My name is Trevor Swistchew. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh and lived at [REDACTED] Newhaven with my mother [REDACTED] and father [REDACTED]. When my father came to the U.K. from Russia in 1937 he joined the British navy and fought in the war (WW2) and he changed his name to [REDACTED].
3. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] My mother had difficulty in getting a home for us and started squatting at the above address in Newhaven. After about six months staff from Edinburgh Corporation caught her living there illegally. Initially they threatened to evict her but she came to an agreement that she would pay rent for the house, and was permitted to stay. My real father left my mother when I was around two years old (1952).
4. In 1954 my father went missing. I think it was when he was working on ships crossing from the U.K. to America, but I am not certain. I did research his name later and found a similar name for a doctor in New York, [REDACTED]. We wrote to him but never received any reply.

5. Mum continued to work different jobs from early in the morning all the way to early evening, just to keep the roof over our head. One of the jobs she worked was with the British Sailors Society, in Leith, Edinburgh where they ran a restaurant/hotel for seafaring men. (The British Sailors Society was a Christian based organisation which looked after the children of men who worked at sea. Lagarie House was run by the B.S.S. until 1972 when it was closed). Because she worked for them and my father had been in the British navy that allowed [REDACTED] to be placed at Lagarie House. Mothers health was deteriorating because of looking after [REDACTED] and working the long hours. When she was about thirty one she visited the doctor it was recommended that [REDACTED] placed into care to give her some respite.

Lagarie House – Sailors Society, Rhu, Dumbarton

6. In 1956 [REDACTED] I [REDACTED] taken from the family house to Lagarie House at Rhu by Mr Brockett from the social work department in a big black car. I was about six years old when [REDACTED] taken there. The only memory I have was being frightened at leaving my mum. [REDACTED] mum was crying and was possibly being supported by her sister, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] knew her as auntie [REDACTED]. It was no easy thing for any mother to have put [REDACTED] into care.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Leaving Lagarie House, Rhu, Dumbarton

27. At the end of the respite time at Lagarie House I was taken home by Mr Brockett from the social work. When I was back home mum was [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We then moved to a brand new three bedroomed flat in [REDACTED]
He was [REDACTED] in the Royal Navy and a Freemason.
28. He turned out to be a sadist and was an alcoholic. He would use what sounded like a whip on my mum and got her to use it on him for his sexual gratification. He would beat [REDACTED] black and blue when in a temper. I suffered a bloodied nose and face from his beatings. He would even strip [REDACTED] and I naked and then from behind, he would beat us.
29. I remember [REDACTED] had gone to the toilet and mistakenly banged the door closed. [REDACTED], who was sleeping on the couch stoned out of his head, came into the room and punched [REDACTED] right in the face and knocked him onto the bed. [REDACTED] grabbed a pillow and put it over his face and tried to suffocate him. Mum heard the commotion and when she came in she screamed at [REDACTED] Some of the neighbours, Mr [REDACTED] and Mrs [REDACTED] came to the house to check on us. I remember [REDACTED] later bought a gun on the street and said if [REDACTED] was to come for him again he would kill him. [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] at the time. Think about that.
30. He even tried to have sex with [REDACTED] He had picked her and her friend [REDACTED] up in his car. After dropping [REDACTED] off at her house he took [REDACTED] to the harbour at Granton. When he tried it on with her she screamed and managed to get out of the car and ran home. Mum heard about it and when he was later sleeping off the drink on the settee she took a frying pan to his

head. When he got up in the morning she told him he had fallen over while being drunk. He didn't remember anything about it and believed what she told him.

31. Mum lived in constant fear of [REDACTED]. She did not want the police involved in case [REDACTED] got sent to jail. Although [REDACTED] was a drinker and cruel with it, my mother told me many years later she thought he would change. He had, she said, promised that many times. I accept that mum appeared to need his company, with all his flaws. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There was no social work involvement at this time, it was all covered up by the family and neighbours. I say "covered up" because neighbours did not report it to the law or authorities.

32. When I was about fourteen [REDACTED] beat me so bad I had to get out of the house right away. I ran to my mum's cousin, [REDACTED] house, where I collapsed as soon as I arrived. I remember the police and ambulance arriving but don't know what happened about it. [REDACTED] husband [REDACTED] and his brothers went looking for [REDACTED]. If they had found him they would have killed him for what he did to me. I stayed with [REDACTED] for about a year, but I am not sure of the exact dates. Mum and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] moved to Northampton and left me behind. [REDACTED]

33. When I was staying at [REDACTED] she told me she knew all about what [REDACTED] was doing but my mum had begged her not to tell the police. Mum was supposed to send her a few pounds for my keep, after she went with [REDACTED] to England, but [REDACTED] was drinking all the money. [REDACTED] lost her husband to a heart attack and was looking after fourteen of her own children and could not afford to look after me. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] For those reasons [REDACTED] felt there was no choice and for my own benefit she went to the social work offices. I was then sent to a children's panel and it was recommended that I be sent to Ponton House, Magdala Crescent, Edinburgh. Initially I thought I was only

going there for a few days. Children were not important then, and the authorities could do what they chose with those who came into their jurisdiction.

