

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

### Witness Statement of

PDW

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PDW. My date of birth is 1948. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I am giving evidence to the Inquiry on behalf of the experiences of my deceased son, KP. KP was born on 1974. He stayed with my wife and I along with my daughter, who is the eldest, is next and is my youngest son. We stayed in the Kirkcaldy area and there were no issues that we saw while we brought our family up.
3. When KP was about three years old he was involved in a car accident along with one of his friends. His friend suffered serious injuries and although KP was assessed as less serious he was found to have a shadow on his brain as a result.
4. The first school KP went to was Pathhead Primary School in Kirkcaldy. He was a bit later starting at school and was about five and a half when he started. When he was at the school, he was taught by Miss, and bored he would kick out at the furniture within the classroom. He was often taken or even had to be carried out of the class room, if he was still kicking off. They sat him at a desk or chair in the hallway and his shoes were removed. He wasn't kicking a teacher or anything just the furniture. He would be made to sit like that as a form of punishment. Eventually this behaviour led to him being expelled from the school, but the school didn't send us a letter to let us know or what had been happening as it happened.

5. It was around this time, when [KPV] was about six years old, that we had the first involvement with the social work department. We were allocated to Mrs Jack at Kirkcaldy social work office. Through this interaction [KPV] was referred to Swan Road Unit in Kirkcaldy two days a week. This was supposed to be for an assessment to be carried out to see what could be done for [KPV]. There was no involvement with the social work for my other children, only [KPV].

### **Playfield House, Stratheden Hospital**

6. Through Mrs Jack and the medical authorities, [REDACTED] and I were asked to sign forms. We were told that this was only to allow for the authorities to have control of his medical needs. It was not until many years later we were told by a lawyer, we were actually giving the social work parental control over [KPV]. There was never any appearance at any Children's Panel or anything similar.
7. We did go and visit the place before [KPV] moved in. When we went to look at the home we found it also housed new mothers who were having problems with their children.
8. [KPV] then spent the next six weeks in the care of Playfield House, Cupar. During his stay there we tried to visit him and when we saw him he always seemed to be unhappy about staying there.
9. We found out that during his stay in the unit he was periodically taken to the Victoria Royal Hospital in Kirkcaldy and was given a series of electric shock treatments. We were never told this was to be part of his medical needs nor did we ever give permission for this to be done. We were never told why he needed this treatment.
10. My sister [REDACTED] and I sometimes visited [KPV] at Playfield House. On one of our visits he told us that the staff had put him in a large bath. The staff told him this was a bath

that was used for therapeutic reasons. He did not go into any other detail what happened in the bath.

11. When he was in the home they prescribed him with Ospolot which just kept him subdued all the time. When he came home for the weekend we would stop his tablets so he could at least communicate with us and try to let him have some freedom.
12. We made a point of trying to visit [KPV] whilst he was in Playfield House. When we went there we could only spend about an hour as we had the other kids to get home for. At the home, the staff never gave us any updates on how [KPV] was progressing. When we spoke to [KPV] he never spoke about his time there, but there did not seem to be any abuse there, other than the visits to the hospital.

#### **Ovenstone Residential School, Pittenweem, Fife**

13. After his six weeks at Playfield House [KPV] was transferred to Ovenstone Residential School in Pittenweem, Fife. He would have been still six or maybe even seven when he went there. This was supposed to be for about six months but it ended up being four years. He was at the school Monday to Friday and be home with us at the weekend.
14. Ovenstone was a large yellow coloured mansion, which may have originally been part of a large private estate. The school was run by Fife Education authority before being taken over by Fife Council
15. There were only a few members of staff that I can remember [KPV] talking about. There was Mr. [LUS], who was [SNR] of the school. The other staff he named was the handyman/minibus driver. [KPV] says all the kids had to call him "Uncle Roger".
16. The last one of the staff we knew by name was [LUR], who was a teacher there. He used to be a teacher at [ ] unit, before he transferred to Ovenstone. He

seemed to have spent a career working with vulnerable children and was also involved in coaching children with [REDACTED]. I believe he was taken to court last year for serious offences involving some of those children. Part of the letter said if he was in the company of anyone under the age of sixteen he was to tell them and any adult present, the nature of the charges he was facing. I knew LUR from school as we were there at the same time. I also played football with him at the Boys' Brigade. His children were in the same classes as my oldest two.

