

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

■ MVX ■

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is ■ MVX ■. My date of birth is ■ ■ 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. I have already signed a statement for the Inquiry on 28 February 2019 in relation to my time in care.

Introduction

2. At the moment I am receiving treatment for complex PTSD. I am in between phases of this. The first phase was to prepare me for the processing part of mental health. It's level four psychologists that I am seeing, it can't be any lower. I'm doing Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) treatment and from that I've learned about the front part of the brain's memory and trauma. I just finished the first phase in March. The treatment was for four months, twice a week, so it was really intense. During it we started getting on to things that happened when I was at Harmerly School, which I initially spoke of in my first statement.
3. The psychologist has also recommended that I have to get more sessions. It cannot just be finished at this stage. I am on a break at the moment then I go back on another four month programme. I was referred to the system by Sonia Pearson, a psychologist in Scotland who said the only treatment I should receive is with a stage four psychologist, because I have stage four PTSD. Birth Link or Future Pathways sent me to see her. She did the assessment. I attend Wirral Wellbeing and see a psychologist called Mike. He has actually just left for another job. I was doing two sessions a week. You need a ten week break after a four month session. Dealing

with my memories of Harmeny was the hardest thing and that's where all this has come out.

4. The psychologist asked me to describe Harmeny to him. I did this and he brought up a photo of it and said I'd described the building perfectly. I started to remember a lot more about Harmeny and things that happened whilst I was there. I was there for two years, from 1976 to 1978. I started high school when I left Harmeny in 1978 when I was thirteen.

Harmeny School, Balerno

5. Harmeny school is situated at the top end of Balerno. It's quite a long drive and as you come down it, there is a big, white house. It has an arch and a big, brown door. There was a bit of a garden and a wall and another archway there and that's where the kitchens were, at the back. As you go through the main door and down the corridor on the right there was a play room where they would try to calm you down. The dining room was downstairs. There were also stairs going up to different levels. As you look out the back there was a big, massive field and a fort at the bottom where we would go and hang around. Towards the left at the back there was another field with a horse in it. It was so big there was room for an athletics track there. There was a bit of a wood then a path leading down to where the cottage was. This was where you stayed your last few months before leaving Harmeny. In front of the cottage was a big field and that's where we would play sport and athletics and things.
6. When you went upstairs, that was the lads' level then up another level to the girl's area. There were some girls' dormitories off ours. The rooms where staff stayed were right at the top of the building.
7. You went to the cottage for your last few months. When you went through the door of the cottage there was a long corridor. In the middle there were seats. As you went along there was a toilet on the right and near the reception area there were boys' rooms. Girls' rooms were further up the corridor. Further on was a staff room then

another toilet then the back door, which led to a garden at the back. There were twelve of us at the cottage, six boys and six girls.

8. The classes were in a separate building at the back of the main house. I think they were made of wood, that's why there was a lot of noise. If there was a fight next door you could hear it. There were about four classrooms. These were mixed with boys and girls and they would keep the kids with their own age group. It was just chaotic there.

Schooling

9. I missed the first year of high school because of being at Harmeny, which was supposed to be primary school education. I used to visit a couple while I was at Harmeny, Harry and Muriel Leask. I don't know if they lived at the top of Balerno, but I used to go to them on a Wednesday and Harry would teach me to play chess. The numbering on the board would help me with maths. Harry was really good. They did try to give us some sort of education at Harmeny but there was nothing learned. The only thing I learned while I was there was how to play chess. I wasn't ready for high school when I left there. It was just too chaotic.

Bed Wetting

10. There is a lot of changes to what I said in my previous statement regarding bedwetting. It was a common thing with children in care. Due to abuse suffered in Harmeny and other homes I wet the bed. At Harmeny, due to mental health treatment, I was put on this medication called Tofranil. You were supposed to be a certain age before you were put on it. So I was put on this medicine to supposedly stop me bedwetting. I can't remember exactly when I was put on it, it was before Harmeny.
11. At Harmeny I was subjected to humiliating behaviour. I was laughed at by staff and when I had to take this medicine at night they made the point of saying, "MVX the bedwetter". They would laugh and joke about it. Other children would laugh at me

and call me "Pee the bed". The main members of staff that would do this were MWF, MWH and KVM, who I haven't really mentioned before. MWF and MWH would say out loud, "He's peed the bed again". This left me feeling isolated and wanting to be alone. The beds were lined up in a row, so you had other lads there laughing and taking the mickey out of you. Some staff would bring my medicine to me at night and say, "Come on MVX, you don't want to pee the bed". Again, that would trigger people to really have a go at me. Some of the lads would laugh all night, shouting, "Pee the bed". I hated this.

