

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PLX

Support person present: No

1. My name is PLX nee PLX. My date of birth is 1955. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I have come to speak to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry about my son, RGK, and the abuse he received whilst attending Starley Hall School.

### Life before going into Harmeny Educational Trust, Balerno

3. My son, RGK, was born on 1986. He has an older sister who was born in 1984. Their father left in 1987 or 1988.
4. Prior to my husband leaving, we had our own house and my husband had his own business. The marriage was difficult because of the business and him being very mercurial. He left me with a significant amount of debt and we lost our home. We had to go back to stay with my mum. That was difficult but we managed. We were a close family so we got by. Because of all the stress and the mess my husband had left behind, I became liable for all his debts. There was a court case about it, that was very stressful. I was always conscious of how that affected my children.
5. Sometime during 1987 or 1988, along with my mum, we all went to Ireland to stay for the summer with my maternal grandmother. RGK would only have been one or two years old at that time. Ireland was familiar and quite reassuring. As children, myself, my brother and my mum had regularly gone back to Ireland for long holidays. It

seemed like a bit of respite and it took us out of the stress of losing our home over the debts.

6. RGK went to a little nursery during the time we spent in Ireland. He was about two or three at the time. His health was good. I would describe him as a sensitive child. He was very sensitive to environmental things like bright lights and noise. He was a very bright and inquisitive child.
7. We eventually came back to Aberdeen after a long summer in Ireland. I had to face the debt and the reality of what that was about. I had no income and no support from my husband who had just disappeared.
8. We lived at my mums in Aberdeen and I went back to university. With the help of my mum, we managed. While I did my training, RGK went to a little nursery in Aberdeen.
9. I still had the court case for the debt going on. Although it wasn't my major focus, it was still difficult. It was in the background but was going to determine what our future looked like. That was my main objective, just to wipe the slate clean so when I started earning, I could provide for my two children.
10. In 1990, I was given a two-bedroom house in Aberdeen. RGK would have been four years old by that time.
11. RGK started primary school in Aberdeen. That was quite near to where my mum lived. He was there for around a year and it worked quite well. My mum didn't drive but she could walk down and pick him up if I was at university.
12. He wasn't too far into primary school when we could see RGK was struggling and it was becoming difficult. I think it was just too overwhelming for him. We didn't have any problems with RGK at home. He was mischievous, he was curious but he wasn't a badly behaved child.

13. There was very limited understanding then of children with neurodiversity. I would turn up at the school and they would say that RGK took too long in getting changed after gym. Or that he didn't tie his shoelaces. They had a lot of supply teachers and they weren't getting to know the child. I'm not saying it was the school's fault completely. It was a combination of lack of resources and it taking so long for RGK to see an educational psychologist. RGK found it difficult and the way he dealt with it was to act out. In many ways we moved RGK out of the school before they pushed him out. He did eventually see an educational psychologist but was just given a behaviour chart.
14. We moved RGK to another primary school in Aberdeen. That would have been around primary two and he would have been six or seven years old. RGK was already attending the school and it made sense for the two of them to be together.
15. RGK also saw an educational psychologist at that school but again it was just a behaviour chart. I have to say they weren't much use and it wasn't long before the problems started again. RGK just couldn't cope with being in a big class. It was just too overwhelming for him. There was no real discussion or deep assessment of RGK although they did do a psychological assessment to determine his I.Q. and such like. He was below the level, he hadn't been learning. On one hand he was a bright boy and very articulate but that wasn't reflected in his scores for reading and writing.
16. I remember the head teacher called me into the school and said to me that if they had really known what RGK's difficulties were, she doubted they would have accepted him into the school. There were things RGK did that some saw as naughty and others saw as quirky.
17. RGK was sensitive to light. As a child he had to have a certain pillowslip. I had to cut the labels off the back of his t-shirts. If there were too many people around him it was almost constraining for him and seemed to cause him problems. The learning became very problematic. He couldn't learn in the way other children did and it came to the point that the school were going to exclude him if I didn't do something about



it. That was their policy back then. His time at this school was short lived. Perhaps he was there for a year.

18. I then put RGK into [REDACTED] School and I paid privately for that. They began picking up on RGK's learning difficulties. At that time, [REDACTED] was a very small school in Aberdeen and they didn't have the resources to meet RGK's needs. With my own training and understanding, I could see and understand RGK's problems but educational psychologists weren't really picking up on it. Things were becoming more stressful and problematic.
19. I had to take him out of the [REDACTED] School after a few months. I then had to go back to the local authority and see what we were going to do. They wanted to put RGK to Carden School. That was a school where I felt children were labelled and it was hard for them to move on from there. I resisted that and told them that they hadn't come up with the correct assessment for RGK. Yet they were prepared to put him into this school.
20. The lead educational psychologist was a bit of a bully and said that I could go to prison if I didn't send RGK to Carden School. She said they could force me. I resisted sending him there and eventually they backed off.
21. That went on for a long time whilst I paid for RGK to go to a private child minder. RGK was out of school for six months whilst Aberdeen City Council decided what they were going to do with him.
22. Increasingly, RGK's health was deteriorating. He wasn't learning and was a child isolated away from his peer group and their development. Then Aberdeen City Council decided to put RGK to a school outside of Aberdeen. He had no peer group, no play mates and I very quickly got the sense that the school didn't want him and that RGK was being foisted upon them.

23. The head mistress made it very clear in a letter that if RGK stepped out of line, he would be excluded. There was no, *"we're going to work with the child."* It was a pretty brutal letter. Of course it didn't work there. RGK was having to go out in a taxi everyday. He had no peer group to come home to play with. I think the atmosphere was already set before RGK went there, so it didn't last long. Then he was out of school again.
24. Social work did get involved and there was a really nice social worker who tried to help. I think things began to deteriorate with RGK's health and I was becoming increasingly concerned. He had been incredibly stressed at school and not coping. He began to wet the bed quite significantly. It was a strange situation, RGK was, in someways, overprotective of me and in another way quite angry with me.
25. I think a social worker became involved perhaps six months before RGK went to Harmeny Educational Trust in 1993. I'm really not sure and it may be that this social worker became involved before I put him into [REDACTED]. I have some medical notes and the timeline of it will be in there.
26. When the children's social work department got involved, educational psychology became a bit more intense. There was also a paediatrician involved who was very good although I can't remember her name. There was also a child psychologist involved from the Children's Hospital in Aberdeen and she was also very good. I just think her hands were tied because there were no resources. Again, it will be in RGK's medical notes. I think RGK's behaviour was just a child exhibiting stress, due to not coping with school and learning due to his dyslexia and dysgraphia.
27. The court case about the debt didn't end until 1996. Throughout all of this, I was just trying to get the debt sorted out. I'm aware that a lot of my stress was picked up on by RGK. My fear was that I could never become so vulnerable that I couldn't look after RGK and [REDACTED]. My mum was on her own, she didn't drive and was getting older. She couldn't have taken on two children and all my other family were in Ireland.