17. I remember some of the other kids who were in Ovenstone at the same time as KPV. They were [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and another girl, I am not sure of her name. She started a [REDACTED] where she was trying to make people aware of the abuse that was going on within the school. She says she will not be giving up her efforts to tell everyone about the things she and others suffered. I am not sure how many boys and girls were in Ovenstone. The only ones we really saw were the kids that shared the minibus to and from the home.

#### **Routine at Ovenstone Residential School, Pittenweem, Fife**

18. KPV told us he slept in a dormitory during his time in Ovenstone. He told us there were times when he was moved to a separate room, but I can't remember why he was being moved there. Also in the dormitory at that time were [REDACTED], [REDACTED] And [REDACTED].

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

19. Food was never really discussed with KPV but he always ate what was put in front of him. He was a good eater and was never hungry when he came home at weekends.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

20. I do not remember there being a school uniform at Ovenstone. We did have to supply four sets of clothing for him. Although they did not provide any clothing they did have



arrangements in place for laundry. Although there was no sports day he must have been doing some gym classes as we also had to buy black gym shoes for him.

#### *Leisure time*

21. KPV did tell us that there were trips outside, one of which they went to an army training camp, which he really liked. He was also taken to the local swimming baths for lessons.

#### *School*

22. I am not sure of any of the other members of staff at the school other than Mr zLUS Mr LUR and Roger. There were never any parents nights that you would expect if he was at the local school. We never received any report cards or photographs of his time in the school. At the weekend he was never sent home with any books to do any homework. He must have been doing alright at the school because he did quite well when he left Ovenstone and went to Viewforth High School in Kirkcaldy. This was the same high school that his older sister and brother were attending.

#### *Healthcare*

23. One of the issues KPV suffered from during his stay was he was always getting large abscesses on his legs and arms. He told me that the doctor at Ovenstone used a needle to burst the abscesses. KPV's gran always said they were a result of him being stressed.
24. When KPV was around eight or maybe nine years old he began self-harming while he was at the school. The school had [REDACTED]. When Roger dropped him off on the Friday he left him at the front garden gate. Normally they brought him right to the front door. I tried to find out what had been happening but Roger would not tell me anything and immediately made his way back to the minibus.

25. On the Monday morning when Roger and another young teacher, I don't know his name, came to pick KPV up I told them I was keeping him at our house. I kept him out of the school for the rest of the week. We were visited by the social work department and threatened that if we did not allow him to back to Ovenstone they would apply for a custody order and keep parental control of KPV until he reached the age of sixteen. We had to relent and allow him to go back.
26. Each Monday morning when Roger came to pick him up, KPV would play with his toy tractor in the back garden. Other times he would be crying saying he did not want them to take him back to the school. He was trying anything to avoid going back to the school.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

27. Although he was home with us for Christmas itself there was never any party provided by Ovenstone and no presents handed out to kids. This is different from Playfield where they did make an effort.

#### *Visits/Inspections*

28. When KPV was staying at Ovenstone he was allocated a young male social worker, but I cannot remember his name. He was supposed to visit there and check up on KPV and some others under his care.
29. We tried several times to get the social work department to get help for KPV, but they never did help. Sometimes they did go to the school to check how the kids were getting on. The problem was KPV and the other children could not say anything because the teacher he was having issues with was always there. I was told by [REDACTED], a friend of KPV, that the kids were not allowed to see the social workers on their own.