12. If you wet the bed they made you strip it and put the bedding on the floor. They would laugh at you, call you 'Pee the bed' and make a big thing of it. Then you were getting it all day in the classroom from other boys. I remember this medication came out but I'm not sure when I was put on it. What I remember is when I was taking it at Harmeny they were making a big thing of it. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later MWF was one of the worst, saying, "Come and get your medicine, pee the bed boy".

Visitors

13. Larry, my social worker, would visit me at Harmeny and would sometimes take me out for the day. He was the one that took me to Tranent every other weekend then back to Harmeny.
14. During my time at Harmeny Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later My sister and my brother were actually adopted. We were told by the care system that we would never be split up as a family. While I was at Harmeny I did go to the family group home I think every two weeks for the weekend. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later When I found out that they had been adopted that really got to me, but staff would throw this in my face, "You're not going to get any support, your brother and sister are gone now", because they obviously knew about it. There was a bit of humiliation about that, saying things like, "You're always going to be a loner,

you aren't going to do anything". So that was quite hard to understand and take. Again, this is from the deep trauma therapy that I had that I remembered this.

The cottage

15. You were moved around Harmeny the older you got and eventually you would end up at the cottage for your last few months. The idea was to get you ready for high school. I was nowhere near ready. My behaviour was always difficult and the bedwetting humiliation didn't stop. It seemed to be worse at the cottage, especially with MWH and MWJ, two members of staff. They seemed to want to have power over you. That is certainly how I felt.
16. Everybody wanted to go to the cottage, they didn't want to live in the main house. That is what you thought until you got there. It was actually worse. There was that much disruption and things going on. You knew at some stage you would go to the cottage and when you did you knew you didn't have long to go in Harmeny. There was a separate bathroom and shower for the boys and girls in the cottage. You had privacy when you went. There were three separate showers with doors to them and there was a bath. There was a TV in the communal area in the middle of the cottage. We all still had to be in bed for about 8:30 pm – 9:00 pm. It was 10:00 pm on a Friday or Saturday.
17. I used to go and play chess with Harry and Muriel on a Wednesday. Sometimes they would give me an apple and some sugar lumps. When I discovered there was a horse at the top of the home I would sometimes go over and I made friends with it. He was called Major. I don't know if he was owned by Harmeny or a local farm. I would eat half the apple and give him the other half. It was a period of escape for me. I ended up getting on the horse and riding it bare back, holding his mane and going round the field. I did this a few times. There was nobody else there.
18. One day I went to see the horse but he wasn't there so I went back to the cottage. I didn't think there was anybody there but MWH was in. I was a bit nervous because she was there on her own. She said I was back early and I told her that

chess finished earlier than usual. I went into my room because whatever little possessions you had you always checked to make sure they were still there, a comic or whatever. She asked me if I wanted a drink and I said I did. I didn't think anything of it. I came out of my room and she wasn't in the reception area, where they were supposed to be. She was at the door of the staff room and she said I could go up there. I thought it was odd because we were told not to go up there. She said it was ok, nobody would know, but I was still a bit wary because I'd previously had a beating from MWJ. So I was thinking, he might come back to the cottage at any time.

19. I went into the staff room and there was a two seater brown chair in it with bright yellow cushions on it. She told me to sit down and gave me a cup of blackcurrant juice and a chocolate biscuit. She sat down next to me but initially there was a gap between us. She started sliding closer to me and said, "You think I'm nice don't you?". I said, "No, what do you mean?". I was getting a bit scared. I knew if MWJ came in and I was in the staff room I would be getting it. She moved closer to me and started cuddling me and touching me on the face. I started moving, squeezing myself to the other end of the couch to get away but she put her arm round me and on the arm rest. She started kissing me on the cheek and moving her body closer to me and asked if I wanted to see her bra. I said, "No, not really", but she took her top off and she had a black bra on. She was really trying to get close to me and I was getting more scared. I managed to slip off the couch a bit and said I needed to go to the toilet. She looked at me and laughed and said "No-one needs to know." I went to the toilet knowing there was a door at the back I could get out. I went into the back garden and there was a big window that looked into the staff room. I saw her putting her top back on and walking back down to the reception area. I just stayed in the back garden.
20. After that incident MWH continued to look at me and I got the feeling she was thinking she had power over me. Nothing else happened with her but I always tried to keep my distance from her. I left Harmeny about two months after that incident and started school. I think I started late, in the of that year. I didn't

tell anybody about what happened with MWH as I was too scared. Nobody else mentioned that anything similar had happened to them.

