

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Graham Francis STEWART

Support person present: No

1. My name is Graham Francis Stewart. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I left school in 1979 and initially did an apprenticeship in car mechanics attaining a City in Guilds certificate but I decided that this career wasn't really for me. My mother, who had worked in hospitals, pointed me in the direction of nursing.
3. In 1982, I started my nursing career as a nursing assistant at Gogarburn Hospital. In February 1989, I was seconded to work with the Church of Scotland as a Grade B nursing assistant to start up a new service at Hawthornbrae in Duddingston Village, Edinburgh. Hawthornbrae was a new service providing residential care for ten adults coming out of Gogarburn. This was one of two new services. The other new service was Dunforth in Park Road in Newhaven, Edinburgh. In Hawthornbrae I was still employed by the health board but worked alongside the Church of Scotland. Hawthornbrae and Dunforth provided similar services.
4. In January 1991 I became a Church of Scotland employee under the board of social responsibility. I was initially a support worker, and later in 1991 became a senior care officer at Wolfson House in Milton Road East, Edinburgh. In 1993 I became the deputy manager at Wolfson House and in 1995 was promoted to acting manager until 1996. Wolfson house was a similar set up to Hawthornbrae and was also run by the Church

of Scotland. It was originally set up in the 1970s for people with epilepsy but the Church of Scotland took over that service around 1984 and again was mostly for adults from Gogarburn. Some service users moved from Wolfson House to both Dunforth and Hawthornbrae, but most came from Gogarburn. There were four service users living in Wolfson House.

5. In July 1996, I took up the post at Wedderburn House managing the day service. There were eight people who had been using the day service at Humble care home but when the Church of Scotland took over at Humble they came to Wedderburn House. I was to develop and lead this service, which included people who were getting housing support from us. In November 1997 I moved to lead the team in the house at 45 Morton Street, Edinburgh. This was the first house we had used and some of the service users moved into Morton Street from Wedderburn House.
6. I worked in Morton Street, supporting the unit manager Sheena McDonald, until June 2000 when I moved to Eskmills Business Park as the acting unit manager for the overall service. In 2005 I became the permanent service manager and in December 2015 took up the role of managing coordinator and took over all the services for people with learning disabilities in Edinburgh and East Lothian. I remain in that post today based in Milton Road East, Edinburgh. The actual office has moved to different locations in that time and is currently at the Gate Lodge at Milton Road East. This is within the grounds of Charis House, which is the CrossReach headquarters.

Qualifications

7. In 1995 I qualified in Health and Social care, Level 3, a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) and in 1997 I attained my Level 4 SVQ in Health and Social Care. I also have an SVQ assessors award which is called D32/D33. These courses were all internally assessed when I was employed by the Church of Scotland. In 1998 I attained a post graduate degree in Social Service Leadership.

Training

8. When I started at Gogarburn hospital in 1982, I had no experience or qualifications in working with people with disabilities. I was a nursing assistant which were called "Noddys". The state enrolled nurses and state registered nurses were the people who were in authority and had far more responsibility. I was trained throughout my time at Gogarburn and subsequently with the Church of Scotland. I did various mandatory training courses including health and safety, food hygiene, first aid, moving and handling, and dealing with challenging behaviour. I later went on courses on leadership, supervision and working with groups of people. Training was regular.

Hawthornbrae

9. When I started at Hawthornbrae in 1989 I had a two-week induction course along with all the other members of the team from Hawthornbrae and Dunforth. One week of the training was conducted by the health board and the other week by the training department within the Church of Scotland. Muriel Rainey was the training officer. She went on to become a manager at Humble.