28. I was in a vulnerable position. I had the legal system bearing down on me and I was fighting the education system. I just wasn't prepared to take it.
29. I decided to speak to the Bishop. I told him that I had tried to bring my children up properly and had sent them to a Catholic school. My Catholic faith is important to me. My children had come from a good home and because the help and support wasn't there, RGK was being bounced around the system and wasn't coping. The Bishop was very good. He gave me the name of a nun in Edinburgh. She was a child psychotherapist at the Siena Learning Centre. Because Aberdeen City Council were taking so long to make their mind up, I told them I was going to take RGK to Edinburgh for an assessment.
30. I remember speaking to the Sister on the phone. She had been a child psychotherapist in the United States. I was quite assured that I was going to someone reputable who could help with an educational and psychological assessment.
31. I remember taking RGK down to Edinburgh and arriving at the Siena Learning Centre. I just remember this nun opening the door. She had her Irish rugby shirt over her habit. I remember she asked for background information on RGK's birth. RGK had a very easy birth and I was healthy throughout my pregnancy.
32. The Sister did the assessment and said to me that in essence, I had a highly sensitive boy who was very intuitive. She said that there were clear issues with his dysgraphia, dyslexia and coordination and that he was going to need an environment which was sensitive and supporting for him. She recommended Harmeny Educational Trust in Balerno.
33. I went back to Aberdeen City Council and produced this assessment. They said that it was power without responsibility and that they weren't interested in reports from Edinburgh.



34. I then went to my solicitor and he wrote a letter to Aberdeen City Council saying that the situation had gone beyond acceptable time frames. RGK was deteriorating and had been out of school for some time. He was at home and not in an environment able to nurture a child of his level.
35. Eventually, the paediatrician read the report from the Siena Learning Centre. RGK was then referred back to Aberdeen's Children's Hospital for three or four days for assessment and observations.
36. The rationale of taking RGK in for observations at the Children's Hospital was because he had no school and they needed an environment where they could observe him playing and interacting with others. From that assessment, they decided that they would fund RGK going to Harmeny School. That was probably after one and a half years of battling with Aberdeen City Council Education Dept

#### **Harmeny Educational Trust, Balerno**

37. RGK would have been six and a half or seven years old when he started at Harmeny School. He was there for two and a half years, I think up until he was nine or ten years old.
38. Harmeny School was an educational trust in Balerno. Mr KYN was SNR and RGK loved it there. I remember they had geese and RGK was in charge of collecting the eggs. I remember the lovely little cottages they had. RGK had a lovely teacher called Linda Gowans who brought RGK on leaps and bounds.
39. It was too far to travel so RGK stayed at Harmeny and came home to Aberdeen at the weekends. He always looked forward to going back after the weekend and he did well there. There are some lovely pictures of RGK on outings at Harmeny. He made friends with a boy from Aberdeen who also struggled to cope with mainstream school.

40. The thing that always struck me about review meetings at Harmeny was how considered and detailed they were. They were so caring and professional and very child centred.
41. I can't praise Harmeny enough. They really got to grips with RGK's learning difficulties and the phonic sounding learning. They saw that RGK could cope in smaller classes where there wasn't too much stimulation. They tapped into his creativity and RGK thrived there. The staff at Harmeny were so caring and professional. I have to say, I think Harmeny was RGK's saviour for his learning,
42. RGK was assessed as having dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyspraxia. For a child trying to learn, that connection between mind, brain and action was hugely difficult. Writing was difficult and he struggled to hold a pen. Now, even as an adult, if you watch RGK hold a pen, it can appear very clumsy.
43. At the Siena Learning Centre, Sister Averill had identified these learning difficulties . I'm sure that report will be in RGK's file. These conditions became apparent and were acknowledged at the Children's Hospital when RGK was seen by the occupational therapist. Based on these assessments of RGK, the funding was put in place for him to attend Harmeny School.
44. When RGK was in Harmeny, he was sent to the Edinburgh Children's Hospital for a further assessment and he saw a paediatrician, I can't remember her name but she did quite a detailed report which identified RGK's problems with dysgraphia, dyslexia and dyspraxia. It was a complex picture but was reinforced during the assessment at the children's hospital. Harmeny then tailored their approach to RGK's education and learning based on that report.
45. RGK was in Harmeny until 1996, when he was ten or eleven years old. That's when problems began to emerge again. I had taken up a post in Tayside. Technically we were living in Perth. RGK was due to leave Harmeny and the educational psychologist in Aberdeen made the decision to send him back into mainstream school.



*St John's Primary School, Perth*

46. I couldn't understand how the education dept could send a child from a school like Harmeny into a school with a thousand pupils, which was St Columbus in Perth. I told them that this would not work and that surely there was an intermediate school that we could send RGK to, to cater for his needs. The plan then was to move RGK back a year so that he would go into Primary 7 at St John's Primary School in Perth. He would have been twelve years old at that time.
47. RGK wasn't a big child so he did blend in with that peer group. In fact, he did well at St John's. The staff were good and it was a small school. My concern was secondary. The educational psychologist got involved in Perth. She was a lovely lady called Barbie Arnaud and she was the educational psychologist for Perth & Kinross. She was very sensitive and good in terms of my concerns about RGK. Despite my protestations and concerns, the decision of Perth Education Services was that RGK should try secondary school and if it failed, we would try something else. RGK went to St Columba's in Perth.

*St Columba's High School, Perth*

48. RGK had pulled up significantly at Harmeny Educational Trust. There were still difficulties with writing and other things but in terms of his level of intelligence, he had pulled up. He had also made friends at St John's and was in a peer group, so it was good.
49. Some of his peer group were moving to St Columba's and it was felt that this would be another benefit of sending him there.
50. It went wrong at St Columba's because of the sheer size of the school. RGK couldn't deal with it so was then out of school. He only lasted for six weeks.

*Out of school and living in Perth*

51. I was then struggling to make up my mind as to whether I should stay in my job. If I left, I didn't have another post to go to. We had been trying to settle in Perth. [REDACTED] was a boarder at her school but wanted to be a day pupil so I was trying to juggle things for her as well. She was happy at School.
52. I was still working so my only option at the time was for [RGK] to go back up to Aberdeen and stay with my mum while I tried to make a decision on our future.
53. I had a good job and a reasonable income and [REDACTED] was happy at school. I hoped that Perth & Kinross Education Dept would come up with something for [RGK]. So, I made the decision to stay in Perth, brought [RGK] back down and we rented a house in Perth.
54. [RGK] was still out of school and he had lost his peer group of friends. My brother had come down from Aberdeen to be a responsible adult in the house when I was at work but it was just so stressful.

