

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HFM

Support person present: No

1. My name is HFM but I prefer to be called HFM. My date of birth is 1952. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born in Newton Stewart and went to local schools. I left school at the age of fifteen and joined the army. I was in the army for eleven years and came out in 1979. I started driving lorries as a job until 1985 when I had a stroke and had to give up my driving licence.
3. I started working at Woodlands around a year later in 1986. I had been getting a lot of hassle from the unemployment office, who were telling me I should be trying to find a job. The social work department sent me on a physical and mental rehabilitation course in Preston, which I didn't enjoy. It was a six-week course, and I had to make my own way up and down, which is a nightmare from Newton Stewart. At that time, through the headmaster's private cleaner, I heard there was a vacancy coming up at Woodlands Children's Home. I grabbed the opportunity and decided to stop going to the rehabilitation course and went for the job at Woodlands.

Woodlands Children's Home, Newton Stewart

4. Woodlands Children's Home was in Newton Stewart. The purpose of Woodlands was basically to look after children as best as we could and to possibly try to mend their ways. The children were split into three units. The units were called Lowers, Inters and Uppers which related to their location in the building. The Lowers were on the ground floor, the inters were one floor up, and the Uppers were above that, then there were the girls in the attic. There were also some girls in a bungalow, which was in the grounds, very close to the main building. I worked with the children in the Lowers unit. All the units got together at certain times, like assembly in the morning and at mealtimes. In the evening, each unit tended to go their separate ways to do the activities that had been organised for them. The doors weren't locked at Woodlands but the front door may have been locked at night. The back door was a fire door with a bar that had to be pushed to get out.

First impressions

5. Because my previous jobs were driving, and this was my first time working with children, it was quite strange to begin with. I enjoyed it for years, until I went to Cree Lodge, and things changed. The children were initially older, so I could relate to them easily, and they were more interested in doing some of the activities we had organised for them. Latterly, the children seemed to be that bit younger, and didn't appear to be as interested. I always felt that the more input you gave to the job, the more you got back, but not for the younger ones. When I first joined, there were a number of older boys who had left school and were getting ready, and looking forward to, leaving care. Some of the boys were interested in hearing about my army career, although there were some who were not.

Relationship between staff and children

6. I think the relationship between the staff and the boys was, on the whole, pretty good. There were some boys who weren't quite so interested in relating to the staff or getting involved in any of the activities. There were some boys who had favourite members of

staff, and other members of staff who they hated. This probably happens in every school.

My time at Woodlands

Recruitment

7. I had an interview with the headteacher, Mrs KWG and Mr Maitchell, and started work the following week. I can't remember if I had to give any references. I am not sure if there was a probationary period.

Detention officer

8. I initially started at Woodlands as a detention officer. Basically, my role was to be present and supervise any of the children who had been given detention at school. To do this I worked evening shifts once school had finished. I think I worked from 4:00 pm until 8:00 or 9:00 pm. The children would have been set some work to do, so I was there to make sure they got on with it in the evening and weren't mucking about. The punishment was partly doing the work that was set for them, and also preventing them from doing other organised activities, which most of them enjoyed. Often, I would sit in the class whilst they were doing the work that had been set for them. I was often happy enough if they sat there and did nothing.
9. It wasn't always classwork they were given. In the summer we would go out and pick-up rubbish in the grounds or some other menial tasks. If I felt the child deserved it, I could knock some of the time off their detention. I can't remember what hours I worked doing this role. I don't think I worked the weekend because as far as I remember, in my first few years, all the children went home. At some point it changed and we started taking children, who we called the '52-week' children, meaning they were there all the time, even the weekends. I was the detention officer for around two years.

10. When I first started, I worked split shifts to help out at the meals. I would work at breakfast, from 8:00 am to 9:00 am, then lunchtimes from 12 Noon to 1:00 pm. I then went back in the evenings from 4:00 pm until about 9:00 or 10:00 pm.
11. When I was the detention officer, I reported to KWG. When I came on duty at 4:00 pm I would speak to her and find out what was going on that evening. I don't recall having any sort of appraisal or monitoring of my performance. I did this for two years.

Assistant houseparent

12. I then became an assistant houseparent because a vacancy came up. In this role, part of my responsibilities was taking the children out on organised activities. This might have been swimming, bike runs, walks and a whole range of other things to keep the children occupied. As an assistant houseparent, I would more or less do what the houseparent wanted me to do, to help out. I normally worked from around 4:00 pm and finished around 10:00 pm.
13. As an assistant houseparent Brian MacDowall was the houseparent who I helped. We were almost always on duty at the same time and we worked together. We would generally sort out who was taking which children on different activities. He might take some fishing and I might take some cycling for example.

Houseparent in Woodlands

14. I am not sure how long I was an assistant houseparent, but I think it was around a year. I then became a houseparent. I was a houseparent at Woodlands main school for four or five years. As a houseparent there was more responsibility because I actually ran the unit. Part of this role would be to actually arrange and organise the activities for the children, sort out the children's pocket money and generally run the unit. I would also liaise with the children about their home visits. My line manager, when I was there, was [REDACTED]. I think his title was unit senior.

15. During my time as a houseparent the appraisal system for staff seemed to improve. I am fairly certain I got an annual appraisal.
16. I am not sure exactly what happened at the end that resulted in my move, but I think there was some sort of restructure within Woodlands.