Recruitment/Working for Church of Scotland

10. When I started working for the Church of Scotland in February 1989 this was an internal posting, and I was initially only seconded to them. I had been working in Ward 7 at Gogarburn at the time when I saw an internal memo looking for anyone who wanted to work with the Church of Scotland. There were no formal qualifications required for this post. A nursing assistant was not a highly skilled post. I think the in-service training I had received at Gogarburn was probably sufficient.
11. I had my reasons for applying for this secondment. I was a union rep at Gogarburn and I was aware there were a number of disputes and strikes. Morale was quite low and I also knew that service users at Gogarburn were starting to get moved into the

community. I realised that hospitals like Gogarburn were becoming out of date because it was recognised that people should be able to live a more ordinary life. I wanted to be part of that, in terms of my career, working with them in the community. I contacted Christine Alexander, the area manager for the Church of Scotland, expressed my interest and completed an application for the secondment.

12. I was interviewed by Pauline Kemp and David Kellock at Hawthornbrae in Duddingston Village. I think at the interviews, both for Gogarburn and for the secondment to Hawthornbrae, the questions were based around my experience and why I wanted to work there. There would probably have also been questions about my values.
13. I provided references to the Church of Scotland in the application process. I remember one had to be a parish priest because I had to show I had a live church connection. My second referee was probably the charge nurse in ward 7 at Gogarburn, Rab Aitken. If it wasn't him it could have been Danny McGuinness a deputy charge nurse.
14. I don't really know what checks would have been done in relation to establishing my suitability. This would have pre-dated Disclosure Scotland and PVG but I would suspect they would have at least contacted my two references.

Humbie Care Home, Algrade Trust, East Lothian

15. I first became involved in Humbie, which was being run by Algrade Trust, at some point around the end of 1994. I was the acting manager at Wolfson House when the area manager, Heather Lennox, asked me to assist by seconding some of my staff to work at Humbie to help sort out issues there. Apparently the Registration and Inspection services were reviewing their position and were considering closing it. Heather told me that the service was in trouble and they were potentially looking at the Church of Scotland taking over the management of the service. It was only after this conversation with Heather that I became aware that things were not going well at Humbie.

16. My understanding is that Muriel Rainey and Heather Lennox had realised Humbie was in trouble and contacted the trustees for Algrade Trust, probably because of their connections to the local churches. I believe Muriel Rainey was a member of Musselburgh Baptist Church which had close communication with the people at Algrade. I believe Muriel had semi-retired by then but she was friendly with Heather Lennox, the area manager, and they decided to approach Algrade and offer help as fellow Christians. I think this offer was welcomed by Algrade initially, but once the Church of Scotland staff were in place and realised how bad the conditions were, I think the relationship with Algrade changed.
17. Before then, all I knew about it was that it was an isolated village community, and that Humbie was very remote, sitting geographically just outside Pathhead. I knew it had an evangelical ethos and that was about all I knew at that time. I believe Humbie was initially set up as a holiday service and then Jean McCrae developed the school and it became a residential service. At Heather Lennox's request, I identified some of our more experienced staff at Wolfson House and they went to work at Humbie for a short period.
18. At some point the board of trustees changed. Betty Waugh and Mina had been replaced. I think this was around the time the Charities Commission became involved and when the Church of Scotland took over the service. Eric Scott was a lawyer and the legal representative for Algrade trust.
19. I never physically went to Humbie, in relation to work, until after I was at Wedderburn. At some point, possibly in 1997, I drove up there with some of the residents in a minibus but by that time Humbie was empty. I had seen the BBC Frontline Scotland programme by that point, so I knew a bit more about the background and conditions. On this visit I could see it was looking quite dilapidated, the grass was overgrown and the buildings were generally in a poor state.

Humbie service users

20. When I started at Wedderburn in July 1996, this was the first time I had come into contact with any of the Humbie service users. The service users had been moved from Humbie to Wedderburn House around six months earlier in December 1995. I had no involvement in the movement of these people from Humbie.
21. When I was working at Wedderburn we did a lot of assessment work with service users who had been at Humbie, doing person centred planning. We particularly did a lot of work with Scottish Human Services as consultants, who helped us and guided us in the person-centred planning process. We were taught how to use maps and paths which told us a lot about people's histories.
22. When we took over the service at Humbie, the Church of Scotland were provided with very little information about the individuals. We had to work with the service users, their families and significant people that they knew to try and build up those histories.