34. Mum and [REDACTED] came back after being in England over twelve years and moved in with [REDACTED] and her husband, at Muirhouse. As time went on [REDACTED] was trying to take over the house. Eventually [REDACTED] husband could not take any more of [REDACTED] and told my mother they had to leave the house. [REDACTED]'s husband was reluctant to take them in to begin with. He only agreed because [REDACTED] wanted mum to have a place to live until she could get a house. You could not imagine what [REDACTED] was like, he wanted everything done his way and always put his drinking above anything or anything else.

Ponton House Lad's Residence, 6-7 Magdala Crescent, Edinburgh

35. I was taken to Ponton House Lad's Residence, 6-7 Magdala Crescent, Edinburgh by two social workers, without being able to pack any clothes. Secondary Institutions - to be published

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

two social workers transferred me and another guy to the YMCA at Manor Place. I was only there for a couple of weeks and shared a room with an older guy.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Wellington Farm, Penicuik

49. I think it was possibly after the YMCA that [REDACTED] and I were taken to Wellington Farm and made aware that it was under a care and protection order obtained by the social work. I knew two other people there, [REDACTED] my cousin, and [REDACTED]. They were in there because they had committed theft, I had not. I was resident there for one year and three months, until I turned sixteen.
50. When I arrived I was introduced to KWB [REDACTED] who was a former [REDACTED] in the army. He was a tall man, well over six feet tall and SNR [REDACTED] for the school. Although I was under the care and protection order, I assumed it meant I had some freedom about my movements in and out of the school. Mr KWB [REDACTED] told me that would not be the case and I would only be allowed out if he gave me permission. He was used to commanding men in a battlefield so you never argued with him.
51. You were allocated a four digit number during the time at Wellington Farm. This was also sewn onto the labels on some of your clothing. Mr KWB [REDACTED] kept records for all

the residents and they were kept under your number, not your name. This was another way to depersonalise you.

52. There were other staff members at Wellington Farm. Mr. HKM was the building instructor and there were probably about fourteen masters, one for each house, with a few female staff working there as well. Female staff were in "domestic" roles. List D Schools, like borstals were run by men. The staff lived in some of the houses situated within the grounds and some even had their children staying with them. You were not allowed to call any of the staff by their name it always had to be "sir". The first time you made the mistake of calling them by name you were given a verbal reprimand and the next occasion some of your allocation of cigarettes was kept back. You started with two per day and work up to five. You get extra cigarettes if your "house" got more points than other "houses", but you could lose some of your house allocation if routine cleaning was not done properly.
53. Mr. HKM was a really nice guy and he would be allowed to have two or three of the residents go to his house on a Sunday night for a cup of tea with him and his wife. We were allowed to go so long as we had not been cheeky that week. There were even occasions that we would be invited by Mrs. [REDACTED] to their home for tea. Mr. KWB was not always happy about it but his wife just told him she was doing it and he had to live with it. Was it part of a re-training programme?
54. The school ran a points system within each of the houses. You were given so many points for beds being made properly and dormitory kept clean and tidy. If there were any issues with something not kept right, being cheeky or punished for any reason then the house would have points deducted. This affected the allocation of cigarettes or any other treats given by the school. The house captain was responsible for keeping the points record for his house. There was also a league system for each of the houses which involved different sports. You would compete against other houses for points. This could be for football or even boxing. Most of the sports took place within the grounds but if you were involved in the boxing you had to go to a gym in Penicuik.