#### *Family contact*

30. One time when KPV was being dropped off by Roger there were some toys on the steps of the house. Roger thought they belonged to KPV and was shouting at him to pick them up. We tried to explain they were his brother's, and he was playing with them. Roger never apologised to KPV for shouting at him. I heard the shouting and went to confront Roger but he ran back to the minibus.
31. The school were very reluctant to have us visiting at the home. There was one time I was having to see SNR at the school as he had hit KPV with a sand shoe on the bare backside. I tried to speak with Mr zLUS about it. He was not available at that time but he was telling KPV to tell me to buy a set of boxing gloves. I went to the school and told him he did not need a boxing ring and if he came out of the school we could sort it out. He threatened to get the police onto me.
32. I remember one bonfire night we were at the school. There was only my wife and I standing with KPV as the fireworks were on. None of the other parents or teachers spoke with us. If I remember correctly the way we found out about it was a letter was sent with KPV when he was on home leave the previous week.

#### **Abuse at Ovenstone Residential School, Pittenweem, Fife**

33. One of the worst things KPV told us about his time in Ovenstone involved Mr LUR. He described how Mr LUR had sent him to his bed early one night. LUR went to the room, where KPV was alone, and used a pool cue to hit him on his legs. As though that was not enough he then pushed the end of the pool cue into his back passage. We did not find out about this until he was an adult.
34. Another punishment LUR used was when he was in the classroom. If KPV or any of the boys had been upsetting him for whatever reason he would grab him by the back of the head and bounce his head off the desk. As well as this there were times when he would have the kids place their hands on the open desk and slam the lid down onto their hands.



35. There was another method of abuse where Mr LUR would poke his finger into KPV's forehead making him bend his neck and head back. LUR was making him look him in the eye and he would then shout at KPV at the top of his voice.

#### **Reporting of abuse at Ovenstone Residential School, Pittenweem, Fife**

36. At the time KPV was at Ovenstone there was no reports made to anyone as the abuse involved SNR a teacher and another member of staff and there was no one we felt could help.

#### **Leaving Ovenstone Residential School, Pittenweem, Fife**

37. My sister, , had been speaking to her cousin , who worked within the Education department and he was able to access the records for KPV. He asked me to see him at his office at Fife Council Headquarters. He told me he had read over the records and that in his opinion there was no reason for KPV to have been placed in Ovenstone and there was certainly no reason for him to be there for four years. It was shortly after him having told me this that KPV was allowed out of Ovenstone.
38. I am not sure and there is a bit of confusion in my memory but KPV had to go to Children's Unit at . I think there was a possibility that this was to help him get accustomed to leaving the residential school and for him attending mainstream secondary school, but it may have been between Playfield and Ovenstone, I just can't be certain, but seems to remember when she was picking KPV up from she saw Mr LUR shouting at KPV and some of the other kids.
39. I have not been able to get hold of any records to confirm this. After Ovenstone he attended Viewforth High School in Kirkcaldy.



40. When he did leave Ovenstone there was no other contact with the social work department. We did not have to sign any forms. He did tell his pals that he was glad to be out of that place and back home again.

### **Life after being in care**

41. After finishing Ovenstone and later Viewforth High School, Kirkcaldy, KPV had anger issues and he could not accept any authority figures. This led onto him being in trouble with the police and the courts.
42. After leaving school he got a job on a Youth Training Scheme with Fife Council. It was supposed to be as an apprentice brick layer but in reality it was as a labourer. There was a day when he got his t-shirt caught in a cement mixer. It was wrapped around his neck and someone had to switch it off. He had a sore mark left after that happened.
43. He tried to join the army and got as far as being accepted on a three month training programme. While he was there he was getting into trouble and during some of the leisure time he was hit by a baseball bat and broke his shoulder. When he was checked fully by the army they discovered his injury he sustained to his head as a child. This was an ideal reason for them to say they would not be accepting him and there would be no claim against them.
44. He did manage to get plenty of jobs that were for short term employment, seasonable jobs like Christmas for example. He did plenty jobs like this but was always losing them as he got himself into trouble.
45. When KPV was around twenty eight years old, about 2002, he saw Mr LUR at the shops. When he came home he was crying and really upset and this was the very first time he told us about some of the abuse he suffered at Ovenstone, including the incident with the pool cue and the things that were happening in the classroom. As much as he told us some of the things he did not tell me everything. It was too difficult

telling me, his dad, about all the incidents. He did tell his friend [REDACTED] a lot more, but I never found out what this involved.