Living conditions at Humbie

23. I was never within Humbie when it was still open, so I never saw first hand what the conditions were like or what the general daily routine was for the service users. I have gained all my knowledge of the routine, and the different experiences, from service users who had been in Humbie and the staff who had worked there.
24. I know there was a school and a dining room, and I heard stories about how cold it was at times in the houses, and how they didn't have proper heating. There may have been an electric fire with one bar, but every room was cold and damp. The only proper heating was in Harmony House where the sisters Betty and Mina lived. This was apparently also the only house that was properly furnished.
25. There were televisions but the residents were not allowed to watch normal terrestrial television channels. All they were allowed to watch was satellite ministry broadcasts.

Some of the staff told me that the more capable service users held the keys for the buildings and not the staff. From what I heard from staff and service users it seemed the conditions were far from acceptable.

Daily Routine

26. Having not worked there, I do not know specifics about the daily routine at Humbie. I know that the male service users spent a lot of time outside doing different activities. Female service users tended to spend more time indoors doing more craft type activities.

Food

27. I recall that when we were doing the individual service plans at Wedderburn, a lot of the service users commented about how great the food was at Wedderburn. I took from that the food at Humbie wasn't to the same standard. Other service users did say that the food at Humbie was very plain. Others said that some of the food was taken to be sold at the satellite café in Pathhead which was run by Betty Waugh.

Work

28. Apparently four or five service users went to work at the café in Pathhead on a daily basis. Those that worked at the café loved it, probably because they were getting paid. One in particular was [REDACTED]. He is currently being supported in a Church of Scotland service in Musselburgh. He used to live with his brother [REDACTED]. They came from Glasgow. [REDACTED] was always very defensive of any criticism of Algrade. [REDACTED] has since passed away. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were both fairly capable and I believe they were given keys to the house. This gave them a bit of power over the Church of Scotland staff when the take-over started.
29. I know that one of the service users, [REDACTED], had the daily task of setting the dining room tables before each meal. Other service users helped with the food, and some did the laundry. Some service users, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] talked

about doing the laundry. I can't remember who did the cooking but it was some of the more able service users. I believe this was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and possibly [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

Trips/holidays

30. Holidays were arranged for the service users. There was a Christian service around Lanarkshire, possible Motherwell called the Maranatha Centre. They had links with the Algrade Trust so there were holidays arranged there. Alan Carmichael managed the service in Hamilton, South Lanarkshire and was involved with arranging the holidays in the Maranatha. People talked about going on these holidays. They had their own fuel pumps at Humber which were used for their transport.

Education

31. People talked about Jean McRae, who developed the school, and they talked about some of the classes. Everyone talked fondly of Jean McRae who was obviously a positive influence for a lot of people. She had a very clear vision of what the service should look like. As far as I know she was a qualified professional teacher so am sure the education aspect would have been of a high standard and her model was good. It was apparently only after she died that things went downhill.

Religious Instruction

32. They had daily morning devotions which continued into Wedderburn. The service users wanted this to continue. These were like mini church services. One of the service users, [REDACTED], loved to lead the devotions and introduce others to do readings or say prayers.

Sleeping arrangements

33. Service users at Humber either had their own bedroom or some shared a bedroom. When they came to Wedderburn we tried to keep people together if they had shared

before. Staff slept over and I think they slept in the men's house which was called 'Sharon' and was the largest house.

Healthcare

34. At Humble the dentist used to visit and do any necessary treatment there. I think for medical treatment the service users were registered and went to the doctors in Dalkeith which is the closest town where these services were available. There was a chiropodist who used to visit Humble too.