Houseparent in Cree lodge

17. I was then moved to a place just outside Newton Stewart called Cree Lodge. It had been called Merton Hall but I think by the time I got there it had changed name to Cree Lodge. I don't know if Woodlands took it over, bought it, or what happened.
18. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Leaving Woodlands /Cree Lodge

19. At some point I met my GP and he knew where I was working. He said he didn't know how I could handle working with children in care. I told him that I couldn't drive because of my stroke. He ultimately helped me get my driving licence back. Because of the shift pattern I was on, and the way the days off worked I managed to do some driving part time. I was subsequently told that Cree Lodge were looking to pay staff off and were offering redundancy packages. I had been there eight years by then, I wanted to leave, so I took redundancy. I think this would have been around 1994. I then went back to driving lorries full time, which I did until I was forced to retire eighteen years ago in 2007. I had a knee replacement and couldn't continue with the driving job.
20. In all the time that I was at Woodlands and Cree Lodge, I was never residential. I occasionally stayed overnight as part of a rota, but that was only to provide support for the two nightwatchmen if something kicked off. If I was sleeping-over, my bed was in the matron's office and the nightwatchman would just come in and wake me up. I didn't have to do the sleepover very often.

Training

21. When I was at Woodlands, I was sent on a Scotvec course at Dumfries technical college. It was a year-long course with a couple of residential spells. It was a childcare course. I think all staff went on this course at some point. I would have been a houseparent when I went on this course and this was about three years after I started at Woodlands
22. An external private group came into Woodlands and gave us training in different aspects of childcare and residential care. I cannot remember what any of the specific topics were. It was a fairly general sort of course. I can't remember the name of the company but it was a peculiar name. Everybody got this training. I think they did this training a couple of times. I felt that the training I received was, to a certain degree, almost adequate. My initial training was okay and I enjoyed the work I was doing.
23. We had weekly team meetings where we discussed lots of different things. If you were off duty you were expected to go in for them.

Structure and recruitment of staff

24. The person in complete charge would have been the head of childcare. He would have contact with the unit senior and then below that would be the senior houseparents then down the line.
25. Mr and Mrs HSO-SPO may have owned the building but I am not sure. I think Peggy Smith was in overall charge of the whole of Woodlands. She also was the family liaison officer. I think Mr Paul Maitchell was possibly the principal or headmaster of the school, so was more focussed on the education side rather than the care side of things. The SNR [REDACTED] when I arrived, was Mrs KWG [REDACTED]. She was solely in charge of education. The care management structure was different to the teaching side of things.

26. When I was a houseparent, Mr Glen Wood started at Woodlands. He took over the care side of things. He was senior and was very highly qualified. He was a very formal boss and he made sure everything was more structured. When he started, things definitely changed for the better. If he saw something being done wrong, he would haul you over the coals for it. Having been in the army previously, I liked having that discipline and rigid structure. He made a big difference and things changed for the better. Below him, for a while, was a Mr Drake. I think [REDACTED] was below him and then it was down to the senior houseparents.
27. The teaching staff came in through the day to the classrooms.
28. Overnight there would be two nightwatchmen on duty, and one member of staff sleeping over. They would sleep in, what was, the matron's room. The nightwatchmen were responsible for the whole school. Their shift finished at 08:30 am when the day shift came on.
29. Mr Maitchell was quite a laid back individual but if you did wrong he wouldn't miss you. I would probably describe him as being firm but fair but I didn't have an awful lot to do with him. When Mr Wood and Mr Drake came they took over more of the care side and Mr Maitchell must have taken on a different role. I felt far more comfortable working under Mr Wood than Mr Maitchell. I preferred his leadership style.

Recruitment

30. I had no involvement in the recruitment of staff. I had nothing to do with the selection process and didn't take part in any interviews. I have no knowledge of the recruitment process or practices.

Volunteers

31. There were a number of young people who came and did social work, college or university placements at Woodlands. Two girls worked in my unit. They weren't that much older than some of the boys. There were also some prisoners who came in from

a local prison to help out. I didn't really agree with this but I didn't have a say. I didn't work directly with these prisoners but I know they were only there for a few hours in the evening, and not every day. As far as I know they just helped the houseparents . They might have been left in the house on their own to supervise the children whilst the houseparents were out doing the outdoor activities. The prisoners didn't go out with the children to do the outdoor activities on their own. The students were allowed to do this. I didn't supervise or have anything really to do with the monitoring of the volunteers. I don't remember who was responsible for supervising them. I have no idea how or if they were vetted, or if they had to provide references. There was no-one who reported to me directly.

Training

32. I was not involved in the training of staff. My involvement in their personal development would be passing on my experience and knowledge to people I was working with. In a way, when I was a houseparent, I mentored the assistant houseparent, but it was unofficial. A huge percentage of the training I got, and the people around me, was basically on the job.
33. I don't know what the policy was in relation to training. I don't know if there was a written policy on training or personal development. I am not aware if any records were held of staff training. If there was, I do not know where that would have been kept.

Supervision/ appraisal/ evaluation

34. When I was promoted to houseparent, I did my best to supervise assistant houseparents and teach them what I did when I was in that role. I shared my experiences with them. If they did something which I thought could have been done better, in a different way, I would tell them. I wasn't responsible for anybody else. [REDACTED] might have asked me how Ian Shankland, who was my assistant houseparent

at the time, was getting on and I would give a verbal answer. At no time did I do a written appraisal for anyone.

