

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGY [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PGY [REDACTED]. My surname was PGY [REDACTED] when I was a child. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1960. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum's name was [REDACTED] and my dad's name was [REDACTED]. I had older siblings, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who is a year older than me. My brother, [REDACTED] was born after I went into the hospital but he's no longer alive. I have a younger sister, [REDACTED], but she was born later, after we moved to Langlees. My grandparents lived with us as well. We lived at [REDACTED] in Camelon.
3. I don't remember much about my life before going into care. One of the only things I remember is being frightened of dogs. I would scream if I saw a dog. I can't remember much else. My mother was out working to make ends meet and look after the family. She would leave my grandparents to look after me. My records state that I was in a cot for eight hours a day. I was in a closed room without daylight. It was classed as neglect at the time.
4. The doctor and social worker advised my parents to put me in care for my well-being. I had a slight learning disability and something wrong with my bones. My records indicated that there were physical and mental health difficulties that needed to be dealt with. I was the only sibling that went into the hospital. I find it difficult to understand that.

Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert

5. I don't really remember arriving at the hospital. As I grew up, I realised where I was and that I was getting help. At the entrance to the hospital, you went through blue gates and there was a big old fashioned building. The doctors and psychiatrists were based there. There was then another building with boys staying in it. There was a separate building for old women and a workshop down from that for the women to work in. There was a café down from the Park building and a workshop for men to work in, doing joinery and building dolls houses. Past the women's workshop was a school for older children that I called the high school. Across from that was a big storage room where they kept things like clothing. There was a primary school on the grounds. It was a big complex.

6. When I first went there, I was in a villa within the grounds. There were four big, long villas close together. I can't remember how many beds were in the bedroom as I was only a wee bairn at the time. We used to get moved into the villas again when others were on holiday, so the nurses could give our ward a detailed clean. I stayed there for a couple of weeks. There was a small living room, a dining room and big wards with a lot of beds in them.

7. I went into the Park building when I was older. I spent most of my time at the hospital in there. There were about 25 children in Park, all girls. I think they were aged seven upwards. My bedroom was upstairs. There were four big bedrooms and one single room. There were four or five beds in my bedroom. My bed was in the far away corner. My friend [REDACTED]'s room was on the left hand side and across the corridor from my room. There were five or six beds in her room. There was a long corridor outside my bedroom and toilets at the end of that with hand basins. There were also two or three baths in one room.

8. Downstairs in Park, the rooms were changed about a bit. There was a nurses' reception, but that got changed into a living room. There was also a play area, but previously that had been a bedroom. There were toilets, a cloakroom, a dining room

with a small kitchen off it, a pantry for mops and things and a living room or bedroom.

Routine at the Royal Scottish National Hospital

Mornings and bedtime

9. The nurses got us up in the morning. They would get us to brush our teeth, give ourselves a wash and put our clothes on. We would get ready for breakfast. After breakfast, some of us went to do duties. I would go upstairs and help make the beds or tidy up. After that, we'd go to the cloakroom and put our shoes and jackets on. One of the nurses would take us to school.
10. Bedtime was between eight and nine o'clock. The nurses would tell us when it was time to go to bed. I always tried to stay up a bit later to help the nurses. I always wanted to help people.

Food

11. We were fed really well. There were people working in the big kitchens in the main building. The food was brought over in large metal containers. There was a smaller kitchen in my house, but I think that was just for teas and coffees and things like that. We had breakfast between 7.30 and 8 o'clock. We got a good breakfast. We had cereal, a fry up and bread or toast with juice or tea. At lunch time we would maybe get soup, mince and tatties and a pudding. At tea time, we would have chips and pudding or cakes. We got a cookie and a glass of milk for supper before bed.

Washing

12. On a Sunday night, we would go in a big room for a bath. We all had to take our clothes off and get stripped. Two or three nurses would bath us, then we had to get our dressing gown or pyjamas on. We had to stand naked, waiting for the bath. That

happened up until I left at the age of twelve. Even at that age, the nurses would wash me with a sponge. If you were one of the last ones to go in the bath, you could be waiting for a while. When I was older, I wondered why we had to strip for our baths at the same time. I didn't know anything different at the time.