*Perth & Kinross Police*

55. I was at Perth Royal Infirmary when I got a message that [RGK] was in police custody. I phoned the police and they said there were waiting to take [RGK] home but they wouldn't tell me what had happened. I was waiting on some blood tests but got home later that evening. I actually had carbon monoxide poisoning. That was why I was so unwell.
56. [RGK] was charged with an offence by Perth Police.
57. The next day I went down to the police station and demanded that they retract the statement [RGK] had given as he hadn't had a responsible adult with him. For the police to say to [RGK] that I wasn't coming for him would have been devastating for him. I think that all happened in 2000 when [RGK] was fourteen years old.

### *Return to Aberdeen*

58. I was told I needed to stop work and take it easy. I was signed off work and at one point they thought I required a blood transfusion because of the carbon monoxide poisoning. I had to give up the house in Perth and we returned to Aberdeen although I was still employed in Perth. I think that was in July of 2000 and I was signed off until January 2001.
59. RGK was wrongly accused of committing offences in Perth and these matters were hanging over him. He was out of school while Perth & Kinross were trying to sort things out. I think between July 2000 and 2000, we were negotiating with Perth & Kinross regarding a school placement for RGK. It was somewhere in that timeline that Starley Hall School was mentioned.

### **Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife**

60. I'm not sure but I think a social worker by the name of Claire Murie suggested we start looking at Starley Hall in Burntisland. I remember going to visit Starley Hall with RGK and I think Claire Murie came with us. That would have been late summer or during the wintertime of 2000. I remember feeling a little desperate at the time. During the visit I learned that PNC from Harmeny had moved to Starley Hall School. In my mind, I was thinking PNC had come from Harmeny, which was a good school so maybe it was going to be okay there for RGK.
61. Reports had to go in and funding had to be secured and during all that time RGK was out of school. I was on long-term sick and we were up in Aberdeen. I was also trying to find another house in Perth. Both Barbie Arnaud and Claire Murie, who were involved in RGK's care, knew about Starley Hall.
62. The charges against RGK were still hanging over him whilst we were looking for a school so I think I was pleased when Starley Hall became a possibility.



63. During our visit to the school and because of what was hanging over **RGK**, I don't think he was particularly endeared to go there. **RGK** still remembers that on that visit he told me that one of the boys said to him, "*you don't want to come here.*" At the time I put it down to boys chatting so hadn't really considered it and it didn't put me off. **RGK** does still bring this up about Starley Hall.
64. Some of the children on the day of our visit just looked like **RGK**'s age. There were other children who didn't look as if they were thriving but there was nothing overt that I could pin that down to.
65. I think we got the train down because I was still unable to drive. We must have met the social worker, Claire Murie, in Perth, but I can't remember. I do remember being shown around Starley Hall and thinking the grounds looked nice. I remember meeting **KYU**, who was **SNR**, but I don't remember meeting many of the staff. I'm not sure if we met **PNC** on that visit.
66. When the funding was about to be released for **RGK** to go to Starley Hall, **PNC** came up to Aberdeen to meet us. I suppose in a way, his visit was to explain to **RGK** what their expectations were. **PNC** knew **RGK** from Harmeny School, where there had never been any major problems. **PNC**'s role was to come up and speak to **RGK**, speak to me and make a decision as to whether they should accept **RGK** into the school.
67. If I'm honest, given all that was going on at the time, being very unwell and signed off work sick, I could still see the danger signs. These charges were still hanging over **RGK** and to me he seemed increasingly vulnerable. You start clutching at straws, and given the history of **RGK**'s schooling and how hard we had to battle for things, when they came up with this funding, I thought, what other choices do I have?
68. Maybe if it had been another time, I would have seen it differently. I was just so afraid **RGK** would become more vulnerable. He was a bright boy and I wanted him to have a good education. I had to make a decision and there didn't seem to be any other option. I had looked at Lendrick Muir, which was a school for children with

learning difficulties but with these charges hanging over RGK, that wasn't going to work. Someone mentioned other list D schools like Kibble and Kerelaw and I just knew that wasn't right for RGK.

69. After the visit, I remember talking to RGK about it and saying that we had to do something and that I needed to work. If we went back to Aberdeen, I would still have had to find a job and it would cause some distress for . I told him that given the charges that were hanging over him, Aberdeen would put him to Oakbank School and I didn't want him to go there. That was my biggest fear and I didn't think RGK should be going to a list D school because of charges that I believed were not correct.
70. RGK was getting into mischief, I'm not denying that, but we were coming to a crucial point, a perfect storm and a whole lot of factors which were outwith my control. We needed to get RGK into an environment that was supportive in learning and that he felt safe. That was the most important thing to me.
71. RGK did want to stay in Aberdeen and thought he could stay with my mum but I said no. My job was in Perth, was in Perth and I wanted to try and make things work. In a way, I was pushing, encouraging and cajoling and trying to make it seem okay. That is a time RGK and I have spoken about since.
72. RGK didn't start at Starley Hall until either the or of 2000 and was there until around of 2001.

*Early days at Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife*

73. Starley Hall school was up a winding road. I think, if I remember correctly, it was a house that had belonged to an Admiral. It was quite an imposing building and was quite old. There were different components to it and I remember it looked over the railway line. There was nothing about the structure of the building that would have given you cause for concern.

74. I remember arriving at Starley Hall and I think we were shown round. I remember at one point we were standing outside a building near to where RGK was going to be. I remember thinking RGK was in a really stressful situation. I think RGK asked for a cigarette. I knew he had been smoking. I didn't approve of smoking and I didn't want to say, "yes, you can smoke" but I just remember feeling overwhelmed by it. I find it hard to describe, but I almost felt bullied in the situation, it almost felt coercive. I remember feeling completely disempowered as RGK's mother. It was nothing like the way staff had conducted themselves at Harmeny.
75. This might sound awful but I might have said, if it eases his stress, try and work to stop him smoking rather than taking this punitive approach. But the conversation never went anywhere near that. I just remember the attitude of staff that were there. I don't know who it was, not PNC because I would have remembered if PNC was there.
76. I remember was with me when we visited RGK and we had to drive away. RGK was really in quite a state. I remember he was taken to his room. He opened his window and he threw his mug out the window as a kind of protest. We had to drive away leaving him in that distress.
77. I don't remember if RGK had a room to himself or how many children were at Starley Hall at the time but it wasn't a lot. There were boys and girls residing there. I just felt after my discussion with support workers that the calibre of staff was nothing like the staff at Harmeny.

*Visits to Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife*

78. I always kept in touch with RGK. When he was at Harmeny I would write to him everyday. I would send him a card. Things changed at Starley Hall. Obviously, he was a little older then but I would still phone him and write to him. There were occasions when I would ask to visit and they would say that was okay and then cancel my visit because RGK hadn't been behaving. What I later learned from



RGK was that he had marks and bruising on him, so I was told I couldn't visit. It was dressed up as bad behaviour.