- 35. When I was a houseparent I didn't appraise the assistant houseparent. This was done by my senior. I don't recall ever writing any appraisals.
- 36. I don't remember ever seeing a written appraisal for myself. If I got a yearly appraisal it would just have been verbal feedback in the form of a chat with my senior. I never had to sign any document in relation to an appraisal.
- 37. The two students who were working beside me in my unit, would probably have been appraised but it wasn't by me, probably by my senior.
- 38. I never saw any policy in relation to supervision or appraisals of staff.

Policy

- 39. I had nothing to do with any written policies within Woodlands. I am not sure if there were things such as policy documents. The only documents I can recall seeing were in relation to the complaints procedure. Everything I did at Woodlands, I picked up on the job, mostly from other people I worked with. There was no policy document detailing individual procedures or specific training on how to do your job. We had in-house training, where I suppose we got some direction and instruction on what was expected.

Strategic planning

- 40. I had no involvement with, or responsibility for, strategic planning. I was never told what the strategic approach was in relation to the children. This was all above my pay grade. I was very clear what my role was at Woodlands and there was a definite line between

myself and the management. I didn't cross that line. I was happy just to get on and do my job.

Children

Placements

41. As a houseparent, I had no idea when and who the next child was coming into Woodlands. I had no part in the process leading up to children being admitted. Peggy Smith was responsible for deciding, along with Anne Millar from the social work department, what children would be coming to Woodlands on a placement. I would just be told by Peggy Smith, that a child was coming to join the unit, and I would be given a little bit of information about their background. Children came from all over Scotland.
42. Having read the statement of HEP [REDACTED] it contains a lot of information about his time before he arrived at Woodlands, and some of it is serious. I wasn't aware of half of this information, which probably would have been helpful to know. I just had to pick up things as I went along. This was probably the case for a lot of the children, that they had a lot of things going on in their life before they came to Woodlands. Unfortunately, I was not made aware of a lot of their background. I never saw any handover document, or in fact any document. We were basically taking children without any information on them.

Assessments

43. I wasn't given any information if any assessments were done on the child before they arrived at Woodlands.

Length of stay

44. At one time I think there were fifty children at Woodlands, forty boys and about ten girls. Five girls were in the attic, and five were in the bungalow. The ages of the children varied quite a lot and so did the length of their stays. A lot drifted in and back out again. The average age of the children was between around twelve and fifteen. Some left Woodlands to go to mainstream school. I never really got to know where the children went after they had left.
45. In my unit, the Lowers' unit, there were between ten and twelve boys. I had one of the biggest units. In the evenings, when I was on duty, there would be myself and my assistant. The only other staff who might be there was the cleaner. There used to be one cleaner who cleaned the whole school. Latterly that changed to one cleaner in every unit.

Food

46. All the children ate at the same time in the dining room. Breakfast was cereal and cups of tea. Lunch was usually soup and a pudding. In the evening it was a proper hot meal. Both the cooks were farmers' wives so it was always good wholesome food. I was never aware of any issues with the food. If someone didn't like something, I don't think they got an alternative. I was never aware of any complaints, because the food was so good.

Sleeping arrangements

47. The children slept in dormitories. It was a big room and there were wooden partitions around separating the sleeping areas. Some of these areas had two beds, some three, and some four. There were several rooms like this. The children were usually in their beds by 9:00 or 9:30 pm.

Washing and bathing

48. Each unit had a toilet and a bath in one room, and a shower room with two showers. Each shower was in a cubicle, so the children got privacy in the showers.

Leisure activities/trips

49. Weather permitting, we had some sort of activity every night for the children. We did lots of different things like cycling, swimming, fishing, walking and running. Sometimes we might just go to the Ryan Community Centre. The children could choose if they wanted to take part in the activity we were doing. Each unit organised their own activities.
50. We had camping weekends to the Mull of Galloway. I even took my son along when he was around seven. He had good fun interacting with some of the boys who were around the same age as him. I had no fear or concerns letting my son be in their company. I was confident that he was safe. I trusted the boys and on occasion even sent them down to my house on their own to get one of my bikes. The boys at Woodland enjoyed the activities and were really engaged in the group. We had a lot of fun. There were four minibuses so there was plenty transport for each unit to do their own thing. Towards the end of my time, things changed and I wouldn't have thought about taking my son into my work.
51. Every year the boys from Woodlands went on holiday. One year it was to Blackpool. We went to a youth hostel in the Peak District three or four times. On one of these trips, we met a group of disadvantaged children from Preston. The police had organised their trip. We got on really well with them and they came to visit us at Woodlands for a weekend. The boys were really keen to go on these trips and had good fun.
52. I know that I sent boys down to my house to get something, maybe like a bike or something like that but they were never allowed to stay over at my house.

Schooling

53. Woodlands was a school. All the children would go to school through the day and come back to the unit as if it was their home. There were three classrooms within the main building and a wooden portacabin outside with another two or three classrooms. I had nothing at all to do with the education side of things. The teachers were separate from the care staff but there was contact and discussion between both.

Health

54. There was a matron who dealt with all the children if they were unwell or had any minor injuries. Her name was Kirsty or Kirsten. I am not sure how long she was at Woodlands. She was definitely there when I was a detention officer and an assistant houseparent, but after that I am not sure. She died and wasn't replaced. We then just used the local health centre. I am not aware of any child being given medication to control their behaviour.