Abuse at Harmeny School, Balerno

21. After a few short weeks of being in Harmeny I noticed that kids were being invited up to staff rooms. From being from the home background I'd already had I was a bit of a loner and would go out into the garden quite a lot. The staff involved seemed to be mainly MWI and his girlfriend KVH. She had long dark hair and was quite slim. I didn't fancy it at first then one of the lads, I think his name was said to me that you got juice and biscuits and things like that, and you got to listen to music. It seemed to be on a Friday or one night during the week. After a while I changed my mind and thought I might try it one time.
22. It seemed all innocent to start with when we were all in these rooms. After going a few times MWI asked me one night if I liked girls. I wondered what he meant and I sort of laughed and asked him why. He then asked the girls if they liked boys. I didn't really think much of it being the age I was. The music he would play would be things like, The Beatles, Abba, The Beach boys and Steely Dan. He would put on the audio of the book War of the Worlds and got us to lie on the floor to listen to it. You didn't really think about it but he would have us lying down in order of boy, girl, boy, girl. MWI or KVH didn't do anything to us physically. MWI sat on the window sill, next to his stereo. It seemed strange that they were doing this and they told us to get closer and closer to each other. At that time it was just MWI and KVH there were no other staff involved. They said to the boys, "If you like the girl next to you, give her a kiss". It felt strange. We just giggled but he got quite persuasive, saying things like, "Oh, go on". You looked at the girl next to you and maybe gave her a kiss on the cheek and that was it. This became a regular occurrence with MWI and KVH but as you moved around to the different dorms and rooms in Harmeny, other staff members would be there. I think at the beginning this was planned and it felt like that was us getting to the stage where we were made to dance with female staff, as I've mentioned in my previous statement.

23. The boys and girls that I hung around with, PHB [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to MWI and KVH's room with. I ended up in the cottage with them too. You tended to hang around with the same people. It's the only way you could get through things there. When we went to MWI and KVH's room they were the only two members of staff initially. They seemed to be grooming us.
24. When we were in the cottage we were still invited up to the staff rooms in the main house by MWI, KVH or MWH [REDACTED]. It was mainly MWI or KVH's room, or MWG [REDACTED]'s room, who I mentioned in my previous statement. I don't know if they shared a room but I know they were a couple. They were the instigators but they never got involved in touching us. It was always the other members of staff.
25. My own thoughts on it are, from day one, was there was grooming and a paedophile ring working in Harmeny school? In my view I think there was. That was just the beginning. I have remembered this from the mental health treatment I am receiving. Harmeny school was one of the worst homes I was ever in.
26. Having a fight with another boy wasn't a two minute thing at Harmeny, because everybody wanted to see who the big 'I am' was. We would batter each other to bits and pick up anything to hit each other with. I was always fighting with different lads. I once had a fight and we picked up sticks and continually hit each other on the legs and the arms. It was with PHB [REDACTED]. The two of us decided to go to the wall where there was an arch, behind the kitchen. We thought no-one could see us. We wanted to see who was the hardest. We went at it for ages. The next thing, MWJ [REDACTED] MWJ [REDACTED], a member of staff, appeared at the archway. We stopped and looked at him and he grabbed us and pushed us against the wall. He was cursing and swearing at us, spitting as he was talking. The look he gave us was of pure evil, it was terrifying. He said, "If I see you fighting again I will kill both of you". The fight stopped and we were terrified. We were covered in blood but he didn't let us get cleaned up or anything.