Christmas and Birthdays / visitors

35. I am not aware of any of the former residents or staff from Humble ever mentioning anything about Christmas or birthdays.
36. I am sure that some families visited residents at Humble but can't say specifically who got visitors. I got the impression, generally, that families didn't really visit very often. From working with the former residents when I was at Wedderburn I found that a lot of the Humble residents came from the west of Scotland, for example Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Renfrew. Places from where it would be difficult for some families to travel to Humble.

External Inspections

37. I was aware that external inspections had taken place at Humble. When I was at Wedderburn I met Judy Moss, Sandra Jamieson and Steven Bush who were the inspection officers involved with Humble. I am not sure if Steven was a social worker or was part of the Registration and Inspection service. I had regular contact, especially with Judy and Sandra, who were instrumental in the changes at Humble and the Church of Scotland becoming involved. They conducted a lot of inspections at Humble and after the service moved to Wedderburn, and initially when we later moved to Eskmills, their inspections continued there. They were keen to see that we were

following the right standards and adhering to national guidelines. We were a completely different model at Wedderburn than what had been at Humbie.

Discipline and punishment

38. I am not aware if, or how anyone would have been disciplined or punished at Humbie apart from the incident alleged by [REDACTED]. I never heard of any occasion when anyone was restrained.

Humbie residents

39. I think, when the Church of Scotland originally took over at Humbie, there were about 32 residents. When they were moved out, 22 or 23 residents came to Wedderburn who I subsequently worked with. 3 users went to ELCAP accommodation in Tranent. Some other residents went back to their families.
40. We had our own issues when we were sourcing other accommodation in Tranent. The Church of Scotland's policy was to only employ staff who had a live church connection, and because it was social housing, this caused a conflict with Scottish Homes. They didn't want to enter into an agreement because of their equal opportunities policy. As a result, ELCAP took over these properties. The Church of Scotland were left with the houses at Eskmills in Musselburgh which we moved to in 1997/98. About nineteen of the former Humbie residents were moved there. We also had a property in Morton Street in Joppa.
41. The age of the service users who came from Humbie to Wedderburn ranged from around thirty to forty. A lot had been at Humbie from childhood so basically had spent almost all their life there.

Records from Humbie

42. I wasn't there when the residents came from Humbie to Wedderburn. My understanding is that there was very little written information which came with them or made available when the Church of Scotland took over the service. I personally certainly never saw any records from Algrade despite the fact they had been there for so many years, most from childhood. There were no written reviews, reports, care plans or assessments, just some photographs. The only information obtained was their basic personal details. At Wedderburn we had to start from scratch.

Staff at Humbie

43. Three members of care staff who had been at Humbie as Algrade employees followed the residents and came to work at Wedderburn House. They were Anne Fleming, Anne Pile and Joe Pile. Anne and Joe were married. Anne Fleming lived in Humbie and subsequently became my coordinator. She was aware of some of the issues at Humbie and was very open about the poor conditions and although she worked at Humbie she knew it was out-dated. She was very committed to the former Humbie service users. Anne and Joe Pile were a bit more traditional and their Christian faith was more aligned with Algrade. They knew that the conditions were wrong but were quite protective of Algrade.
44. [REDACTED] was a gardener/handyman at Humbie and he came to work at Wedderburn for the Church of Scotland, not as a full-time employee, but was paid on a sessional basis. There was also Colin Robertson who had worked as an artist and did art activities at Humbie. He came to Wedderburn to work for the Church of Scotland and just recently retired.
45. Other staff who I had heard about were [REDACTED] who left around about the time the Church of Scotland took over. I am not sure if he was an employee of Algrade or a volunteer because Algrade had quite a few volunteers. He had a relationship with one of the service users, [REDACTED], but they left to live in Ireland and we lost contact. Ruth

Ross was a member of staff at Humbie, I think doing support work. She later came to work at Hawthornbrae initially as a cook then she moved to a support worker role. PSB [REDACTED] was another employee but he left Humbie around the time the Church of Scotland took over. He didn't come to Wedderburn. There were also Mr and Mrs Vincent, who were volunteers, and helped with transport and things like that. They were there in the period when the Church of Scotland were taking over.