Work

55. The children made their own beds and kept their bedspace clean and tidy. They didn't have any other chores to do, like polishing the floors, because it was all carpeted. There was a laundry lady who washed the dirty clothes and there were cleaners who looked after the building. At mealtimes, one of the boys, [REDACTED], took it upon himself to set all the tables in the dining room, then clear all the dishes away afterwards. That was just what he was like, but I know he didn't like the education side of Woodlands. He was more a practical person than academic.

Visits

56. Family members would visit the children, but that was only after the '52-week children' started. Up until then all the boys went home at the weekend so there was no real need for family to visit. Family visits were arranged along with the child's social worker. All visits were prearranged. Parents couldn't just pop in unannounced. Parents and

social workers were allowed to take their children out for the day and sometimes the parents were allowed to stay overnight in the bungalow or in a big caravan in the grounds.

57. The children had their own social workers and they would come in regularly to see the children they were responsible for. I never saw any reports compiled by the social workers and I had nothing to do with any recommendations they might have suggested for the children.

Reviews

58. I had nothing to do with ongoing reviews of the children by Woodlands senior staff and was never asked to get involved. Sometimes the visiting social workers might sit down with me and ask how a child was getting on, and if there were any issues. I never got any feedback from the social workers.

Discharge

59. I can't really remember what would happen on the lead up to a child leaving Woodlands. I seem to recall sometimes writing some sort of appraisal report which I probably passed to my senior. He would add his comments and then it would go to Anne Millar. I have no idea who made the decision when it was time for the child to leave Woodlands.

Preparation for leaving

60. Towards the end of the boys' time at Woodlands, they were given the option to go out to learn a trade. Usually this would be on a Friday. They would go out for the day to work at places like farms, sawmills, garages, all as a work placement.

Help/support

61. Once a child left Woodlands, I have no idea what, or if, they received any continuing help or support wherever they went to afterwards.

Living arrangements

62. I lived fairly local to the school, so just made my own way in every workday. At Woodlands, apart from the staff who were working or on duty overnight, there was no other member of staff who actually resided there. Every member of staff had full access to the building. There were no restricted areas for staff.

Discipline and punishment

63. I never saw a written policy in relation to discipline and punishment or a code of conduct. I think it was all just down to the individual staff member's discretion. I learned about giving and taking away points, depending on behaviour, from other staff that I worked with.
64. I am not aware of the children ever being physically punished.
65. The only discipline I was aware of, was when the children were put on detention by the teachers, for their behaviour at school. Apart from getting them to sit in the class and do whatever work was set for them, in the summer I might make them go out into the grounds and pick up the litter or sweep the yard. I could decide, if they misbehaved to extend this time, or if they were good, I could reduce their time in detention. Any other matters of discipline and punishment would be dealt with by the headmaster.
66. The children were given points for good behaviour, and points deducted for bad behaviour. As a houseparent, I could do that. The number of points they had at the end of the week reflected how much pocket money they would receive. It was up to

my senior to decide on the level of pocket money. I suppose it was an incentive to make them behave. When Glen Wood came, this all changed. He preferred to reward positive behaviour rather than punish the children for negative behaviour. If children were good, he would arrange for them to be taken out for something to eat at the chip shop.

67. If the child had been badly behaved at school then we would leave it to the teaching staff to deal with. If they decided to give them detention, then I would have become involved in the evening when I was the detention officer.
68. If children had been fighting or had run away, these are examples of when a child would be punished. They might be stopped from going out on that evening's activity, or on a trip, which would be seen as their punishment. The assistant houseparent and houseparent could do this. I am not aware of the children being punished in any other way. At no time were the more senior children ever made responsible for the behaviour of the other children. It was only ever the staff.
69. Where a child was punished, by denying them a trip or from participating in an activity, then this would be recorded in the general unit report.

Restraint

70. I think the guidelines for restraint were that it should only be used if the child was a danger to themselves or to others around them. If a restraint was used then this would be recorded somewhere, probably in the daily log and the head office would be made aware. I don't think there was a specific form which had to be completed. I never saw a policy document in relation to restraint.
71. We received training for restraint in-house. I remember being on this course a couple of times but I can't say that it was regular. The course was taken by Mr [REDACTED], the head of care. I think we did it on a Friday afternoon after the children had left to go home. I think it took about an hour.

72. Basically, in a restraint situation, we were taught to hold the arms and legs and hold them until the child had calmed down. We had to put a pillow under their head to protect their head. Medication was never used to calm them down. There was no detention cell or other room where a child would be put in segregation.
73. There were times when I had to restrain children when I thought they were a danger to themselves. If I did have to restrain a child I would always try and make sure there was another member of staff with me. Restraint incidents were very rare, sometimes once a month, but sometimes less and sometimes more.
74. I never saw excessive restraint being used on any child when I was at Woodlands or Cree Lodge.

Concerns about the institution

75. I am not aware, at any time, of there ever being any concerns about the way children were being treated at either Woodlands or Cree lodge.
76. The police were sometimes called, if there was an ongoing incident, or if a child was being restrained. The child would be given the chance to make a formal complaint to the police. If the child wanted the police to be contacted we wouldn't refuse. I think towards the end of my time, the police were getting fed up coming.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

77. In the main stairwells at Woodlands, there was a payphone which the children could use. There was a poster beside the phone for 'Childline', which included their phone number. The children had access to this phone at any time, and they used it often.
78. If a child was to come to me and make a complaint about something, if it was something I could deal with, I would. The details would be recorded in my report. If I

felt I couldn't deal with it, I would pass it on to my senior. At no time do I ever recall any child coming to me with a complaint that I had to pass on to a senior. There would have been times when children reported very minor things to me and I would have dealt with them. I can't think of anything specific that was reported to me.