School

13. I went to the primary school on the grounds. I liked singing, poetry and making things. I think the teachers came in from outside the hospital. They were good. I think all the children came from within the hospital. I remember learning a song about a little red bus and a little red mini when I was five or six. I can still remember the tune. I was in a villa at the time. I remember being taken to watch Playschool. We would get a bit of buttered roll whilst we watched it. It was good.
14. I went to another school when I was older. I wasn't there for long before I left to go Dawson Park School. School was alright until I got separated from my pal, [REDACTED].

Work

15. The nurses would allocate the chores each day. Some of the time, I was willing to do it. I didn't know anything different. In the morning, we would strip the beds if they were wet. We would change the top cover if it was necessary. I remember making the beds and having a carry on with [REDACTED]. One of the domestics shouted at us, "You're not paid to carry on, you're paid to clean". We would clean after lunch before going back to school. We would brush, mop, clean the toilets. After that, it was nearly time to go back to school.
16. When we got back from school, we had to tidy up again. We had to scrub the toilets, wash the dining room floor and scrub the stairs. I can picture the stairs all the time. They were red and white. I was often on my hands and knees, scrubbing the stairs. I remember scrubbing 25 pairs of white socks until my hands blistered. Now I realise that they could have been washed at the laundry, but I didn't realise it at the time.

17. One day, I left a bed wet because I couldn't be bothered making it. I was made to strip it and re-make it. When I got older, I wondered what the domestics were doing whilst we were cleaning. They must have been sitting having tea and coffee. If we did the chores, we got 25p a week. If we didn't, we got 10p. On a Saturday morning, I would go to the shop on the grounds with my money and buy sweeties and juice.

Staff

18. The staff were sisters, nurses and domestics. There was a more senior nurse called a matron. The nurses wore blue overalls with a white bib that tied at the back. They wore a black belt and a watch and badge. They wore hats. The sisters used to wear a darker colour. They would work in shifts, so there were a lot of them. Some of the patients needed round the clock care. I can't remember any male nurses working in my house. The doctor would come back and forth if you needed to be seen.
19. Every morning, I used to ask some of the nurses who was going to be working that day. If it was somebody I liked I'd be happy, but I used to dread some of them. I got on well with some of the nurses. I used to talk to them. One of them gave me gold slippers with flowers on them. Another gave me blue, white and pink pants with white elastic round them.

Leisure time

20. We played in the play room. There were toys there and books to read. We could draw or colour in or do jigsaws. There was plenty to do. In the summer, we would go out to play. I played on bikes and scooters. I was always falling off the scooter and skinning my knees.
21. After we'd done our duties on a Saturday morning, we used to go to the big gym hall at the primary school. We could play on the ropes or jump on the horse. Ladies would come in from outside the hospital and supervise us at the gym. On a Tuesday night, we went to the pictures in the concert hall on the grounds. We did our school nativity there and I played Mary.

Personal possessions

22. When we got new beds, they were attached to a wardrobe with a set of drawers. They were nice. They didn't look so much like hospital beds. I would keep my belongings in the unit. I had a walkie-talkie doll, my radio and my red bag.
23. I got a brown and white dog as a present from one of the nurses. It was for putting my pyjamas or gown in . When I left, one of the other nurses told me I couldn't keep it. I said it was mine but she said I was going home to stay and that I needed to leave it.

Holidays

24. They would take us on holiday once a year. The nurses took us. We took turns, because they could only take so many children at a time. We went in a coach. I'm not sure where it was, but it was near the seaside. We stayed in a big villa. I loved it. We had two dormitories and a big long living room. We went to the beach and went round the shops and bought toys. I remember I chased a wasp and got stung. The meals were good. I remember asking for HP sauce because I didn't like tomato sauce. I remember we got a bag of sweets. My friend asked if that was all we were getting. I crushed up my bag and threw it away. I was in a bad mood that day for some reason.