46. PSB [REDACTED] was subsequently convicted of abusing some of the male service users. As far as I know he left Humbie around the time that the Church of Scotland took over the service from Algrade.

Moving out of Humbie

47. In terms of assessments being performed prior to residents being moved from Humbie, I don't really know if anything was done like that. I think most of the assessments of residents started after they got to Wedderburn. I do know that guidance from the social work department and the registration and inspection service was followed in relation to the move. Because they had to leave as a result of the poor, cold conditions, I think they were forced to make them leave fairly quickly. Wedderburn was an emergency arrangement, so I am not sure to what extent planning was able to be done. A lot of the planning done in the lead up to this was finding staff to go in and take over and building the service. I think the relations between the Church of Scotland and Algrade Trust had become quite difficult as time went by.
48. By the time the residents were being moved from Humbie to Wedderburn, the service was being run by the Church of Scotland. There were managers, team leaders and groups of support staff in place. There would still have been some of the original Humbie staff there too. There was an advocacy group called People First who were involved with the service users when they came to Wedderburn. They did a lot of advocacy work with the service users when they left Humbie. This was possibly arranged following discussions between the Church of Scotland and the social work department.

49. In the lead up to the move, there must have been contact with families, and some residents would have gone home. [REDACTED] went home to his family. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went elsewhere and didn't come over to Wedderburn. Some of the families may have taken their family member out of Humbie following the broadcast of the BBC Frontline Scotland programme, but I cannot be certain about that. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] went to live with his brother in Glasgow and [REDACTED] also went to live with family.
50. By the time I was posted to Wedderburn, the service users from Humbie had been there around six months. The morale seemed to be very good by then. Because of the activities they were doing in the community, having money, shopping and the links to colleges, the atmosphere was good. Food and money were very important to them. I don't know if they were getting any allowance money at Humbie but at Wedderburn they were getting £5 every Thursday. They used to line up and Jack Sneddon, our accountant, a Church of Scotland employee, gave them their money.
51. Staff working at Humbie would obviously have picked up from the service users very early on, all the various views on how Humbie was being run. Some service users, especially the few who went to work at the café in Pathhead were very defensive about Humbie and some still are. I think however, most of the residents were quite positive about the move to Wedderburn.

Comparison between Humbie and Wedderburn

52. I never heard any of the service users, who had been at Humbie, saying that they didn't want to be at Wedderburn. That included [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who had initially been defensive of Humbie. It was apparent that almost everybody enjoyed the new experiences at Wedderburn. There was a lot of time spent on them and they had lots of opportunities to do different things. We were very focussed on getting people out and about in the community developing their social skills. They would go shopping where they were given money and were exposed to making choices, like choosing and buying their own clothes.

53. We had a link to Queen Margaret University who had a campus in Cramond. We took the residents there to do activities like aqua aerobics and keep fit. We made contact with Jewel and Esk Valley College and got some residents enrolled on different courses. There were courses for training in daily living, independence and basic literacy. This was all very successful and good for the residents. We also went on holiday to Troon.
54. I don't think the service user's views of Humble, and the transfer, or comparison to Wedderburn would ever have been recorded anywhere, and any mention about it would probably only be conversational. At Wedderburn, any information gleaned at meetings with the service users would be used to build their person-centred plans.
55. We concentrated a lot on the individual person-centred plans at Wedderburn. Each had a person-centred map which told you about their history, their dreams, their nightmares, where they saw their futures and how they wanted to get there. It was an innovative method. It was a very pictorial approach using huge screeds of print from newspapers across the wall. It will all be drawn up by a facilitator using graphics. We involved the families in this, mostly at Wedderburn but sometimes in the family homes. There had been nothing like this at Humble but the person-centred planning was a new approach. There were no other remotely similar plans like this at Humble. This was apparent from the contact I had with families because they had never been involved in those kinds of discussions before.

