

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HQX

Support person present: No

1. My name is HQX I am known as HQX. My date of birth is 1962. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I grew up in Kirkcaldy, with my mother and father. My dad was about ten years older than my mother. She was married three times and I was the third youngest of eleven children. The older children were all married and living in their own homes. At the time of going into care there was only my older brothers, myself, younger sister and younger brother.
3. Our life can only be described as being extremely poor and a hard existence. My dad worked occasionally and not for any length of time. The food was cooked on the fire at the house.
4. When I was about five years old I started at North Primary School, Kirkcaldy. I did not enjoy being at school. As a result of there being little money in the family, there were times when I had no shoes to wear for school and sometimes had to wear my sisters brightly coloured wellington boots. This gave the kids at school more reasons to take the mickey and eventually I just stopped going.

5. The school got in touch with my parents about me not going and my mum would walk me to the school. As soon as she left the school I would find a way to sneak out again. This went on for months and eventually the social work became involved.

Ovenstone Residential Home, Pittenweem, Fife

6. Mr Cuthbert was my social worker and he arrived at the house one day and took me away to Ovenstone Residential Home. This was the first time I had met him. I think he told me it was because I was not staying at school.

Routine at Ovenstone Residential Home, Pittenweem, Fife

First day

7. Mr Cuthbert took me to the school in a car. I don't remember much of the day when I arrived but I do know it was a really long building. In the centre of the building were the offices for the nurses and other staff and from there they could observe the other dormitories. The nurses were usually dressed in their uniforms. Mr Christie was one of the nursing staff there.
8. In the main building was the dining area. There was a TV room and next to that was a library. Then there were the dormitories and there was a big grass area outside for playing. The only other staff I can recall at that time were some ladies who helped with the laundry. I did get to help there sometimes and there was a lady called Kate who always looked after me. It was great because it was really warm in there.
9. The dormitories had about fifteen to twenty beds on each side of the room. They were all single beds. The first time I was there it was all boys, probably about thirty of us in total. The eldest boy would have been between nine and eleven years old. It wasn't until my second time at Ovenstone in 1969 that I saw that girls were being housed there.

Mornings and bedtime

10. The staff nurse who was on duty during the day would wake us in the morning and arrange for us to get washed and dressed. They supervised us just to make sure everyone was okay, but they did not interfere with you. If you needed it they would help you get dressed. We then went to the dining hall for our breakfast.
11. After tea we would play for a while and then it was inside to watch TV. We would be there for maybe an hour possibly a little longer. The nurses would help you get ready for bed making sure you washed and got dressed in your pyjamas.
12. On a Sunday we all went to church and we were given a kilt to wear for the service and the bible class there. They did not make us do anything else religious if we were not interested.

Mealtimes / Food

13. I don't remember much about the food but we all sat together for the breakfast. It was usually porridge with maybe some toast. I don't remember being hungry while I was staying there. Lunch was usually soup and maybe a pudding and at tea time it was a main meal. Sometimes I would be given an extra portion if there was anything left. The food was really good while I was there.

Clothing / uniform

14. For school we all had grey shorts, a jersey and shoes which were all supplied for us. I did not have any of my own clothes there because I didn't have any. The only clothes I would wear was what was supplied by Ovenstone.

School

15. The school was situated within the grounds of Ovenstone and we were all in one class. The kids in the class were all different ages and we sat together. An older teacher would come from outside to teach us and I liked going to the school there. I had clothes to wear and there was no mickey taking. You got to know all the kids while we were at school. I don't remember the teacher's name but she was nice.
16. We would be in the dining hall for lunch and back to school and play until we were back in class for the afternoon. After school we played in the grounds until we were ready for tea. There were no toys or balls or anything else to play with.
17. There was a library where I could take books out if I wanted, but I never did. We didn't get in there very often as it was usually locked. At most I would have been there only twice.

Trips / Holidays

18. I think it was the second time I was at Ovenstone when we were taken to the Pantomime. I don't think we had any other visits anywhere.

Visits

19. I cannot recall any visits from any social workers, including Mr Cuthbert when I was there. My mum tried to visit every few months but that meant a long bus journey from Kirkcaldy to Pittenweem and then a three mile walk from the bus stop along the country path. I did not see any of my brothers or sisters during my time there.

Running away

20. Because of the abuse there were four or five of us who decided to run away. We stayed on an old boat moored at Anstruther and were there for a few days.

Eventually we were found by the police and returned to Ovenstone. Until this time I had not discussed the abuse with Mr and Mrs Rolland.