79. I remember going down on a visit one day. RGK and I went through to Edinburgh on the train. We had gone into Jenners Department Store and had to come out. RGK had a major panic attack in the middle of Princes Street. He was just overwhelmed. To try and tease out what was going on was difficult. I just couldn't get to the bottom of it. I don't think RGK wanted to tell me what was going on at Starley Hall. I was still off work unwell and I think RGK tried to deal with it in his own way.
80. I think it was 2000 that I attended my first review meeting at Starley Hall. I was still off work and I think RGK had only been in Starley Hall for a couple of weeks. The social worker from Perth would have been there but I don't remember who chaired the review. I don't remember Mr KYU being there. I'm sure there must be a record of these reviews. RGK was saying he would try and make a go of it but at the same time the police charges were hanging over him and I didn't know what that was going to mean. If he was found guilty, were they going to move him somewhere else? I sensed RGK was trying to say the right things to me. I remember telling them that I wasn't well and not dealing with things as well as I could. I also said that I wondered if RGK sensed my weakness and that frightened him.
81. There was another review in the January and I was beginning to feel a bit better by then. I was beginning to have concerns. I couldn't put my finger on things but I was concerned about RGK's demeanour. I felt that he was depressed. I sensed he wasn't telling me things and I knew he was acting out. I didn't see much of PNC PNC at that time.
82. On a subsequent visit I had possibly for another review meeting, I learned that RGK had been placed in a class with severely autistic children. I spoke to the support teacher and he complained to me that RGK was not accommodating the behaviour of the autistic children. I told him that he was the teacher and that RGK was not there to do that, he was trying to manage his own situation. He was almost

blaming RGK who maybe didn't understand the difficulties the other children had. I don't remember the teachers name. It was never like that at Harmeny where you had a sense the staff always had a handle on things. That encounter made me feel very uncomfortable

83. There was a gentleman called PRT, who I think had responsibility for RGK. I found that man obtuse and RGK didn't like him. There was another gentleman there called Peter Stanford. I think he was a social worker or a social support person. He was the only person I felt that I could speak to who had a sense of professionalism about him. He was nice and helpful and you could have a conversation with him and explain some of your concerns. RGK liked the way he dealt with him. I was so concerned about RGK in that period leading into the January.
84. I always wanted to have that weekend contact with RGK but at Starley Hall, that became completely disrupted. I couldn't say how many times my visits were postponed. I just know there were occasions I was going through and was told I couldn't see him.
85. They kept RGK in lockdown, in social isolation. I was beginning to feel a bit better by the January and I asked for the doctor to see RGK. He wasn't on any prescribed medication at that time. I phoned a few times and said I wanted RGK to see the school doctor. Despite my repeated requests for that, it never happened. I think there was a suspicion that some of the kids were sniffing glue or aerosols.
86. There were times I spoke to RGK on the phone and he said that Mr KYU was listening in to his phone calls and would end the call if RGK said anything bad. I never wanted to do anything which would make RGK's situation more vulnerable so I always went through the correct channels. That's why I wrote to Mr Stanford.
87. My letter is dated 16 February 2001 and is addressed to Peter Stanford, Team Leader, The Lodge, Starley Hall. The letter reads as follows:



88. *"Dear Peter, further to RGK's review meeting, I would like to thank you for your very detailed assessment report that captures many aspects of the very complex nature of RGK the child struggling to cope with adolescence and all its attending pressures. The opportunity for a further six weeks assessment period and allowing RGK to make further improvement in his behaviour is helpful in certain aspects. However, I'm concerned that contrary to this, is that psychologically it may serve to induce further pressures resulting in a further decline in RGK's mental wellbeing due to stress and the consequences of failure. Stress is an underlying factor and affects many aspects of how RGK manages himself and interactions with other people and the environment he's functioning in. I'm extremely concerned that when stressed or under duress, RGK has and does exhibit signs and symptoms of depression. What can range from becoming withdrawn to becoming verbally aggressive with features of mood swings. Given my concerns regarding RGK's mental wellbeing, I would wish to discuss these aspects further with the school doctor. I'm concerned that the failure of secondary school coupled with the subsequent offending behaviour has had an indelible effect on his wellbeing and behaviour. I have enclosed for your reference, some reports that maybe helpful regarding RGK's developmental progress."*
89. I must have also provided a copy of the report that came from Edinburgh's Children's Hospital. It was like Starley Hall were oblivious to all this. It was like, we've got you now, we have the funding so forget all of the other stuff. That was completely alien to what Harmeny was like.
90. Of course, unbeknownst to me, RGK had been physically abused. He'd seen other children being physically abused. He wasn't telling me at the time, he just kept saying that he didn't want to be there.

*Routine at Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife*

91. There was a routine at Starley Hall. There were classes although I don't think the classes met RGK's needs. There were mealtimes. I can't remember if he shared a room at Starley, he did share a room in the cottage at Harmeny but I'm not so clear



about Starley Hall. What really stuck with RGK was the fact they contained him in that isolation situation and that he wasn't allowed out.

92. RGK was on a restriction order and he wasn't allowed to do certain things. They did go on activities but I think RGK was grounded and wasn't allowed to go to the skating rink, for instance. I remember randomly and suddenly he was allowed to go on an activity one day. It turned out that when RGK got back from the activity, the school inspectors had been there. RGK would have been quite articulate with them but it was interesting that all of a sudden he was allowed out.

#### *Running away*

93. RGK ran away a few times, two or three times. That was RGK's way of dealing with it. Running away in the hope they would put him out of the school. RGK did go missing for two days. I think he took another boy with him from Starley. He was in Aberdeen. I think that was RGK's way of thinking, '*I'll sabotage this and then they'll put me out.*'

#### *Incident at Starley Hall School and Kirkcaldy Police*

94. There was a situation with RGK and another boy. I don't know if you would call it an altercation or capering but there was an incident with a boy and a bath of cold water. I think they had been capering and dipping the boy under the water. I suppose you could view it as high jinks, boys capering, it depended on what slant you wanted to put on it. You could dress it up as more serious. This happened and they got into trouble about it but it all just seemed to blow out of proportion.
95. The next thing, Kirkcaldy Police were talking about charging RGK with a serious offence. The boy didn't lose consciousness. I remember this was coming up to the Christmas period 2000. There may have been other incidents too because RGK was kept in lockdown with 24-hour supervision. I don't know how many days this was for.