55. On the day each of us arrived at Wellington Farm we had some powder thrown over our naked bodies and told it was to delouse us. As the powder did its job our skin would feel like it was burning. The staff would then make you have a cold shower to get rid of the powder. Two male members of staff would be standing watching while this took place.
56. There were probably about ninety kids between fourteen and sixteen. All were split into different houses which were usually named after the islands within the Forth estuary. The one I was allocated was Forth House. The beds were all in straight lines with fourteen on each side of the room. There was no privacy within the dormitories and when getting ready for bed at night you were all made to strip naked in front of each other before getting your pyjamas on. One of the house masters would be there to ensure this happened. The groups within the houses were all made up of different kids from all over the country. This led to many fights taking place with rivalries from the different areas. A good many of the boys were gang members from the "Tongs" in Glasgow and city gangs elsewhere.
57. The only thing I remember about our house master was he was English. He would waken you about seven in the morning and get you ready for breakfast. Before heading down to eat you had to make your bed. The bed linen was changed on a Saturday morning and a fresh set issued. The blankets were only changed every couple of months. You were shown how to make your bed with hospital corners.
58. At meal times there were four lunch monitors appointed by SNR [REDACTED] and they would ensure all the meals were eaten and no talking allowed. You were all made to line up in each of your houses and then marched down to the dining room. You all sat at your allocated seat at an allocated table. There probably eight at each table. You then had to say "Selkirk" Grace, "Some hae meat and cannae eat, some wad eat that want it, but we hae meat and we can eat and sae the Lord be thankit". If you did not say it properly your meal would be taken away from you.
59. After breakfast there was an inspection by Mr. KWB [REDACTED] to make sure all the beds were made correctly and your clothes and possessions were in a correct order. You

had to stand at attention beside your bed during the inspection. Mr KWB would appoint each of the houses with a House Captain and he would select others to be his assistants. In our house this was [REDACTED], who was from Falkirk. He was nicknamed '[REDACTED]' and he had two assistants who I only know as '[REDACTED]' and '[REDACTED]'. Whatever [REDACTED] wanted done to the other kids then [REDACTED] would do it to him, mostly assaulting other boys.

60. We carried out some chores and one of these was the whole dormitory had to be cleaned every day. This included the floors and the toilets. If anyone had been cheeky then they were always allocated toilet cleaning as a punishment.
61. The house captains had the freedom to administer any punishments they saw fit. The worst punishment was called "round the dorm" (or RTD). This would compel all in the dormitory to punch the victim in the jaw. This would mean that if the house captain saw fit to use this punishment the person receiving would be punched by all other twenty seven boys in the dorm and if you did not hit the person with sufficient force the house captain would make you receive the same punishment. This happened to all of us, except obviously the house captain himself. I received this assault numerous times while at Wellington Farm.
62. At night we were only given a few minutes notice by the house master that lights were being put out and that was the last opportunity for anyone wishing to use the toilets. The toilets were then locked during the night. The action of locking toilets (I was told) was to stop anyone running away during the night. Actually, it was yet another punitive measure against incarcerated young boys. The order "Last call for premises", was a boys last opportunity to visit the toilet until morning". Thinking of this I realise how inhumane Wellington Farm really was. (There were boys in Wellington Farm who wet their bed. Locking toilets was cruel and impractical).
63. There were some kids who wet the bed and [REDACTED] from our dorm was one of those boys. Each morning Mr KWB would pull back the sheets and then embarrass [REDACTED] who ran off to the bathroom. He was brought back and Mr KWB gave him the cane over his buttocks in his office. All the boys who wet the bed were made to

stand in the corridor holding their wet sheets and pyjamas. They were not allowed to dress while this took place. As they were stood in the corridor the other kids and staff would laugh at them. [REDACTED] was further humiliated by going "round the dorm" for losing the house points for wetting his bed.

64. At the weekends the house captains were allowed to take a maximum of six of their residents to the pictures. One thing wrong with that was two of the six always included his deputies which left little chance of the rest of us getting to go. On the Sundays we were marched to St Mungo's church in Penicuik, for church service. This was the only day we were allowed to wear our own clothes. At all other days you were given uniforms from the school which you were made to wear.
65. The house masters would report any relevant matters involving discipline to SNR [REDACTED]. He would then decide what, if any punishments, or point deductions were appropriate. He would be the person who would carry out some of the punishments on the residents. He would use the cane and the offender could expect to receive anything up to eight strikes with the cane on the buttocks.
66. Every day we were either punched, shouted at, kicked or touched up by staff while I stayed at Wellington Farm. It wasn't all staff who were unkind but most would have been aware of the violence in Wellington, because they would see the injuries on boys faces. I saw many of the other residents being hit with the cane. It was a straight wooden cane about four feet in length. Mr KWB [REDACTED] liked to swish the cane in the air first to frighten you, before using it on your buttocks. On one occasion of the boys I saw being caned was named [REDACTED] and he would have been about fifteen at that time. We were told to watch and told this was what would happen if we were cheeky. [REDACTED] could not sit for days after this happened.
67. In the place of schooling we were sent to some workshops where you were shown different skills in woodwork, metalwork and brick laying

68. [REDACTED] visited me once while I was at Wellington Farm and she spoke to KWB [REDACTED] about some of the things I had told her about. He told her he was doing his best to maintain discipline within the school.
69. Sometimes if I had a day out to Penicuik I would buy a postcard. I would send a quick message to (Auntie) [REDACTED] to tell her [REDACTED] (her son) and I were alright. I told her not to write back in case the staff found out I was in touch with her.
70. While I suffered this abuse at Wellington Farm I often had suicidal thoughts. It would have been so easy for me [REDACTED] just to get away from all the pain. NO child needs to live like that and no child should.