79. Most times, after a restraint was used, the child would complain. The circumstances would be thoroughly investigated by Glen Wood. If there was any justification, it would probably go higher than Glen Wood, but I can't remember that ever happening. I don't know if there was a complaints procedure to be followed. I dare say the child would complain to the person they felt most comfortable talking to. It would be recorded in the daily report but I don't know if it was recorded anywhere else. I never had any complaints made to me.

Trusted adult/confidante

80. As part of my role as a houseparent, I was a counsellor. Each child had a counsellor. I believe other members of staff, who were also counsellors, took children home to counsel them there. I never did that. I might take a child out to a café for a coffee or a juice, but I usually stayed at the school with the children I was counselling. Sometimes I might have a private chat when we were fishing or something like where I would get a chance to ask how things were going. I did not receive any specific training to do this counselling role. I was just expected to know what to do.
81. The idea behind being a counsellor was that children you were responsible for could approach you and tell you if they were having any issues, either in the school or sometimes at home. I was basically a listening post, and if it was something that I couldn't deal with, I would pass on to my senior or Anne Millar. None of the boys I was responsible for ever came to me with a significant issue that I had to pass on.

Abuse

- 82. When I was at Woodlands I was not aware of there ever being a definition of 'abuse'.
- 83. I never saw any behaviour in Woodlands or Cree Lodge, that I thought could be considered as being abuse. I was never made aware, at any time, that a child had made a complaint of being abused.
- 84. I wasn't with the children all the time, so I cannot say for certain that I would have been aware if abuse was going on. I dare say it is possible that abuse was going on undetected.
- 85. I don't recall ever getting any training in identifying the signs of abuse.

Child protection arrangements

- 86. There was no guidance on how children in care in Woodlands should be treated, cared for and protected against abuse, ill-treatment or inappropriate behaviour towards them.
- 87. There was no guidance or instruction given on how to handle, and respond to, reports of abuse or ill treatment of children by staff, other adults, or other children. Common sense would dictate that if anything was reported to you then you would know to tell a senior, or if it was particularly serious you might skip the senior and go even higher. This never happened to me. As far as I was aware I didn't have any discretion in relation to these matters.
- 88. I was never given any training, or told what child protection arrangements were in place, to reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill treatment, or any inappropriate conduct by staff, or other adults, towards children at Woodlands. Everyone had to have a common-sense approach. I always tried never to leave myself open to allegations. I tried to limit the occasions when I was alone with children. When I was the detention

officer there may only have been one child, sometimes a girl, in the classroom. In these circumstances I would always make sure the classroom door was left open and I would sit in view of the door.

89. If a child was known to play up, or make allegations against staff, you would always ensure you were never alone with that child. When new staff came in, that was the sort of information we would share with each other. I would like to think that everything we did kept the children safe.

External monitoring

90. There were several visits to the school by Dumfries and Galloway Council, or whoever licenced Woodlands. There were so many a year, and a certain number were unannounced. I don't know who they spoke to, but they never spoke to me. We didn't get any feedback directly from the inspection team. We would be told by the management at one of the team meetings whether we had passed or failed and what the recommendations were to rectify the faults.

Record Keeping

91. I believe that each child had their own personal file. I probably could have had access to their file but it wasn't made available to me as a matter of course. They were kept in the main office. I might have had to be quite forceful if I wanted to see it. When I was the detention officer I wouldn't have to do a written report. I would generally just speak to the houseparents at the end of the shift and verbally let them know how things went. I might have asked to see the file of the boy I was counsellor for, but I can't really remember ever feeling the need.
92. As a houseparent, at the end of every shift, I would have to write a daily report. This would mention the activity we had been doing that evening. We would also include any information passed to us by the staff in relation to any behavioural issues. You

would record bad behaviour and name the boys responsible. This report was read by [REDACTED], the unit senior, and he may pick you up on certain points and ask for more of an explanation. The daily report was like an incident report. Each unit did their own log. Children would have had their own file somewhere in the office. We didn't update their file.

93. Any restraints used on any child during that shift, would be recorded in the general incident log by the member of staff who initiated the restraint. They would also have to inform the senior on duty. There was no formal debrief after a restraint situation. There may be an informal chat, straight after the incident, with the other person involved or with the senior, but that was all.
94. I never saw a policy in relation to record-keeping.

Allegations of abuse

95. When I was at Woodlands and Cree lodge I was never made aware that I was the subject of an allegation of abuse or ill treatment of a child or children who resided in Woodlands or Cree Lodge.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

96. I was never involved in any investigation on behalf of Woodlands or Cree Lodge into allegations of abuse or ill treatment of children. Neither was I involved in any investigation into inappropriate behaviour by staff, or others, towards children

Reports of abuse and civil claims

97. I was never involved in the handling of reports to Woodlands or Cree lodge by former residents concerning historical abuse. I was never involved in the handling of civil

claims made against Woodlands or Cree Lodge by former residents concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

98. I have never been the subject of any police investigations into alleged abuse at Woodlands or Cree Lodge. I have never given a statement to the police/the Crown concerning alleged abuse of children cared for by Woodlands or Cree Lodge,
99. I have never given evidence at a trial concerning alleged abuse of children at Woodlands or Cree Lodge

Convicted abusers

100. I do not know for definite if any person who worked at Woodlands or Cree Lodge was convicted of the abuse of a child or children at the institution. At some point I heard that a former member of staff, Mr [KXJ] had been convicted of something but I don't know what. He was at Woodlands a long time before I was there. I never knew this man.