46. KPV [REDACTED] always said that the first time he was sent to Polmont it was not him that was involved. He never denied any of the other things to us but always denied that first time. From his many times in jail and with the trouble he was in while not working he got involved in taking drugs and became addicted. To try and keep him straight they managed to get him on a rehabilitation programme, but when he failed to turn up he was again sent to prison.
47. Later in life as an adult KPV [REDACTED] served custodial sentences many times in prison. On one of those occasions he met up with [REDACTED], who had been in Ovenstone with him. [REDACTED] disclosed to KPV [REDACTED] that he too suffered abuse from the staff there. Unfortunately KPV [REDACTED] did not say what the abuse was that [REDACTED] suffered.
48. He did have a relationship with a girl called [REDACTED] and they had two children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Their relationship was one where they were together one day and the next they were apart. This went on for a long time.
49. KPV [REDACTED]'s son [REDACTED] ended up with a minor head injury and the social work department became involved. [REDACTED]'s grandmother took over the care of the two children, but with her age, eventually she could not cope with the both of them. [REDACTED] came to stay with us and we are still bringing him up. About two months ago [REDACTED] came to live with us. She had been staying with her great grandmother but when she passed away she stayed for a while with an auntie and then with us.
50. KPV [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] 2016 in Kirkcaldy. Even before he died he was cutting back on the amount of drugs he was using, but turning more to alcohol. [REDACTED] passed away in 2016 from sepsis about two months after KPV [REDACTED].

## Impact

51. I am sure that if it had not been for his time in care and building up resentment to authority figures he would have been a much different person. He always preferred his own company and I think being in care away from his brothers and sister meant he missed out on building up relationships and this carried on into his adult life. Even when his wife and him split he wanted to stay in the house on his own.
52. It hurts my wife and I that maybe we should have done more to get KPV out of care, but we could not fight the social workers. We think about that most days. They kept threatening to get the police involved and threatening to keep him under their control until he was sixteen. Nowadays we would have been given a lot better support from the social work if KPV was at the schools of today.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

53. KPV did try and report the abuse to the local police station but because of the relationship he had with them, they just told him to leave their office. Around 2004 he tried to report it through his lawyer Dewar and Spence. Their answer to him was there was no claim to be had as they were under the impression we had placed him into care, which was not correct. During that time he was trying get custody of the children but he was told by his new lawyers could not get legal aid for him as he had an ongoing case through Dewar and Spence.
54. I came to give KPV's story to the Inquiry and as a result my details were passed to the police. Officers from the CID came to our house and noted statements about his time in Ovenstone. They were very good and understanding when they came to the house. They must have visited others at the school at that time. This led onto a case being prepared by the Procurator Fiscal's Office. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019 we received a letter updating us. In the letter it explained that Mr LUR had appeared at court on charges involving serious violent offences. It also listed bail conditions where he was barred from contact with anyone under the age of sixteen and with anyone on the sex offenders register. My understanding is the case is still ongoing.



## Records

55. I have tried to get hold of some of the records but have been told by the social work that as some people within the records are still alive I would not be able to get hold of them. I have been told that the Fife Education Authority destroys their records five years after a person leaves.

## Lessons to be Learned

56. I think we would have been better informed by a modern school than when KPV was at his school, especially when he was getting into trouble with teachers.

## Other information

57. I hope by coming to the Inquiry that what happened to KPV does not happen to anyone else and hope it might help others who have come forward. I would also like the Inquiry to be able to stop LUR from being involved with children.
58. KPV's son has received lots of help from child psychologists, but has not had any assistance. She was around with her mother just before she died. keeps saying she does not need any help but we think she would benefit from some help.
59. 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..... PDW

Dated..... 20/02/20