Life after being in care

71. At the end of my time at Wellington Farm I was sixteen and not given any notice about leaving. I only recall Mr. Whiteoak taking me from there in his car to the half-way house at Leamington Terrace, Edinburgh. He was a good person who was "manager" (along with his wife) of the "half-way house" at Leamington Terrace. I had never met him before this. As I left Mr. HKM [REDACTED] passed me a whole packet of cigarettes and they even had the cellophane wrapper still on them. Life was so much better from there on. Leamington terrace was used as a half-way house for boys leaving Wellington Farm as a way back into society.
72. Before leaving, Wellington Farm had returned my old watch to me along with all my old clothing. Mr Whiteoak took me to "Parkers" shop in the South side and bought me t-shirts, jeans, house coat, pyjamas and a denim jacket. He also bought me a Harris tweed jacket and told me I would need a nice jacket for any job interviews. When we returned from the shops we burned my old stuff in the back garden. (It had lain on a shelf for over fifteen months).
73. When I arrived at Leamington Terrace I was given a cup of tea and a sandwich. This allowed me to settle to the new environment before I was shown to my room. I was so happy having my own room for the first time, I burst into tears. It even had nice curtains

on the windows. There were three other boys staying with Mr Whiteoak along with his own family. His wife was a very warm lady who was kind and softly spoken. One of his children was a drummer in a local group (The Muftiz)

74. I had so much freedom there I was allowed out to what I wanted during the day so long as I was back in by ten o'clock at night. I was given £5 pocket money each week. It was explained to me that I would have to use some of it for buying toiletries, cigarettes etc but no alcohol. I was told the rent had been paid for six months. The Whiteoaks showed me how to budget for myself and some basic cooking. When I left the budgeting had worked so well I had saved about two hundred pounds, a fortune in those days.
75. For the first three months at Leamington Terrace I could not get any work and I started to visit [REDACTED] and her family. Eventually as I was trusted more I was allowed to stay with her at weekends. After being at Leamington Terrace I moved in with her and her husband. When I left Wellington Farm I was never spoken or seen by any social work officers and was not even made aware that I was no longer under their care.
76. With help from Mr Whiteoak I did eventually get a job with Robert Lamb, box makers. After working there for about six weeks I was approached by one of the staff who put his arm round me and asked me for sex. I told the boss I could not work there anymore but could not tell him it was because I had been approached by a predator. Mr. Whiteoak later got that man sacked. I did not go back to that job.
77. Again after help from Mr Whiteoak I later worked for Leith Provident while I was still at Leamington Terrace and stayed working there even when I left. At the beginning I was loading the vans and because I was doing well and was good with numbers I was moved up to being a clerk.
78. [REDACTED] started his own business, [REDACTED] at Granton with two of his friends and he asked me to work for him. The pay was so much

better and I doubled my wages. While I worked there I learned how to make fish cakes. I worked there for about nine months.

79. When I was eighteen I joined the army but only lasted eight weeks into the training. They said I was not mature enough at that time and actually gave me a medical discharge. I was not at all suited to a life in the army and I was rightfully expelled. Looking from the present, it was the only possible result.
80. I later met a guy, David G, from Portobello who played guitar and he taught me a few chords on the guitar and found I took to this very easy. He later sent me a book on psychology. This led to my interest in Buddhism. Some of the symptoms I have suffered from are described in the book as being similar to PTSD. Later in my life as my interest in Buddhism grew I had the pleasure of meeting the Dalai Lama on two separate occasions. I also met Lyndon Baker who was a Buddhist monk and he has helped me with counselling for the last ten years.

Impact

81. The abuse I suffered affected how I performed at school. I did not leave with many certificates but later in life I found another interest in educating myself and managed to obtain a diploma, with a lot of credit being due to my ex-wife, who encouraged me to study. I now hold an HNC/HND in communication and a few SCOTVEC qualifications.
82. I was married for about twenty two years but I spent a lot of my time reacting to, and talking about the abuse I suffered. This affected my marriage and eventually my wife left me. when I look back she was right at that time. I was angry and I reacted too harshly to her good advice. On every level of life, child abuse infiltrates and I know it is definitely the root of much of the suffering I have experienced and caused for other people through my frustration and aggression. I cannot forget those I have offended and I regret that deeply.