Other staff working at the establishment at the same time.

[REDACTED]

101. I don't know a [REDACTED]. If he had worked at Woodlands or Cree Lodge I would know him but I have never heard of that name. There was definitely no [REDACTED] working there when I was there.
102. I did know a [REDACTED] who was a unit supervisor. I think he was the head of care of all the units. He was there when I first started and he was there when I left.

When I was a houseparent he was my line manager. I think [REDACTED] was HEP [REDACTED]'s counsellor.

103. I didn't know [REDACTED] very well but I would report things to him. I saw him working with children and he went hiking a lot with them. He was very good with the children and I didn't ever see him disciplining anyone. He may have been involved in some restraint situations when I was on duty but I never saw him abuse or ill-treat a child and I never heard that he had.

HGH [REDACTED]

104. I remember HGH [REDACTED] He was a houseparent in the Uppers unit then went on to work with the '52-week' children. HGH [REDACTED] was there when I started and left before I did. He was around the same age as myself but died two or three years ago. I knew him quite well. His wife worked at Woodlands too. I saw HGH [REDACTED] interacting with the boys. I didn't really play football but he did and some of the local boys from the town came in to play football too. HGH [REDACTED] was a boxer and sometimes came over as being a bit of a hardman but seemed to get on okay with all the boys. I never saw him disciplining anyone. I never saw or heard anything to suspect that he had abused any of the children.

HEU [REDACTED]

105. He definitely wasn't there in my time. I would have remembered his name because I know the names of everyone who was there.

HFP [REDACTED]

106. HFP [REDACTED] was a member of school staff and was a PT/outdoor pursuits teacher. He was a few years younger than me. He may have been there the whole time that I was there. He was certainly there at the start but I am not sure if he was there when I left. I didn't have a lot of interaction with him. He seemed to be quite popular with the children and I never saw him disciplining anyone. I would describe him as being firm but fair. He was a typical school PT teacher. I never saw or heard that he had abused anyone.

HFR

107. She didn't work there when I did. I don't recognise that name.

zLEB

or

108. I remember [REDACTED]. He was about ten years younger than me. There was someone called zLEB [REDACTED] who came after I left but I can't remember his first name. [REDACTED] was the assistant houseparent to HGH [REDACTED] in the Uppers unit. [REDACTED] left not long after I started at Woodlands. I didn't have a lot of dealings with him because he was in a different unit. I didn't really see him with the children very often. I never saw [REDACTED] disciplining any child or see or hear that he had abused a child.

LDK

109. I know of a [REDACTED] who was a pupil but I don't know a member of staff called

LDK

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110.

111.

Leaving Woodlands

112. I can't remember if Woodlands was shutting or it may even have shut for a while and reopened. Whatever the reason, I was moved to Cree Lodge. Some of the other staff may have come to Cree lodge too. I don't know where everyone went.

Cree Lodge, (previously Merton Hall), Newton Stewart

113. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

114.

115.

116.

117.

Leaving Cree Lodge

118. When I went to Cree Lodge [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]
[Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I heard about redundancy being offered so I applied and got it. I didn't get any references when I left, and I wouldn't have asked them to provide me with one.

Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry about me

119. [HEP] has given a statement to the Inquiry. In paragraphs 146 he says:
- "[HEP] is a guy who was a member of care staff but not in my unit. I had problems with him [Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I would say he was six feet tall, he was in his late forties or early fifties, strong looking and he had previously had a stroke."*
120. I remember this boy but I know him as [HEP]. He was one of the younger boys in the bungalow when he first arrived. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]
[Secondary Institutions - to be published later] He took an instant dislike to me. Part of this may have been because he was so small and I was big. He didn't like people telling him what to do. I couldn't deal with him and we had several 'run-ins'. To be honest I just didn't like working with this boy. He was one of the main reasons I left childcare. I voiced my complaints to my seniors about him but nothing was done about it, so I just had to soldier on.
121. I never had cause to sanction or punish [HEP] but I did have to restrain him. I can't remember what the circumstances were that I had to restrain him. It was probably because of his behaviour and that he was a danger to himself. I can't recall the specifics. He abused me a lot of times, both physically and mentally.
122. I can categorically say I never abused him in any way. In all my years at Woodlands and Cree Lodge I never abused, interfered or assaulted any child.

123. HEP goes on to say at paragraph 232:


"The first meal time was an evening meal because I got there after lunch time. I only lasted at the table for fifteen minutes before I was getting slapped and restrained. We were sitting around the table and a member of staff called HFM was telling me that I would do what I was told in there and that I thought I was a wee hard man. It was the usual spiel to me. As soon as my elbows touched the table he started shouting and swearing at me telling me to get them off. He was telling me that they have manners in this place and was calling me a scumbag. This was my first introduction to what people called table manners and it was all new to me. I did what he said. Then he said that seeing I was the new guy I was to say Grace. I asked him what he meant and he said that before we eat the evening meal they said Grace. I was starving and didn't understand so I said the word grace and I went to eat. He was screaming at me asking 'if I was taking the piss'. He told me to say Grace properly. I had no idea he was talking about some kind of blessing, like thanking the Lord for this dinner. It was stupid in a way because I thought he meant I wasn't pronouncing the word properly so I said it again emphasising the word clearly. I went to eat and he told me I had one last time to say it properly before he would slap me. The boys were looking at me and were laughing. I think they thought I was acting up. I didn't know any better. I said grace once more clearly pronouncing every letter of the word. HFM flew up in a rage, grabbed me, dragged me through the room and slapped me on my face. I think he hit me with the bottom of his hand as it sounded more like a thud than a slap. He threw me into my bedroom and shut the door. I was starving and I tried to come out and barge past him so he grabbed me by the back of the jumper and restrained me. I struggled and other members of staff came and helped restrain me. It wasn't for long, maybe five minutes, and then HFM threw me back in my room. I just crawled into bed and stayed there."