96. I drove down from Aberdeen and it must have been the 23 or 24 December 2000. There were no social workers available and nobody to speak to. I remember seeing **RGK** in Starley Hall. He was in a separate part of the house and the person supervising him had to stay there as well. **RGK** looked very distressed and unwell.
97. I had a child who was accused of a serious offence and now accused of another offence. **RGK** was in this unit with one-to-one supervision with various staff who seemed to get drafted in. They didn't seem to have any proper qualifications. At one point, I think the gardener or the handyman was watching him.
98. I remember I wasn't well enough to drive back to Aberdeen. I managed to get a room in the nurse's home in Perth and I stayed there from the 23 December until the social work opened around the 27 December 2000. I remember I either received a phone call from **KYU**, **SNR** or I phoned him. It was so distressing because it was almost coercive. He said that he could have **RGK** shipped to a secure unit and that I wouldn't know where he was. I told him that he couldn't do that and that there would have to be a case review. There seemed to be some degree of control and enjoyment in it for him. I would have expected him to say that this is quite serious, that we have to get to the bottom of this and need to work out why **RGK** is behaving this way. There was none of that.
99. When the social work opened up again, I spoke to Claire Murie the Social Worker and told her what **KYU** had said to me. She said that couldn't happen and that there would have to be a case review about it. At that point, we were still heading towards the children's panel regarding the Perth incidents. I was becoming increasingly concerned about **RGK**'s demeanour and presentation.
100. I received another phone call from Mr **KYU** at some point. I said if **RGK** is doing that, why didn't he do something about it. I asked him where his evidence was for that. It seemed to be just another layer on top and something else I couldn't deal with.

101. In the February, I must have spoken to Peter Stanford on the phone, prior to sending him my letter demanding that RGK was seen by the doctor.
102. In the March 2001, I went back to work. I was thinking of going down to visit RGK that weekend when I received a phone call from Peter Stanford. I remember it clearly. I was at work. Peter said he was calling to let me know a couple of things. He told me that he was leaving Starley Hall and that he was there to support RGK and hoped everything would be okay.
103. I don't remember his exact words but it was something along the lines of there being children at Starley Hall whose behaviour was either a hundred times worse or a thousand times worse than RGK's behaviour. He said that their parents either didn't care or didn't understand. He told me that it wasn't about RGK's behaviour but that he had been put out of the school that day. They had packed his bags and he was out of the school. He said, *"people don't like the questions you are asking."*

#### **Abuse at Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife**

104. RGK sustained a severe head injury in Starley Hall. That was in one of the restraint incidents. In whatever way that restraint was carried out, RGK banged his head on one of the wash hand basins and was concussed. He said KYU said to him that he was meant to be a toughie from Aberdeen. Imagine a man exercising that level of control over a slightly built boy. He was never taken to the hospital. RGK told me about that sometime later. He also said he saw another boy having his head banged against a basin.
105. RGK told me that whilst being restrained he had become unconscious because of the way Mr KYU held him with his arm across his neck. According to what RGK had seen, I think Mr KYU's modus operandi was to place an arm lock on children's necks. I don't know an exact number of times RGK was restrained but it happened more than once.



106. One other incident that distressed [RGK] was when they rubbed his face in vomit on the carpet. He had carpet burns down his face. What brings this back to [RGK] is that he can't stand the smell of burgers. That association of cheap burgers. I don't know if he got sick or somebody else got sick and they just rubbed his face in the vomit. I don't know if that was Mr [KYU] or another staff member. [RGK] has told me who it was but I can't remember.
107. I think there was coercive control of [RGK], me not being allowed to see him when he was so vulnerable. I was so concerned about him. I think what made that worse for [RGK] was what had happened in Perth when the police told him I wasn't coming for him.
108. [RGK] also told me that [KYU] was listening in on his phone calls to me. That he would be standing there with his finger on the receiver, telling [RGK] he would disconnect if he said anything bad about the school.
109. I think it was the physical, psychological, the humiliation and dehumanising treatment that took its toll on [RGK].

### **Reporting of abuse, Starley Hall School, Burntisland, Fife**

110. Whilst [RGK] was at Kirkcaldy Police Station, he tried to tell police about the abuse he had seen at Starley Hall with other children being restrained and what had happened to him. He said that he told them about the abuse but the police dismissed what he was saying, they didn't believe him.

### **Leaving Starley Hall School, Burntisland , Fife**

111. There was no care review, nothing. [RGK] was brought up to Perth with black bags. I don't remember if the social worker went down to collect him or the staff at Starley

Hall brought him up. I think because of the restriction order still on him at that time, it meant that he had to be somewhere he could be supervised.

### **Parkview Independent School, Dundee**

112. I remember going up to Parkview but [RGK] was only there two or three days. I don't remember who the headmaster was. I think it was damage limitations, anywhere they could put him at that point to fulfil the restriction order. I knew Parkview was a school where children had particular needs. I didn't know much about the school at that point. I didn't have a choice on him being there.

113. I don't remember having any contact with social work at the time. I think they were caught off guard with this as it all happened so quickly. You can't have a child with special educational needs under these restrictions. Where their mother is asking for him to see a doctor because of concerns she has about him and then make a decision to put the child out without a review, a discussion or any planning. I don't believe Parkview was connected to Starley Hall in any way.

114. Secondary Institutions - to be published later there was a decision to put [RGK] out of Parkview. Maybe it was an emergency decision where he could be at home but had to attend the children's panel, I can't remember.

115. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

116.

117.

### *Moving back to Aberdeen*

118. Bu this point, I was already thinking I may have to move back to Aberdeen to make things work. I had seen a job advertised and had applied for it. They called me for interview but it wasn't the time. In my head, I was thinking I needed to get back to Aberdeen. I negotiated with my mum and asked if she could manage until I could finish my job in Perth.

### **Cordyce School, Dyce, Aberdeen**

119. I told Aberdeen Council that I was intending moving back to Aberdeen. They wanted RGK to go to Cordyce School in Aberdeen. I don't know if that school would have come under a list D or a list G school in Scotland. I think RGK maybe went a couple of times but he'd had enough by this point.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



## Leaving Cordyce School

120. We did try with Cordyce School but RGK had had enough by that point and refused to go back. That would have been 2001 and RGK would have been 15 years old.
121. By that time, it had been proven that RGK was innocent and had not been involved in the incidents reported by Perth Police. Another boy had been identified and charged with the offences. The charges on RGK were dropped in the April 2001. Having been wrongly accused of these offences and being broken by his experiences of Starley School, I think this was a significant tipping point in RGK's sense of who he was.
122. There was then another incident after this when RGK was stopped by the police whilst walking in Aberdeen. The police carried out a PNC (Police National Computer) check on him and ridiculed him about the wrongful charges. We had to go to our solicitor to have this followed up and the details removed from the system.

## Life after School

123. What happened to RGK at Starley Hall and how RGK would express it, almost became secondary to what I was now seeing. I understood what RGK was saying about going to school. I didn't want a situation that was going to further aggravate, distress and traumatise him. I thought I just needed to get RGK stable. I needed to get him feeling safe and well and we would work from there. That was my hope but there was a rapid decline.
124. I can't remember at what point it was, but he got into company with some boys over in Torry in Aberdeen. I would go out looking for him and had major concerns about him. He was becoming belligerent and agitated. It was like all that had occurred at Starley Hall was simmering inside of him.