Awareness of or reporting of abuse at Humble/Police involvement

56. When I first came to Wedderburn in July 1996 I was aware that some service users had made some disclosures of abuse. I knew that male service users had made some allegations against PSB that he had physically sexually abused them. I can't remember any of the specific details. When I arrived, the police were already involved and were interviewing those concerned. There were also some health care professionals helping out. Sandra Guinea was a psychologist who worked with the police. I think her role was to assess each individual service user's capacity to give

credible evidence in court. As a result, there was a group of service users who were deemed to be credible and some who were not. I didn't hear any other name mentioned as an abuser apart from PSB [REDACTED]

57. None of the service users from Humble ever reported any abuse to me. I think I carefully and intentionally avoided initiating discussions with any of the service users about any abuse because the police were involved. I didn't want to be seen to be influencing any of the individuals because of the ongoing investigation. I just tried to be there to support the service users. I have never given a statement to the police about Humble.
58. From the BBC Frontline Scotland documentary and some of the documentation I have seen I was aware of some abuse at Humble. One incident in particular involved a service user [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was from Glasgow and I think he probably gave them quite a hard time. He was quite a jovial character and I have no doubt would have rebelled against Betty Waugh and the regime and would probably have been seen as a troublemaker. I know he was a Catholic and I believe he had quite a difficult time at Humble.
59. At some point I spoke to [REDACTED] about the incident. I remember at the time I knew, and he confirmed to me, that he had been made to stand outside in his underwear, in a tub of rotten fish, because he had been heard to say the rosary. Betty Waugh had made him do this, but I do not know what age [REDACTED] was when this happened. This was the only time I heard of any punishment or abuse at Humble. A lot of the service users cowered and were obviously fearful of Betty Waugh when they heard any mention of her name.

Reporting to police

60. I cannot recall any particular incident of abuse, when any of the residents were children, ever being reported to the police. The only abuse that I really heard about,

apart from the incident with [REDACTED], and the other general chat about the poor environment and conditions within the houses, involved PSB [REDACTED].

61. I think at some point around 1998, there was some concern about [REDACTED] and the police investigated him. He had been at Humbie as a gardener/handyman and came over to work at Wedderburn then went on to work at Eskmills in the Morton Street house. He left there and we lost contact with him.

Criminal proceedings

62. As a result of the police involvement at Wedderburn, a court date was set around the [REDACTED] for those involved to give evidence against PSB [REDACTED]. There was a lot of work done by the police and the Criminal Justice system to support those witnesses and prepare them for going to court. I wasn't personally involved in this. Some were quite keen to go to court and within Wedderburn openly talked about how PSB [REDACTED] was terrible and wrong to do the things he did. They didn't go into specifics of the abuse and it was kept quite general. At the very last-minute PSB [REDACTED] PSB [REDACTED] pled guilty so the witnesses didn't get their day in court. In one sense some of them were relieved, but on the other hand some were angry because they had built themselves up to give evidence against PSB [REDACTED].
63. I believe PSB [REDACTED] was sentenced [REDACTED] imprisonment, but I think he only served four. Some people who knew him actually felt sorry for him because he may have been having difficulties in his marriage or had divorced. There was also a suggestion he had mental health issues. But on saying that there was a lot of anger from residents and their families.
64. I remember having a conversation with Anne Fleming and she told me that in her view PSB [REDACTED] was a very vulnerable person in his own right and that he was very impressionable, whereas some of the service users were quite able. She believed the service users could possibly have influenced behaviours and relationships, and blurred lines between what was acceptable and what wasn't, and what was a normal

friendship and what crossed the line into inappropriate behaviour. A lot of the service users would have been brought up in a single sex environment because all the men lived in the same house. Anne Fleming thought the abuse was possibly wider and not always initiated by people like ^{PSB} [REDACTED]