Abuse at Ovenstone Residential Home, Pittenweem, Fife 1967-1970

21. The first time I was at Pittenweem I was about five or maybe a little older and I stayed there for over a year, this was probably around 1967/68. During the night Mr Christie would wait until the other boys were asleep, come into the dormitory and take me out of my bed. He took me through to his bedroom where he sexually abused me. After abusing me I was returned to my own bed. This would happen regularly before I returned home to my parents. Whilst there the first occasion I did not see any others being sexually abused.
22. Although I was not in trouble while I stayed there I did see other boys being punished. When the boys did something wrong the nurses used their hands to slap the kids around the face and body. There was one boy who tried to cut himself and the nurses would slap him and take him to the ground and eventually control him. He was then taken to another room until he calmed down.
23. Sometime during 1968 I was returned to my parental home and things were fine for a while, I even went to school. It did not last long, maybe six months or slightly longer. When I stopped going to school Mr Cuthbert again placed me in care at Ovenstone. I was about seven years old when I went back. I know it was sometime during 1969 as I remember the lunar landing that year and we would look out the windows at the moon.
24. It did not take Mr Christie long to start abusing me again. It would happen during the night when he was working. He would again wait until the others were sleeping, take me to his room and sexually abuse me. This time I learned to pretend to be asleep and when he believed this he would take another boy from his bed, take him to his room and sexually abuse him. I dreaded when he came in and would only get any sleep when someone else was taken.

25. One of the other male nurses at Ovenstone was a man called HQY [REDACTED]. Next to the laundry was a garage. HQY [REDACTED] would take some of us into or come into the garage when we were there and touch our privates. This happened to me a couple of times when I was in the garage. He was abusing others in the home including a boy called [REDACTED]. Some years later I gave a statement to the police regarding [REDACTED].

Ovenstone Residential Home, Pittenweem, Fife 1973

26. After the court case involving Mr Christie I stayed at home until I was about eleven years old. I then stopped going to school again and was returned to Ovenstone. During this short spell, I was there for a few months and there was no abuse or any other issues, although HQY [REDACTED] was still working at the home. He did not come near me during this spell.

Reporting of abuse at Ovenstone Residential Home, Pittenweem, Fife

27. During the first time at Ovenstone there was no one I could report the abuse to as there were no visits from either Mr Cuthbert or any other social worker.
28. When I arrived at Ovenstone in 1969 there was a new head nurse, Mr Rolland. He stayed in the grounds with his wife, in one of the cottages. I got on really well with his wife and was allowed to visit at their home and sit in their garden during the summer. During one of my visits it must have been obvious how upset I was and she asked if there was something wrong. I told her about Mr Christie abusing me. Later that day Mr Rolland asked me to confirm what was happening and he reported it to the police.
29. The police must have spoken to some others at the home as the case ended up in Cupar Sheriff Court during the early 1970's. I would have been around nine or ten and along with some of the others we gave evidence at the trial. At the end of the trial he was sent to prison.

30. On the third occasion at Ovenstone in 1973 things at the home were so much better and I saw the Rolland's every day. They made attempts to adopt me but my parents would not consent to this and I was returned home.

Leaving Ovenstone

31. When I was at an age to go to secondary school I was returned home by Mr Cuthbert. My dad was looking after us for about six months, while my mother visited my sister in Australia. I then started at Viewforth Secondary School before again deciding I did not want to go.

Life after being in Ovenstone

32. For not attending Viewforth Secondary I went to lots of children's panels and they eventually sent me to Balgowan, in Dunfield, Dundee. I was about twelve years old and spent nearly a year there. When I was there for a settled period I was allowed to visit my parents at home for the weekends. I enjoyed my time there and was friendly with the gardener there who helped me to sow and grow things from seed in the greenhouses. I don't remember his name but there was no abuse there. When you were trusted you were allowed to walk into town to go to the shops.
33. When I was thirteen I did run away from Balgowan along with a boy from Glasgow. We had not done anything wrong and just decided we wanted away for a while and I cycled from Dundee to Kirkcaldy. If the police came to look for me at my house I would climb out the window. If I was playing outside with my pals I would outrun the police. I was away for a while before the police caught me. I was told by the headmaster that I was the first boy who ran away and did not get into trouble while being away. I appeared at a children's hearing and I was sent to a secure unit in Edinburgh.

34. I was at the secure unit for about six months. I had to stay there until a place could be found for me. I did not like staying there because there was a lot of violence. There was a lot of bullying, mainly because I was from Fife. If there was a fight, the staff would be violent as they piled in. I never got on with them. They were violent towards the people they were looking after. If I could have ran away from there I would have, but all the doors were locked so I could not find a way out.

Kerelaw House, Stevenson, Ayrshire

35. After Edinburgh I was sent to Kerelaw House in Stevenson, Ayrshire. This was my last involvement with my social worker, Mr Cuthbert. He along with the police transported me there. When they left I was taken to a room and I thought it was a cell. I ran out the building but was caught. I thought I was being put in a punishment room for no reason. I was then shown to the block where I was to stay along with about fifteen others. Initially I shared a room with three others until I was about fourteen years old when I got a room to myself.
36. I did get in bother there sometimes, usually for fighting. As a punishment, we were put in the cells for a few hours, but never overnight. Once we were calmed down, we shook hands with the person we were fighting with, and we were returned to our dormitory. Overall my time there was good and I was not abused.
37. When I had been there for a number of months I was allowed home at the weekends. That was quite a trek as I was taken by minibus to Glasgow Central train station, then I walked to Queen Street station to make my way to Edinburgh and on to Kirkcaldy.
38. There was a young member of staff there called Myra Taylor who was really good. Her parents stayed in Irvine and sometimes if she was visiting her mum and dad she would take me with her. Another member of staff I remember was Mr Nash who was the PTI. He stayed in the grounds and was a nice guy.