125. I thought I could sort it all out, not knowing how bad things were going to be. Him needing money, things going missing from the house and just seeing that lovely boy disappearing.
126. Social work were involved but there were no services in Aberdeen. I suppose, to be fair to them, they were doing what they could do under their resources. They contributed to the reports written in relation to his offending. I would accompany RGK to the meetings he would let me go to with him. When he was older, I think he felt that he didn't need his mum to be there.
127. By this time, RGK was really not in a good place. As things went on, he became very emotional and agitated about what had happened to him in Starley Hall. What he saw, what they did and how they had treated him. RGK hadn't come from a home where he was ever smacked or beaten or heard abusive words.
128. This all began to come out. I think RGK, in his own way, was angry at me as he had told me that he didn't want to go to Starley Hall.
129. Around 2002, my father became unwell. RGK loved my father and this caused a lot of distress for him. RGK used to see him everyday and I suppose, in a way, my father was like RGK's father. In 2003, my father died, and that seemed to be a tipping point and brought out emotions and upset in RGK.
130. We eventually got a letter from CAMHS (Child and Adolescents Mental Health Services). That was to deal with the false accusations in Perth and how this had affected RGK. We saw this lovely lady psychiatrist who RGK told what had happened. By the time he was due to go back to see her, he had turned eighteen and suddenly he was in adult services. He had transferred from children's social work into criminal justice.
131. I have a social enquiry report dated 12 May 2004. It is headed Criminal Justice Social Work Report. It says that RGK had contacted his GP and been referred to the substance misuse service. In this report it does mention the abuse. RGK does

tell them about it. The report says that he may benefit from seeing a clinical psychologist for a psychological assessment because of his behaviour and learning difficulties.

132. There was more contact with the police and more social work involvement. One social worker told RGK to cut ties with me and another one told me to throw him out in the street.
133. At that time in Aberdeen, there was a two-year waiting list to be seen for addiction services. If RGK got a court fine, I would pay it, anything to keep him out of trouble. I would pay off any debts for him. That was basically our life for a while. It went on and on and became so problematic. I knew he was using heroin.
134. I eventually had to move out of my house. I thought, if RGK is bringing heroin into the house, and I was there and the police came, I would end up in a situation where I would be charged and would lose my job. It was awful.
135. What I eventually had to do was leave RGK in my house. I made the house as secure as I could and I went back to live with my mum. Every night around 11:00 pm, I would go round to check on him and would see that he had been injecting. I would make sure he hadn't been sick. I used to sit there until 1:00 am, then go back to my mum's. I wouldn't sleep much. I would go back round at 6:00 am and say my prayers I would find him alive when I opened the door.
136. RGK looked so unwell, but at least he had a roof over his head. I made sure there was food for him. Of course, this didn't go down well with some people, but knowing what I knew, I thought this was the only way I could manage. I would never have put him out on the street although there was a point where he did take off but only for a couple of days. We lived like that for two or three years.
137. During this time, RGK was being fined for stealing from shops and I was paying the fines. In that time, my house went to rack and ruin. It was destroyed but at least RGK had a roof over his head.



138. It was 2008 when criminal justice decided to put RGK on a drug treatment testing order. RGK has slight OCD and gets very stressed. I told them RGK wouldn't cope with this and that he needed psychological assessment for underlying factors. I wrote many letters but I never got a response. I remember phoning social work and asking for their rationale for putting RGK on the drug treatment testing order. They gave me this waffle and I said that wasn't a sound reason. The social worker hung up the phone on me.
139. I then wrote some letters expressing my concerns about putting RGK on this drug treatment testing order without any sound understanding of his issues. Nobody paid a blind bit of notice to it. RGK had to go to court for the drug treatment testing order. It was 2008, and by this time he had gone onto a methadone programme and was taking benzodiazepine. They loaded him up with a whole load of medicine. It was only ever meant to be for a short time until he got some treatment. But there was no psychological help, nothing. We just seesawed from one crisis to another. Me begging them for help. He was in services but it was just meds. Increasingly, RGK wasn't sleeping, turning night into day, with very low moods and saying to me that he didn't want to be here.
140. I remember going up to the chemist. It was a really bad snowy day and I said to RGK that we should go to the court first but he said he needed his methadone. There was a delay in him getting it so by the time we arrived at the court and RGK went in, he was two minutes late. I was waiting outside as I wasn't allowed in. A social worker came out and told me RGK had been given a custodial sentence because he had been late into court. The social work had recommended that they pull his drug treatment testing order. The prosecution put all his sentences together and he was sent to prison for eighteen months, which was reduced to nine months. RGK was maybe nineteen or twenty by this time. That was horrific. RGK was in a bad way and he was sent to Craiginches Prison.
141. RGK clearly needed psychological support but that never happened. It has never happened, despite all my letters. I even wrote letters to NHS Grampian. So, although it is mentioned in the report, it never came to anything. That was maybe because of

a combination of factors, [RGK] getting more chaotic, lack of resources and a two-year waiting list.

*Newspaper articles and High Court Case involving Starley Hall School*

142. When I became aware of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, I thought of Starley Hall. From what I knew and what [RGK] had told me, I thought Starley Hall must have come up in the Inquiry. This would have been around 2017 or 2018. I told [RGK] about the Inquiry and asked him to speak to them about Starley Hall. He was very reluctant at the time although we did get the forms. He wasn't in a great place and just couldn't get his thoughts together. He couldn't deal with it although said that maybe at one point he would do it.
143. In 2019, I was speaking to a friend and she mentioned something about school abuse at Brimmond Assessment Centre in Aberdeen. I hadn't heard anything about it but I later googled it and up came this article on Starley Hall. This must have been [REDACTED] 2019. It was in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] newspapers and was dated [REDACTED] 2019. I couldn't believe it. [KYU] was mentioned and I think there were forty-two witnesses, children who were now adults. I could work out which school they were referring to although I don't think they named it in the newspaper.
144. I sat with it for a few days but thought that I would have to tell [RGK]. I told him one evening and he became really distressed about it. I asked him what he wanted to do because it was already in the court system and he wasn't sure. I said that I would find out more about it for him and he was fine with that.
145. I phoned the Procurator Fiscal (PF) in Edinburgh and said that I had read the story in the newspaper and that the situation pertains to my son. I was told to speak to the PF in Aberdeen via the police. [RGK] was very reluctant to speak to the police but I gave them a call. I said I knew they had had contact with [RGK] before but asked them to send somebody appropriate. This was all over the course of two days.