Prior Statements

65. I have never given any statements to anybody in relation to the abuse at Humbie, and have never been asked about allegations of abuse of children at Humbie carried out by other people. I am still in regular contact with Algrade Trust which still exists, although there are new trustees. We have had regular contact for years. They are a benefactor to our services and regularly make donations. They own four properties at Eskmills. I usually meet once a year, with Helen Ferguson and formerly Eric Scott who worked for the legal firm Campbell Smith. They were both trustees. Eric Scott is now retired.
66. I was aware that Betty Waugh and her sister Mina owned the café at Pathhead and several, maybe five, houses because apparently they had plans to move the residents from Humbie into these houses as part of independent living. At Wedderburn we were asked to check the wills for the former residents at Humbie to see if there was anything unusual, like the proceeds or property being left for Betty or Mina. I think it was the Church of Scotland management who asked me so it was possibly Heather Lennox then Janette Deacon. I believe there was a concern that Algrade Trust may have been sued and this would have a knock-on effect for the church. I think [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were the only ones who successfully sued Algrade Trust. I didn't find anything unusual in any of the documents I checked, and everything seemed to be in order. I am aware the police did some sort of investigation into a potential fraud but I don't know what the outcome of that was.

Humbie Residents today

67. There are only five ex-Humbie residents still under the care of the Church of Scotland from the original nineteen. They are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] passed away in [REDACTED] 2025.

Knowledge of Impact

68. On the occasion that I visited Humbie in the minibus in 1997, I had a number of service users with me who had previously been at Humbie. This included [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. When we stopped at the site at Humbie, [REDACTED] refused to get out the minibus and his face was chalk white. He would have been in his thirties and had been at Humbie from childhood. He was normally quite a gregarious character so something had obviously deeply affected him seeing Humbie again. There were other service users who missed Humbie and didn't say a bad word about it.


Helping the Inquiry

69. There is no doubt that people with learning disabilities who have been abused in care as a child or in lifelong care, that their human rights have been affected. It affects their outlook and restricts the choices they can make in their life. It can be very difficult for them to be seen as an individual. It will also affect their behaviours and their potential to grow and become independent. There are some service users who have benefitted from being in the care setting because they had been part of a big group and thus a more social environment.
70. It also affects service user's families. They are quite often left with a big feeling of guilt. It has an impact on siblings who aren't able to form a relationship with their sibling causing lost contact. I know it has led to marriage break-ups.

71. To mitigate this impact, good communication and inclusion is essential. We now work very closely with families. It is also important that everyone dealing with these children and their families, have an understanding and empathy of their experiences. Dealing with children who have learning disabilities or behavioural issues can be very difficult. Service users at Humble were kept outside a lot and were almost hidden. Families were not regularly involved, sometimes they were not involved at all. Crossreach now offer mandatory training in trauma-informed practice for all staff.
72. If the families had been involved, the issues at Humble possibly wouldn't have happened or been detected and resolved much earlier. If families had been involved in proper reviews, and if social workers were involved in this process, and inspections had been done on a regular basis, it would never have happened.
73. Nowadays we are completely transparent. There is the care inspectorate, SSSC, we have our own corporate teams including the finance department, HR departments and safeguarding, and constant social work teams we are accountable to.
74. I think the main lessons to be learned to protect children in the future is there should be no secrecy and children shouldn't be hidden away. If it is suspected a child is being hidden, then red flags should fly. There should have been many red flags at Humble and if it had been operating today it would never have been allowed to happen. Nowadays there is a lot of training in adult protection and safeguarding and a lot of trauma informed practice. Staff sit down with the person and look at the person and their background and experiences. It is reinforcing the empathetic approach. This kind of approach back then would have been very helpful.
75. The person-centred plans we were using were very helpful and told us a lot but they were more looking forward to where the service users were going next when they left Wedderburn. We should maybe have spent more time sitting down with them and their families and getting more information.

Other information

76. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..........

Dated.....03/04/2025.....