39. I did fail to return from weekend leave and got into some trouble with some boys from Kirkcaldy. I was still fourteen and ended up in court and sent to Longriggend, where I was placed in the school boy unit there.
40. Around the time I was fifteen I was sent back to court and sentenced to two years in a Young Offenders institution. I thought I was to be sent back to Kerelaw but I ended up being transferred to Saughton prison. As I was under sixteen I did not qualify for any remission. I was treated the same as the adults and worked in the hairdressers and cut the hair of some of other prisoners. I was in Pentland Hall and locked up from five o'clock until the following morning.
41. I was in the prison for about a year when I happened to be watching television one day and saw on the news they were trying to identify a man from the Kirkcaldy area. The man had been found with a head injury. I recognised him, it was my dad. My brothers came to the prison and told me he had fallen from a wall and days later he died from his injuries. I was not allowed to see him in the hospital but I was escorted to the funeral by two prison officers.
42. When the new young person's unit was built at Glenochil I was transferred there. I remained at Glenochil until [REDACTED] 1978 when I was released from custody. I was promised help when I got released but it never happened.

Impact

43. I had been out on licence and working at Wetherspoons. I went to the bank and found money had been taken out of my account. I tried to report it to staff. They told me I was to come back on the Monday but that was no good to me and left my phone number with them. A few days later I was picked up by the police and sent back to prison on a recall for a breach of the peace I never committed. I had to stay in for four and a half years, the remainder of my sentence.

44. I appeared in front of parole boards each year and despite being a model prisoner. I was kept in custody until the full sentence was completed
45. A few weeks before my release date from Glenochil prison in [REDACTED] 2014 two CID officers from Kirkcaldy called to see me as they were investigating abuse. They were making enquiries into complaints made by [REDACTED] and I provided a statement to them. This brought all the memories flooding back and I ended up having a heart attack and had two stents inserted. I was in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary for eight days before returning to Glenochil.
46. I have been in trouble most of my adult life. In my opinion, I was fighting back against the abuse I received. When I was in Perth prison I was introduced by one of my pals to heroin. It was good because it only lasted three days in your system and you knew when you were being tested so it was easy to fool the test. I have been clean for twelve years now.
47. My mental health has been greatly affected by all this and with my time in prison. I have spent almost thirty five years of my adult life in custody. I know if I was never abused I would not have turned out to be the person I am now. The abuse completely destroyed my life. It is hard to explain my life in crime but it is like I needed to get some sort of revenge. There was no one there to see what was happening to me and no one to listen to me when I was being abused.
48. I have been out of prison for the last three years and have no intention of returning there. I cannot get any work because of health issues and my prison record. I do not leave my house except to see my sister and brother in law. They pick me up from my house every day and take me to their home, where I have my tea with them. They take me back in the early evening and I am back in my room. Each day I have suicidal thoughts but my sister is trying to help me through this. If it wasn't for her I would have killed myself by now. I hate being me.
49. I still get flashbacks regularly and have discussed this with my doctor but he does not seem to understand and is not much help to me. I take lots of medication for my

sciatica, arthritis, gout and aggressive degenerating back issues. For a short time I was on Amitriptyline but it was not good for my heart and am no longer allowed this. I have tried other anti-depressants without success.

50. While I was in prison everything was done for you and provided for you. If you wanted to earn some extra cash you could work, but this was not compulsory. Since coming out of prison the real world has changed so much. I don't even know how to work the Internet.
51. I was twenty one when I got married and I have three daughters, two sons and nine grandchildren. When I was married I was really happy but my wife divorced me when I was sent to prison for my last sentence of ten and a half years. I have not seen my kids or grandchildren for many years.
52. I have absolutely no trust for anyone in authority. Those people have done nothing but tell me lies and abuse me throughout my life.

Records

53. I am seeing a lawyer who is trying to obtain compensation for the time I was abused in care. We have tried to get access to my records but both Fife Council and the social work have been difficult to get anything from them. They are not even handing anything to my lawyer. I told them I was looking for the dates I spent in Ovenstone and their answer for not supplying the information is because I do not have any photographic identification. I took my driving licence to them and was eventually supplied some papers but they were so heavily redacted they were not of any use as it does not show the dates I was there. The only thing not redacted was Christie's signature and the date he signed the reports.
54. I have tried to get information from Cupar Sheriff Court but have been told records are only kept for twenty years at Cupar and Edinburgh and they are no longer available. I just want closure and an apology for the abuse I received. The abuse has

destroyed my life. None of the rest of my family got into any trouble or sent to prison. All this because I did not go to school.

Lessons to be Learned

55. I hope by telling my story stops anything like this happening to any other kids and to stop those kids lives being completely ruined like mine. The authorities just don't seem to care.

Other information

56. I have not had any counselling for my time in care. I have an appointment with Future Pathways and am hoping they can give me some help.
57. 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..

HQX

Dated.....

03.05.2018