146. Then I got a call from a detective from Fife CID. They said they had tried to contact me at Perth. Two CID officers came up to see us and took statements from us separately.
147. At that point, the world changed and everything went into lockdown. From that period in 2020, RGK became very unwell. He wasn't eating and I had a lot of concerns about him. His mental health really deteriorated.
148. Prior to the High Court case in February or March 2022, there was no precognition statements taken from us, although somebody did speak to RGK and go through his statement with him. We received a phone call on the Monday about 4:00 pm asking us to be in the High Court in Edinburgh the following day. I said I would have to try and get the day off work because RGK couldn't travel on his own. I told them RGK wasn't too well.
149. I had been working with RGK, trying to prepare him for attending court. I mustered everything and got him there. We went into a small room in the court building about 11:00 am on the Tuesday morning. It was hot and we sat there all morning. RGK was getting a little agitated. I had given a lengthy statement to the CID and had been cited as a witness, but I was told I was not going to be called as a witness when we arrived at the High Court in Edinburgh in February/March 2022.
150. We were allowed to go out for lunch but we just went out for a breath of fresh air and went back in. We sat and sat and it must have been 3:00 or 4:00 pm when the clerk of the court came into the room and said RGK was not going to be called that day. That they had run out of time and that we would need to come back the following day. Thankfully, we had brought extra medication for RGK. We sat for a while waiting to be excused, when the clerk came back in and said to RGK that he could go in and give his evidence.
151. We were taken upstairs and sat in this anteroom. RGK went through and it could only have been about ten minutes before he came back into the room. There was a victim support person there. No disrespect to her but she looked to be a schoolgirl.



There had been no victim support prior to this and I knew what it took for me to get RGK on that train. RGK told me that they had spent time asking him about his name and address and that the only thing the defence lawyer said to him was that he was lying.

152. I know it had been a virtual jury. I seen one man coming out of one of the court rooms and he looked overly sedated. He was a bit older than RGK. It must have been hugely challenging for him. As we were leaving, there was somebody else who was shouting and they were calling for the police. The court experience was a farse, shambolic.
153. I didn't know if I would be called to give evidence at some point but we didn't hear anymore about the case. I then read in the newspaper that the verdict had been not proven. I couldn't believe it. I was absolutely horrified.
154. I phoned the court in Edinburgh and asked why we hadn't been told about the verdict. I wanted somebody to tell me what had happened. Eventually, Fife Police got in touch and I think they were shocked as well. They gave me the name of the head Procurator Fiscal, John Richardson and said they would check to see if I could phone him.
155. To his credit, within an hour, John Richardson phoned me. He was nice and spoke at length and I gave him my observations. My concern was that there had been a deputy advocate who had been handling the case. Then suddenly, a new deputy advocate, who probably didn't have the same depth of knowledge, had taken over. We spoke at length and I said that I found it unfathomable that there were forty-two witnesses, were they all lying? He said sadly, some of the witnesses had died.
156. That's what upsets me now. Those men accused of the abuse at Starley Hall just sat in that court and let circumstances unfold for these vulnerable witnesses.
157. Vulnerable children, children I saw when I visited RGK at Starley Hall. They weren't thriving, they weren't healthy. A lot of them with more profound learning disabilities

than RGK. Living in that environment with learning disabilities, not having come from nurturing homes and now having a chaotic lifestyle as an adult. They were expected to go into court and give an account of their childhood experiences at Starley Hall. I would imagine a lot of those people, because of their vulnerabilities, didn't even have their bus fares to get to Edinburgh.

158. I went to the pharmacy and sorted RGK's medication before we went to the court in Edinburgh that day. If RGK had had to do that, he would never have made it to Edinburgh. The whole legal system worked against these vulnerable witnesses. It wasn't that they didn't tell the truth about Starley Hall. They told the truth, it was just the circumstances. When you're vulnerable, chaotic and on lots of medication, you can't articulate properly and, in this case, they had a remote jury.
159. I did say to Mr Richardson that I found so much of what he was telling me difficult to deal with on the telephone. He agreed for RGK and me to go down to Edinburgh to see him. We met Mr Richardson in the Procurator Fiscal's office with the depute advocate. To me she looked very young. We went through everything, I asked a lot of questions, and it seemed to be on the Moorov Principle that things failed. If people have died or are in prison, then of course it's going to fail. I said to him I was very unhappy about the way the court case was managed and later wrote in detail regarding these aspects.
160. The court case in Edinburgh didn't fail because people weren't telling the truth, it was because the witnesses were too vulnerable. I saw some of the people outside the court that day. I didn't know who they were but you could tell because of their age and presentation, life had not been good to them
161. Mr Richardson said to me that in being there that day, and I hope I'm not doing him a disservice, that there was probably a story to be told and that maybe I could tell it. I hope somebody will shine a light on Starley Hall. For all those people that have died. For the people that have been imprisoned and for what they did to RGK.
162. After the court case, RGK went into a major downwards spiral.

## Impact

163. I have a flat in Aberdeen and RGK lives there alone. He doesn't cope well. I go twice a week to collect his medication. I don't think RGK has slept properly for years. He lies awake at night with all the intrusive thoughts and feelings of being helpless.
164. As a child, he had a good diet and ate good food. I cook for him. RGK has a good appearance but will go four or five days without showering or washing and just not looking well because of his low mood, turning night into day.
165. He doesn't watch much television. RGK is articulate and bright but reading is challenging for him. He listens to a lot of audio podcasts. He doesn't get a full night sleep so will lie listening to podcasts and end up falling asleep during the day. His routine is very disrupted. He doesn't have a self-disciplined routine because of how things have deteriorated in his life.
166. For a while things were difficult with . I was just trying to contain RGK. would say that all I was doing was concentrating on RGK. Thankfully, we've got over that. is very good to RGK, very concerned for him and tries to support him. RGK can talk to her, so that's good.
167. Without question, the way RGK is now, is as a result of his time at Starley Hall. You can't separate out one event from another. Of course, we were on that trajectory with RGK's learning difficulties and all the challenges. You get into these layering up of things, which affect every aspect of your life
168. In August 2001, I wrote to and telephoned Mr KYN SNR of Harmeny at the time. I think his reply to me validates RGK was in a good place whilst at Harmeny. This is an excerpt from the first part of the letter Mr KYN wrote back to me on 30 August 2001. I was very concerned about RGK at the time. He was at St Columba's School in Perth & Kinross. Mr KYN wrote:



169. *"Dear Mrs PLX thank you for your phone call concerning RGK I'm obviously concerned that all the positive progress he made at Harmeny seems to be beginning to fall apart. I note your letter to B. Arnaud, educational psychologist and can honestly say we enjoyed a very positive and productive period with you and RGK which engaged all parties towards common goals. I remember that you were the instigator of him coming to Harmeny and your judgement proved correct and at that time, I have no doubt now, that if you are noticing a downward spiral of behaviour it is real and needs to be considered seriously."*
170. RGK came out of Harmeny, went to St Johns but then you get into these things that occur. I suppose you could say that when RGK went to Starley Hall, in addition to his learning difficulties and failures at school, he was carrying these accusations, which were wrongly levelled and inappropriately charged. He went into Starley Hall with this and into an environment which was not what it portrayed itself to be.
171. Over the years, when RGK has become upset, it has always led back to Starley Hall and what Mr KYU did to him. I have no doubt that whatever else happened in our lives, losing our home or whatever, we got over it. did well and has a good job. Yes, their father went away, but there was nothing disruptive in their lives. I go back to the point when I became well again and started looking at things, thinking about Harmeny, asking questions about Starley Hall, demanding to see a doctor for RGK and that phone call from Peter Stanford. I told the CID officers about that phone call. I don't know if Mr Stanford would have been interviewed for the court case. I have him as a man of good character who supported RGK and I hope that he remembers that because I certainly do.
172. You just don't think this would happen. You put your trust in the system. I thought I was doing the right thing putting RGK into a school that was important for our family values. Then you get caught up in the machinery of funding. What those police officers did to RGK, telling him I wasn't coming, with no responsible adult being present. What they did was despicable. Then you layer that up.