83. I have been with my current partner, [REDACTED] for over ten years. I try not to put my issues onto her because she has suffered her own issues with loss in her life and does not need my problems. But with all this between us she is still with me.
84. From all the abuse I suffered I could never again trust anyone in authority. Anyone who would be in a position to tell me what to do at a job I would eventually end up shouting and arguing with them. This meant I was never able to hold down a job for long and had more than forty jobs during my life. I have even walked out of a job because someone gave me a row.
85. When I was about sixteen I went to the dentist for a check-up. When he examined me he found my jaw was misaligned and some of the teeth were crooked. I explained to him where I had been and the beatings we received and he believed this was the sole reason for this problem. Wellington Farm School allowed boys to be assaulted and took no action.
86. For about four years I took various street drugs. The only drug I never used was heroin. I am now completely different from that person. I was taking the drugs because I could not cope with the memories of the abuse. I also have various forms of OCD and suffered from Bulimia.
87. Because I was always isolated from my family I still feel isolated from them and have the same problem with some of my friends. I still suffer from alienation and trust of anyone in authority. When you have been beaten and bullied growing up it becomes natural not to trust anyone. I have never had any support to help with this, other than from the very few people I trust like Lyndon Baker and other friends who play guitar as I do.
88. From about age twenty five I used to pray each night and asked for help to make sure I got through my life without hurting anyone. One of the quotes from the Dalai Lama is "if you cannot do good in life, don't do bad". I have tried since to use that as a mantra in my life.

89. My first official contact with anyone who offered assistance with my problems was with the National Confidential Forum via CELCIS. After reading through their leaflets I ended up sending them a brief statement. I did not talk to anyone "officially" about my life until I started talking to CELCIS.
90. For about a year when I was fourteen and staying with "Auntie" [REDACTED] I had suicidal thoughts. I was in regular contact with the Samaritans during this stage of my life. Even while I was at Leamington Terrace it took a while for these thoughts to go away. I have been to the doctors years ago for anxiety attacks and he taught me how to stop them affecting me and for a while I was taking medication to help me. I am now receiving support through Future Pathways and this has been since I got in touch with the Inquiry.
91. If I had been given the correct support and upbringing when I was young I know I could have been someone and achieved something worthwhile in my life. Instead I just see myself as the product of my existence.

Reporting of Abuse

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

92.

Wellington Farm School

93. I did report some of the abuse at Wellington Farm to my house master and he did take it to SNR [REDACTED], Mr KWB [REDACTED]. His response was to say we were under Home Office regulations so there was no point in taking it to the police. I told him he was a disgrace and he was responsible for the beatings being authorised by [REDACTED]. I was not his "favourite" after that.

Records

94. I have tried through Birthlink at Dundas Street and 1st Contact to trace some of my records and at this time there seems to be no trace of anything that can assist me. I have received communication from the Ponton Trust that a large number of records were relocated to a storage area near an old swimming pool and there had been a flood which destroyed the records stored there. I was told the same thing when I asked Lagarie House had records. Their records were also ruined in a flood. These records run into many thousands it appears. Why?

95. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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Lessons to be Learned

96. Wherever children are being placed in care I would like signage in place showing contact numbers and addresses for kids to go to where they can report abuse. I would like to see some sort of law enactment that if a person witnessing abuse and not reporting same should be guilty of a criminal offence with a punishable sentence of up to five years in prison. Staff should have to sign a legally binding document they will not cover up or collude when abuse occurs. If a child is between the ages of six and nine they should have an electronic panic button which should be linked to police for immediate attendance, and worn on the child's wrists. (Not to be taken off unless for practical reasons).
97. I don't think you can stop all child abuse but the more that is put in place to prevent it, will certainly reduce the chances of abuse taking place.

Other information

98. I have laid a lot of my anger on the Police, Government, Councils, Church and other organisations, all with the aim to seek some sort of retribution for what the system did to me. I now channel this in other ways. I have started writing a book about my life in care, the things I have seen in my life, (including witnessing the rape of a girl when I was ten and a group of six men being convicted of it). I cannot say the information I have given is 100% accurate. It is from memories and how my life has been impacted from the age of six until now. I apologise to anyone in my life whom I have offended. You may appreciate the difficulty of trying to recall events from the past.
99. I am writing my story in a book which gives a great deal more information than this written testimony.
100. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated.....12/4/19.....