27. MWJ [REDACTED] was affiliated with the [REDACTED] at Harmeny school. He was a big bully. I hated him and was always scared of him. I harmed myself a lot at Harmeny and the staff would laugh at it. MWJ [REDACTED] said I was doing it on purpose when I punched walls and things. I remember saying to him, "I'll be dead one day and I'll be away from you". That's how terrified I was of him. Every time there was [REDACTED] everybody would wonder what he was going to do to somebody next. It was his way or no way. I don't know what his actual role was at the school, but he was in charge of sports and [REDACTED]. He was six foot something, had an athletic build, beard and glasses with dark hair. He was very strong. I don't know if he stayed within Harmeny but he never seemed to be away from the place.
28. SNR [REDACTED] at Harmeny was KVJ [REDACTED]. He always came across as a nice guy but then I found out that he wasn't. I remember one time we were out playing in the gardens, kick the can or whatever. I fell over and cracked a bone in my arm. I had to go to hospital for an x-ray. He took me but the whole way there he was at me, saying things like, "You've done this on purpose", and "You are a stupid attention seeker". How could I fall over and crack a bone in my arm on purpose? When he saw me getting angry and harming myself he would say, "You are hurting yourself on purpose aren't you?" He had a habit of giving you a rabbit punch to the arm and giving you a dead arm and a dead leg. I saw him do it to other boys too. He would line us up and ask who wanted a dead arm, so we would cover our arms up and he would hit you in the leg.
29. It used to happen sometimes as you were going into the classroom. He would turn up and line us up and do the same thing, "Who wants a dead arm?" You didn't know if he was going to hit you or another kid. He seemed to laugh about it. He was quite slim and had brownish hair, I can't remember whether he had a moustache or not. I remember one day he said to me that I wet the bed as a 'pro-active act' from a young age. I was often told by him and other staff that I overreacted about events. If I was humiliated for wetting the bed I would go off on one and KVJ [REDACTED] grabbed me by the neck and twisted my arm and moved me out of the way. I saw him do this to other boys a few times if there was a fight and he was there. As he was doing this I would tell him to "Fuck off" because I was raging, so he would do it quite a lot.

30. He called me thick and said I was useless and that I could never sit still, I was a 'fidget'. He also called me a "Disturbed little young boy" and laughed at me. He told me I should be locked away. He said this to me on numerous occasions.
31. There was another member of staff called KVM. I can't remember his surname. He liked to give you a dead leg as well. Sometimes he would be passing and punch you on the leg for no reason, just because he thought it was funny.
32. That's the stage I'm at with my therapy. That's everything I remember. The next stage of therapy is to help me process it all.

Leaving Harmeny School, Balerno

33. At some point my social worker Larry told me I was leaving Harmeny and going back to the family group home in Tranent and getting sorted out to go to high school. I started high school half way through a term, so all the other kids had been there for a few months. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions never left the family group home. and were adopted to different families, so they were separated too. After was adopted I never saw her. We reconnected a few years ago but the relationship was never the same. It's been on and off over the last eight years. That's been one of the biggest impacts on me. This is because of the system and the fact they said we would never be split up as a family.

Impact

34. My time in care has had a massive impact on me, even now Birth Link sent me more information. I knew I had another brother but I hadn't really looked into it. I then found out I had another two sisters and a brother, because my dad married again and had three more kids. I only found that out a few years ago. I've only tried to

contact one of them and we met up last year. But there isn't really anything there, the odd message now and again. My dad's three kids to his second wife were never in the care system and he wasn't the bad man we were led to believe he was. He was actually a nice guy. He died of cancer. They said they had a good upbringing with him and they all have good jobs.

35. I've had two lots of treatment over the last twelve months and I've been told I will need another three lots of treatment. The psychologist said I can't just stop where I am. It will be to help me deal with all the trauma that happened.

Records

36. I have been sent my social services records. I have never looked at them. I think there are names blacked out on them for some reason. Birth Link and Rachel from Future Pathways told me not to read them because it might be too upsetting, so I haven't touched them since, along with my first statement I gave the Inquiry. I was thinking of destroying my records, why do I need them?

Redress

37. Last year I had a solicitor from Thompson's act on my behalf and she mentioned the redress scheme but she told me there wasn't enough evidence. I told her she had all my social service records, all the police reports from 2001 and two witness statements from people I grew up with, so why isn't there enough evidence? She kept side tracking, so I tried to get another solicitor to help me, who came out with the same thing. So I did an individually assessed redress application myself and sent it in. A panel sat in March or April 2023 and they gave me an offer in a letter on 24 May 2023. It listed all my care placements except Harmeny. There was no mention of it whatsoever. A good friend of mine said I should take the offer because we thought maybe Harmeny isn't on it for a reason. I got back in touch with them a couple of months later and they are now trying to add Harmeny in, saying it was already included in the offer I got. To me that is incompetence and wrong. I took the

offer, however I am disputing the fact that Harmeny wasn't included. I'm going to keep fighting.

Other information

38. 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..  MVX

Dated.. 30/7/24