173. You still have to trust the system is going to help you. There were very good people there. Mr Standford, Barbie Arnaud did her best for RGK.
174. There were good people on that journey but I have to say, my thoughts on Starley Hall are that they were chancers. There were no checks and balances and I would hazard a guess, between the time that school was set up, there were no checks and balances on the staff's credibility. I would imagine, none of them had appropriate training. I would say the school was operating on a cash basis of who they could get in. The calibre of staff there, with no disservice to Mr PNC and Mr Standford, was not suitable to the complex needs of the children. Starley Hall were chancers and the system allowed that to happen. I have checked, and the care inspectorate did not check that school until the systems changed over. Starley Hall were getting away with things due to a lack of robust checks in the care and educational system at that time.
175. When I think about myself, I am more concerned about whether I could have protected RGK more. I always did my best. I tried to get RGK to take responsibility for what he needed to take responsibility for, whilst mitigating against the worst of that.
176. It has taken an immense toll and at points I thought I was going to have to give up my job. My boss was understanding but there were days I sat with RGK until 1:00 am and went back at 6:00 am to make sure he was okay.
177. Thankfully, my health has been okay. It could have been better at times with the stress. I worry about anything happening to me because I don't think RGK would cope. He is a bright boy but has never held down a job and has no qualifications.

### Reporting of Abuse

178. RGK did, at one point, when he was seen by social work in Aberdeen, tell them about the abuse at Starley Hall. They didn't ask how, what, why or when.

179. RGK was interviewed by detectives from Fife Police for the High Court case. He did tell them all about the abuse he suffered at Starley Hall School.

### **Treatment / Support**

180. RGK is on a lot of medication now. He's on methadone, benzodiazepine, triazoline and sleeping tablets. RGK has a CPN who is very supportive, which RGK appreciates. I cannot praise his CPN, Annemarie Walker, enough for her care and support of RGK.

### **Records**

181. I have copies of so many letters I have written over the years. I have letters and medical reports from Aberdeen and Edinburgh, reports written by social work and criminal justice workers. I don't have any records from his time at Starley Hall School or Parkview School in Dundee.

### **Lessens to be learned**

182. The time was as it was. The legislation wasn't there. I'm sure KYU SNR Starley Hall as a business. As long as he was getting money in from children who were not going to complain. Starley Hall exploited the system but didn't help the children. RGK described one boy being locked in a cottage with his face pressed up against the window. He said that he was locked in there all the time.
183. Thankfully, we now have 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) and the care inspectorate and we have other belts and braces but sadly we are where we are. When you look at the drug related deaths in Scotland, and when you look at people in prison, you follow the breadcrumbs backwards and you sadly find the same tale. The justice system failed us in the court case and I do hope that the Inquiry can



shine a light on Starley Hall. How can forty-two people give witness statements, go to court and a not proven verdict be given by a jury?

184. I know Starley Hall portray themselves now as a different school. The checks and balances of regulations and inspections will require them to do that. I'm sure some of the staff there now are of a much better calibre. I'm sure the children who are there now are getting a better experience than RGK had.
185. The entire experience of Starley Hall and how RGK was treated leaves me with many questions and observations, which I hope the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry will uncover and report upon, in relation to:
186. How and why was Starley Hall allowed to set up as a school for children with SEN without robust checks by the appropriate authorities?
187. Why were staff employed without the appropriate background checks?
188. Why was there not the appropriate authority/regulatory checks conducted regarding staff skills and fitness to work with vulnerable children?
189. Why were there gaps in the timeline of inspection reports from when the school first opened until early 2000?
190. My observations and experience of Starley Hall School was, that it was set up and run as a business, purely to get funding, without a clear philosophy or educational approach to meet the complex needs of the vulnerable children attending the school. Coercive and abusive behaviour by staff towards vulnerable children was allowed to go unchecked, due to a lack of robust objective inspections conducted at the school; and the poor quality of reports produced from these inspections.
191. Rarely in these inspection reports was the health and well-being of the children commented on or discussed in the reports. The adverse effects of childhood experiences on children's health is now well understood and scientifically proven.

Starley Hall failed to provide safety and nurturing for my son and other children who attended the school. I hope the inquiry will give voice to the children, now adults, who were failed by various systems that should have protected them.

### Final comments

192. On [REDACTED] 2025, at the time of finalising my witness statement, I learned that my son [RGK] had passed away - I was not able to see him or kiss him goodbye as a mother should. The terrible irony and cruelty of this loss of my son, is that, as I learned by telephone of my son's death, I received an email from Fife Council relating to a FOI request I had made. Reading the content of this email from Fife Council and my observations of Starley Hall as a school and [KYU] behaviour, was traumatising and painful for me as [RGK] mother to read.
193. All the questions I have raised in my witness statement, is borne out by the lack of robust inspections of Starley Hall. They should not have been approved as a school to operate, which left vulnerable children at risk to abuse and in an environment which was clearly unsafe. Starley Hall and Mr [KYU] operated with impunity and were able to get away with this shocking standard of care, education and poor calibre of staff fitness to practice with vulnerable children.
194. I am in no doubt that the experience of Starley Hall ultimately killed my son. He never recovered from the dehumanising ordeal and the subsequent court case in March 2022, which retraumatised him - being told he was a liar.
195. [RGK] had informed social workers of the abuse he suffered at Starley Hall - yet nothing was done.
196. In 2015, in an assessment for residential rehab by NHS Grampian and Aberdeen City Council, he reported again the trauma he had experienced at Starley Hall, which was related to his need to self-medicate. The social worker's response to [RGK]'s disclosure of abuse at Starley Hall was to question whether he was, "Making this up." Yet again, another professional doubting him as a victim. [RGK] was devastated by

this experience and saw no hope in justice. To add to his pain, the request for residential rehab was denied, which added to his distress.

197. Previously, following an incident at Starley Hall in December 2001, [RGK] had attempted to tell the police about the levels of violence at Starley Hall but he was not listened to nor believed. Throughout my son's experience of Starley Hall, and reporting to professionals, he was failed. He received no specialist psychological intervention for the trauma and to address the abuse at an early stage.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

198. It is too painful for me to go into further detail at this time due to the grief of losing [RGK]. I trust his voice will be heard now and believe that I can be [RGK]'s voice.

### **Other information**

199. 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..... [PLX] .....

Dated..... 10 April 2025 .....