124. I would never swear at any child. I never have and just wouldn't. He says this happened in the dining hall in the main house. I don't recall HEP eating in the main dining room because I think he was in the bungalow. If he had just arrived that day, there is no way I would expect him to know about saying 'Grace'. I might shout but there is no way I would slap any child, especially in front of forty other children. There

is no way I slapped him. Because of my medical stroke I didn't have full control of my hand so my hand would either stop before it hit him, or I would have knocked his head off. I have no recollection of this incident but am certain that it didn't happen.

125. The passage of time has definitely not affected my recollection of what was alleged.
126. I can't explain why HEP would say that this happened. The only thing I can think of is that it is a personal vendetta and he has a grudge against me.
127. I agree that what HEP has said would be considered to be abuse, but it didn't happen.
128. Also in his statement, in paragraph 273 HEP goes on to say:

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129.

130.

131.

132.

133.

134.

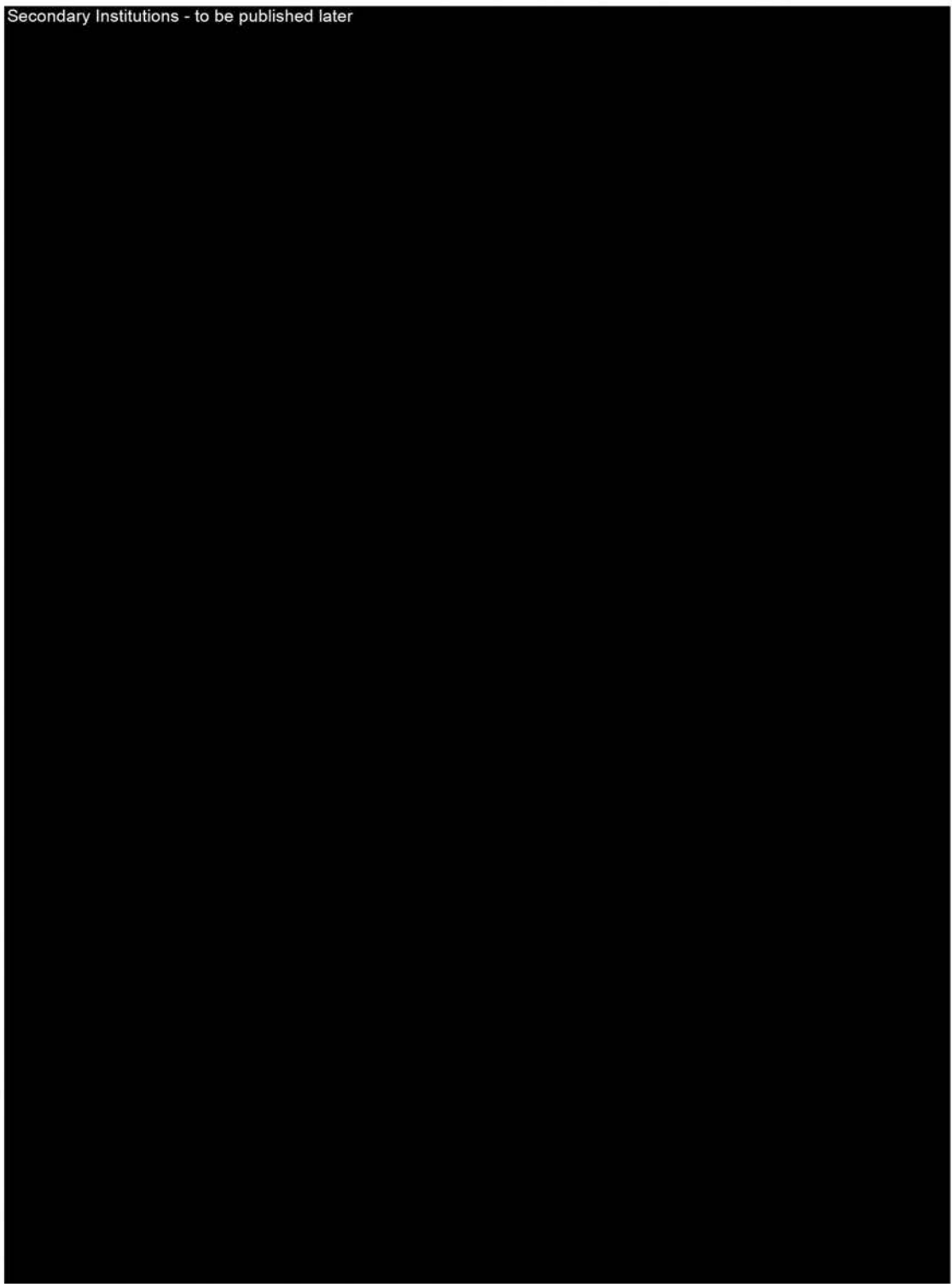
135.