Birthdays, Christmas and Easter

25. On our birthdays, we got a cake and everybody would sing happy birthday. We would get something as a present, like a bar of chocolate. There were Christmas decorations and a Christmas tree. We got presents, just like a child should have. Sometimes I got to go home at Christmas time. On Easter Sunday, we would get a nice Easter egg. It would be sitting on the table when you came down for breakfast.

Visits/Inspections

26. My mum had to ask for permission to come and see me. She had to write a letter to request a visit. I don't understand why she had to ask for permission to see her own child. It felt like I wasn't her daughter any more. She came every couple of weeks on a Saturday. Sometimes, she would come on her own and sometimes she came with one of my sisters. She would buy me Maltesers because that was my favourite chocolate at the time. We would walk around the building and go for a cuppa and a chat. Sometimes, my mum would take me out for the weekend or the whole week. I would go out and play with friends I'd made at home. I used to love getting a bit of freedom.
27. I also got visits from Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], who were my mum's friends. I don't remember any social workers coming to visit. I only remember being under a social worker when I left the hospital. Nobody else came to ask how I was getting on.

Abuse at the Royal Scottish National Hospital

28. When I was ten or eleven, my friend, [REDACTED], was separated from me. I used to have a lot of good times with her. We used to help each other. My mother's friends, Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], used to take us out at the weekends. I later learned that Mr [REDACTED] sexually assaulted [REDACTED]. She didn't tell me about it. Her father told the hospital that she should have nothing to do with me. I didn't know why. I wasn't allowed to play with her at school, even though we were in the same class. I was being punished even though I had done nothing wrong. She was asked to give me back my transistor radio. I just smashed it up in anger. She gave me back my red handbag and I ripped that to bits as well. I started having tantrums. I would lie on the floor and kick my feet.
29. I was still allowed to go out with the [REDACTED] family when I was in the hospital. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] would come and visit me. We used to go and feed a donkey and he bought me a blue and white coat. When I got home, my mother told us not to go

round to see them, but she didn't tell us why. We did what we wanted. Not long after I had returned home, Mr [REDACTED] abused my sister, [REDACTED], as well.

30. There was a handyman at the hospital. He looked quite old to me. He was maybe in his thirties or forties. He wore brown overalls and a tartan flat cap. I remember being up the stairs in the Park when nobody else was around. He touched me down below. He got me to put my hand in his pocket, which went through to his private parts. He said, "Mind that was your toy when you were a wee kid. That's what you used to play with. It's our wee secret, you don't tell anybody. I've done it to other lassies on the other wards." He told me he'd touched me when I first came in and was in the villas. I remember on one occasion he was touching me down below when I was standing at a window. It happened until I left.
31. One night, when I was about ten, I wet the bed. The night nurse came in and felt my bed. I don't know her name. I was lying in my bed sleeping, facing the wall. She walloped me with a high heeled shoe on my right buttock. She used the heel. I was screaming because of the pain. She said in an angry voice that it was for wetting the bed and that I shouldn't be wetting the bed. When she left the room, I lifted something and flung it off the wall in anger. I couldn't sit properly at breakfast the next day because it was really sore. Somebody must've seen the black and blue mark on my bottom.
32. There was a domestic called Mrs PXE [REDACTED]. Every time I got something new, she would take it off me. She used to be jealous. I remember I got a new pair of slippers because my old ones had a hole in the toe. She took the new ones off me and got the old ones out of the bucket, saying there was nothing wrong with them.
33. I remember a girl came out and hit me from underneath a table. I hit her back so I was sent to my bed as a punishment. She was stuck under a table for the full day. The nurses twisted her arm up behind her back and put her under there. They sat on chairs blocking her, with their backs to her. She only got out to go for her meals or to the toilet. Every time I was in her villa, she was under the table. I was afraid of other

patients because I got hit by them. Some of them were really strong. I started hating the hospital and I just wanted home for good.

34. I remember going to the disco on a Thursday night. I used to play with a boy sometimes. He gave me a wee car or train. He gave me a peck on the cheek and I gave him one back. As a punishment, the toy was taken off me and I missed a week of going to the disco.