136. HEP goes on at paragraph 289 to say:

137.

138. HEP [REDACTED] goes on to say at paragraphs 290 and 291:

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139.

140.

141.

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142.

143.

144.

HEP

goes on to say at paragraphs 293:

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145.

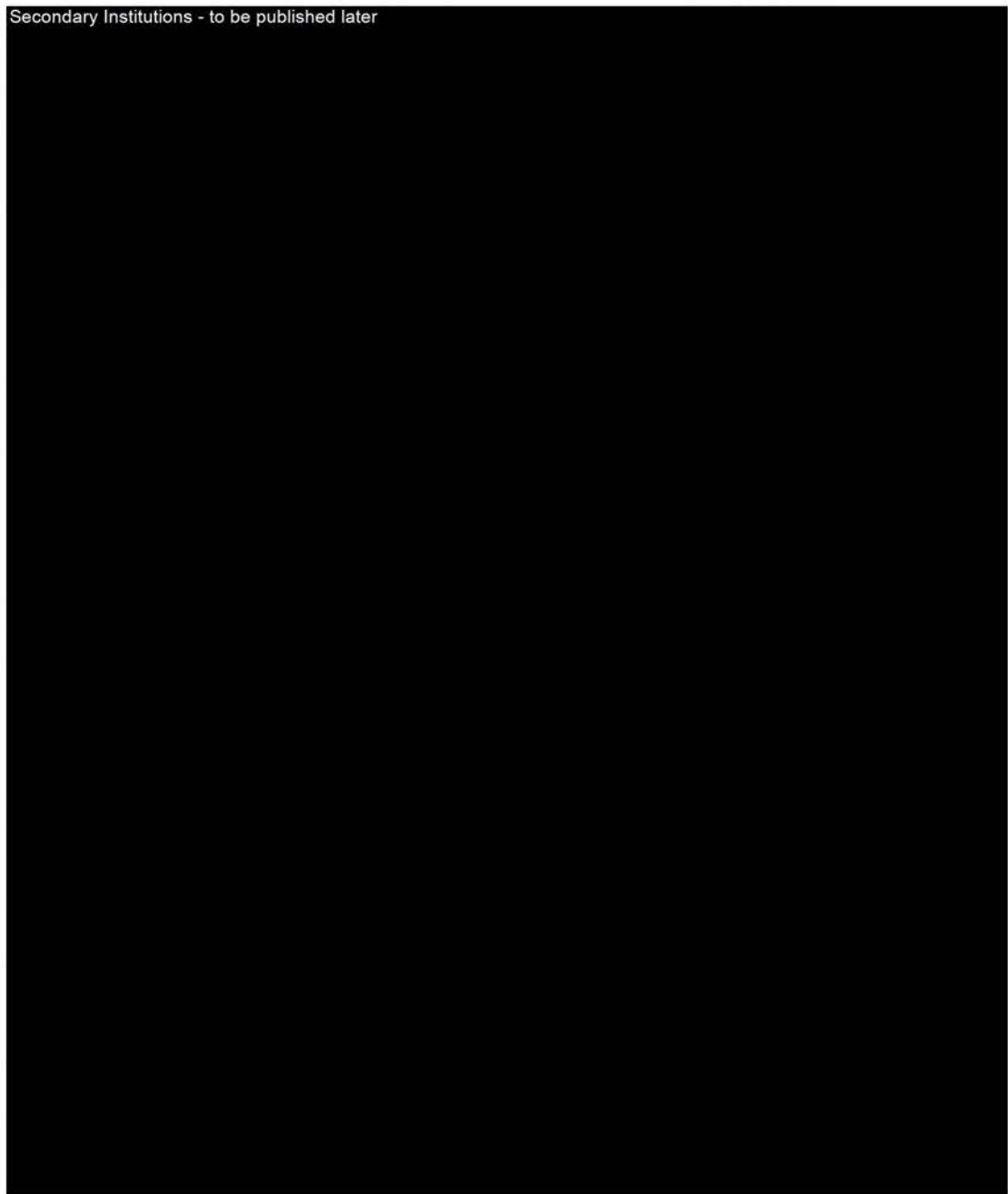
146.

HEP

, at paragraphs 294, 295 and 296 goes on to say:

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147.

148. HEP [REDACTED], at paragraph 297 goes on to say:

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later



149.

150. HEP [REDACTED], at paragraph 298 goes on to say:

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

151.

152.

153. HEP goes on to say at paragraph 299:

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154.

155.

156.

157.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



158. I have been asked if I am aware of a possible complaint against me by a [REDACTED], a child at Woodlands. I can't remember this boy. The police were never involved in relation to the incident where I was suspended.


Helping the Inquiry

159. I can't explain why [HEP] and other children will have made allegations against staff. I can only think it is because they hold a grudge or they are the victim of a vendetta. I honestly think I gave [HEP] the best I could. Everything I did for him tended to get flung back in my face and he just gave me abuse. I wasn't there to get the brunt of his bad behaviour.
160. Had I known a bit more about [HEP]'s background before he came to Woodlands, it is possible this would have helped and I may have changed the way I dealt with and treated him. It might have helped me understand why he behaved in certain ways sometimes.

Lessons to be learned

161. I have no doubt that there should be more staff training. Secondary Institutions - to be published

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Other information

162. 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 HFM

Dated... 17/4/25