Reporting of abuse

35. I used to come home crying to my mum. I told her that other patients were hitting me. I was afraid of what the handyman might do to me if I told anybody he was abusing me. I didn't know who to turn to. I was only a child and he was an adult, so he could do more harm to me than I could do to him. After I'd left the hospital, I told my mum months down the line that this man had been touching me. I only told her recently about being hit with the shoe and about the domestic. My mum apologised and said she should have done something about it at the time. She didn't know who to turn to.
36. I reported the abuse at the hospital to the police. I made a statement about four years ago. I told them about the handyman, the nurse who assaulted me and the cleaner. I wanted somebody to listen to me in case it happened to another child. They went into a lot of detail. It made me feel like they were challenging me when they should have been challenging the abusers. When they got back to me, they said they couldn't find anything and that the case was closed unless further information came to light.

Leaving the Royal Scottish National Hospital

37. Before I left the hospital, they tried to settle me in at [REDACTED] School, to see how I'd get on. [REDACTED] School was in Falkirk. It was for children with disabilities or children who needed additional educational support. One of the nurses

then told me I might get home for good. My mum had got a new house. She came to pick me up. I went home to my parents and my brothers and sisters.

Life after leaving care

38. One day, about a year after leaving the hospital, I got home from school. My dad told me to go and get changed. He came into the room and asked if he could talk to me. I thought he was just going to talk about school. He said, "Do you know what a penis is?" I said, "No, I don't want to know either." I saw him going for his zip. I bolted for the toilet and locked the door. I don't usually lock the door because I feel trapped. I told my mum but nothing was done. I think she was worried that everybody would take it out on her. She's had it really tough.
39. My dad was an alcoholic. He wasn't always nice to my mother. I remember him shouting at me, "Get her back to Bellsdyke." Bellsdyke was another name for the RSNH. I started crying because I thought he meant it. I told my mum I didn't love him and I didn't want to speak to him. I never talked to him again until the day he died. I just kept out of his way.
40. I did alright at school. I used to like it. I used to dread what would happen when I got home when my dad was still there. He had jobs, but they never lasted long. He'd hit the drink. A female social worker would come and visit the house to see how I was progressing.
41. My mum worked hard to feed us, clothe us and make a nice home for us. When I was about thirteen, she decided to divorce my dad. I think it was because he tried to interfere with me. I came home from school one day and my dad had set fire to the house. It was a brand new house. I couldn't believe it. I thought I was seeing things. I was really upset.

42. The council moved us to a flat in Langlees while the house was rebuilt. I didn't see my dad again. I think he was jailed for what he had done to the house. My dad died when he was 47.
43. I left school when I was almost sixteen. I worked in a milk dairy, putting milk into bottles. I was there for nine months before we all got paid off. I worked in the foundry for fourteen years, then I worked with [REDACTED] for nineteen years as a sewing machinist. I worked as a carer for two years, then I went back to the sewing industry. I've been there for three years now.
44. I've been married for 28 years. I have two sons. They both have jobs. My mum is still alive. I don't like to put any burden on her. I tell her, "It's not your fault, mum. You thought I would be safe."

Impact

45. I blocked things out until I had my first child 23 years ago. After I had my first child, I got post natal depression. I was starting to lose it all. That's when the flashbacks started. I went to the doctor to ask for help. A social worker got involved. I told the social worker there was no way they were taking my child after what happened to me in care. I asked for help and support to get through it. My sons went to [REDACTED] nursery because I could become anxious and angry. It was a day care place for children at risk. It was for their protection and my protection.
46. The doctor gave me antidepressants. I was off and on tablets for years. They didn't help. If anything, they made me worse. I tried to take an overdose. I told my husband I didn't want to be here. I didn't know what the point was. I felt as if nobody was going to believe me, nobody was going to listen to me and nobody cared two hoots about me, as long as they got what they wanted. I was just a kid and I was just there to do as I was told.

47. My husband told me he knew I was hiding something. I'd been hiding what had happened in my past because I didn't want to dwell on it. He knew from how I was reacting and from my body language that something had happened. The abuse I suffered affects my sex life. One minute I'm alright and the next I just freeze up. I'm lucky I've got an understanding man.
48. I tried to ██████ myself when the kids were young. My oldest son was in the house at the time. He was nine or ten. He was crying, shouting for his dad to stop me. My husband was trying to get a hold of me to stop me. I didn't want to live any more. When I eventually told my husband what had happened to me in care, he didn't believe me at first.
49. I told the doctor that the tablets were just like a sticking plaster on a cut finger. When the tablets wore off, I still had the problem. They didn't solve anything. I didn't want tablets, I wanted help. He referred me to Open Secret in Falkirk for counselling. I had one to one counselling. They asked me to draw a picture of how I was feeling. I drew a black box, saying I wished I was dead and that I was a mistake. I still feel like I was the black sheep and I don't belong here. The counselling helped a bit. I then joined the in-care survivors in Stirling, still Open Secret. I did one to one sessions off and on as the years went in. Sometimes, I thought I could cope without counselling and then I'd have to go back.
50. When I stayed with my mum, I would get so angry I would smash things. I remember smashing up the shelves in my wardrobe. Nobody was listening to me otherwise, so it was the only way I could make them listen. I still feel angry. Sometimes I feel so angry inside me, I want to hit a wall until it falls. A couple of years ago, I was round at a friend's house and I punched a brick wall. I put a dent in it.
51. I think my anger stops people getting close to me. I get angry with people who care about me. I take it out on the wrong people. I don't have as many friends as I should have. I overreact if somebody comes at me. Sometimes, if you try to tell people about the abuse you can scare them. So I learned not to tell anybody. I still talk to

my mum. I know she's not to blame. She's had a hectic life as well. I think I would've been closer to my siblings if I hadn't been taken into care.

52. There are always reminders. I put the TV on, I put the radio on, somebody talks at work or I lift a paper and I find things that trigger me. I hear a voice in the background, telling me it's happened before and it will happen to me again. I get flashbacks and I feel like people are reminding me all the time. I had blue, pink and yellow pants on when I was touched by the handyman. I don't wear pants that are similar to them.
53. I've been working with Cath at Wellbeing Scotland for five years. She's based in Stirling. I attend group therapy sessions. I'm starting to feel a bit better and make plans. Maybe if I can get through this journey, I can get some closure.

Records

54. About four years ago, Cath helped me to get my records. I'm still going through them. Cath read my records to me. When she read the section about me having been neglected before I went into care, it brought tears to my eyes. It still haunts me. The doctor used the words "severely mentally retarded" in my records. I found that extremely insulting. I don't know if that was the type of language used at the time, but I took offence.

Hopes for the Inquiry

55. I think people working with children in care homes need to be checked regularly. They should be checked by the police before they go in. When they're in, they need to be checked as well. There must be a way to catch these people out. Things can happen behind closed doors.

56. I hope that a lot of other people realise what happened back then. I want things to improve. People should be safe and comfortable wherever they're being looked after. Young people, elderly people and vulnerable people should be protected. Nobody deserves to be treated like I was.
57. Living in silence wrecks lives. There should be more information about help that's available for people like me. If I hadn't had Cath and my husband to tell my story to, I don't think I'd be here today. I'd be in the gutter by now.

Other information

58. I don't know what I'd have been like if I hadn't been in the hospital. Maybe I wouldn't have had the nourishment or medication that I needed. I was put in the RSNH for my safety and well-being. I would have expected the people there to look after me and keep me away from harm. A lot of the people there were really good and they took care of me. They fed me, clothed me and did everything that I needed. It as a minority of people that did wrong. It shamed everybody else in a roundabout way.
59. I've pushed a lot of people away. I don't want to do that anymore. I've had enough of it all. I've let my abusers beat me for years. Not anymore. I want to live my life. I want to have the last laugh.
60. 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... PGY

Dated... 19/3/18