

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KVI

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is KVI. My date of birth is 1987. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going to the Royal Blind School

2. I was born in London and lived there until I was about three years old. My dad is also called [REDACTED] and my biological mother is [REDACTED]. I don't have any contact with her. The lady I call mum is [REDACTED], who my dad later married and who has been a big part of my life for many years now.
3. I have a big family, although it's a bit dysfunctional. The oldest of my siblings is my sister [REDACTED], who is two or three years older than me and there is [REDACTED], who is about four years younger. I also have a step-brother called [REDACTED], who is three years younger and who was [REDACTED]'s son from a previous relationship, and I have half-brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who my dad had with a different partner. They are quite a bit younger.
4. I was born twelve weeks prematurely with a condition called retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), which is a visual impairment. I am registered blind although I do have some sight. I can see some colours and the outlines of people and objects. In those days, to be born so early was basically a death sentence. I was read my last rites and apparently I died three times and had thirty-two blood transfusions. I was on a life support machine for the first three months of my life.

5. I don't remember much of my early childhood, although I know that it was a good one. My dad always treated me like I wasn't visually impaired. If I wanted to go and climb a tree, he would tell me I could, but if I broke my leg I wasn't to go crying to him. I got into scrapes here and there, made friends, lost friends, it was an average childhood.
6. When I was about three years old we moved up to Wester Hailes in Edinburgh to be with my dad's mum and dad, who stayed in Murrayburn. I think I was about five when my parents split up and my dad brought [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself up by himself.
7. When I was of an age to go to nursery, my dad caught wind of the Royal Blind School at Craigmillar Park in Edinburgh. He thought that would be the best place for me and so I ended up going there from nursery right through to leaving age at eighteen.
8. I remember the nursery was down the street from the main Royal Blind School building, in an old Victorian building that I think was called Barry House, but I don't remember much of my time there.

The Royal Blind School, Craigmillar Park, Edinburgh

General

9. There are lots of buildings that formed the Royal Blind School in its grounds at 16 Craigmillar Park.
10. The main building was huge and I think was built in 1901, or thereabouts. It had a basement, ground floor, middle floor, second, third and fourth floors and contained both classrooms and residential areas. The floors upstairs were all named after the Scottish Islands, like Islay and Arran.
11. As you came in the ground floor of the main building from reception, you came to the grand staircase and if you turned left you would go past the library on your right, the school office and then the headmaster's office on your left, before you came to another set of stairs.

12. At those stairs was a corridor that led to the boys' toilets and a fire exit, which led out to a building called the Hostel. If you went straight on past the stairs you would get to the music room and a classroom on the left for learning development, which was for people with special needs. Further down the corridor swung off to the left and took you all the way down to the gym, the changing rooms and the primary school. On the right off that corridor was the common room and the locker room.
13. If you went back to the grand staircase and turned to your right, there was a lift on your left and the maths room on your right. Further along the history room was on your right and then the deputy head's room and more stairs on the left. Then there was another wee corridor that took you to the girls' changing rooms and another fire exit and directly to the right was the soft play area and the drama room.
14. If you went up the grand staircase, there were more staircases going up again and on the first floor, Islay, you first came to the religious and moral education (RME) room and the mobility instructors' rooms. Further along there were the independence flats where the young adults would learn to live by themselves with staff popping in every now and again. In the independence flats there was a living room on your right, three bedrooms on your left and a fire escape down the bottom.
15. If you came back to the grand staircase, down to the left there were more residential areas on the left and at the very end, which must have had about three bedrooms each. At the grand staircase on Islay level there was also a living room area and a kitchen area and another corridor that split off to the left and right where there were another three bedrooms on each side.
16. If you went through the double doors that were there you entered another residential area that was called the West Wing, I think. It was on two levels, but both were exactly the same. On each level there was a phone box and staircase on the right and six or seven rooms all the way on the left of the corridor, leading to a fire escape. On the right, halfway along, was the living room, which led onto the kitchen.

17. The next floor up was called Arran where to the right there were three bedrooms on each side. Further along to the left was the kitchen and living area on the right and even further along, the hallway split to the left and also went straight on. Where it split was another play room where there was a snooker table, although that got changed to another classroom while I was there. Directly across at the split was a small kitchen and a huge dining room. Further along the corridor was another classroom and a staff room on the left, a conference room on the right and then two staff bedrooms.
18. Up the staircase again at the back was a small office where a lady called Margaret Haggart, who dealt with all the transport side of things, worked. There was the English classroom on the right and directly across from there was the I.T. classroom. To the left was a computing room and further along again was the main kitchen and then the home economics room, the art room and another learning development room. At the end were more toilets and the kiln room on the left side.
19. The primary school was built onto the main building and accessed through the gym. As you went down the corridor at the gym, there were changing rooms on the right and two classrooms at the bottom. To the left were another five classrooms in a row and to the right were toilets and a small kitchen area. If you carried on to the right you would get to the primary school staff room on your left and a set of fire doors. Beside the fire doors was the office for the primary headmistress and another two rooms that were used for overflow.
20. The quickest way to the nursery was through the primary school and out through gates there. Then you turned left and then right and walked all the way down to the bottom of Craigmillar Park.
21. Back in the grounds of the school, facing the primary school, was Dreaver House, which was a residential area that was used for primary school kids. In primary we sometimes would go into Dreaver at break times. Behind Dreaver was the Hostel, which was for people who were a bit older, who could live more independently.

22. There was a massive green area in the grounds that everyone used for football and there were also three or four sets of swings and other play park equipment. There was also a swimming pool at the school, so we were quite lucky.

Structure

23. The age range of students at the Royal Blind School was from nursery age up to, in some cases, about twenty years old. The length of time someone could remain at the school depended on their council authority and on their development. The council from wherever the student came were usually providing the funding and it costs roughly £40,000 to £50,000 each year for each student.
24. At its peak when I was at the school there were 314 pupils, but there weren't always that many. There were boys and girls, all of whom had some visual impairment and who ranged from people like myself, who were perfectly able, to people in wheelchairs with cerebral palsy and people with severe learning disabilities.
25. The number of children that stayed in the residences varied over the years and depended whether their local authority could afford it. Some students stayed for the whole term and just went home for the holidays, some went home every weekend and some, like myself, were day pupils. It was also possible to stay the odd night, as I did when I got older.
26. I always went home while I was in the primary school, but there were many children from all over that stayed in the various residential areas.
27. The headmistress of the primary school when I started was a lady called Margaret, I think, and the headmaster of the main school was an older man. I can't remember his name, but I do remember he always wore golf jumpers with diamonds on them. He left when I was about eight and a fantastic guy called Kevin Tansley took over. My dad was actually pretty good mates with him, so I was pretty much the headmaster's golden boy.

28. Mr Tansley left when I was about twelve or thirteen and a lady called Margaret Thompson, I think it was, took over. She had ginger hair and I always used to think she walked in her high heels like she had a tangerine stuck up her backside.

Routine at The Royal Blind School

Primary School

29. I remember driblets and drabs of my first years at the Royal Blind School. I remember that at first you had to walk through the gym to get from the primary school to the main school. Then they converted that and made a corridor and I can remember picking the putty off the window there.
30. I also remember being in Dreaver house at break times and I can remember playing in the garden there and in an old air raid shelter. One time one of my pals, [REDACTED] who was completely blind, decided to walk along the path that went around the shelter. He veered off a bit and ended up falling down the steps into the shelter, although I don't think he was hurt.
31. Generally my time at primary school was good from what I remember. At first we wore our own clothes and then it got more formal when I was about seven and we had to wear a shirt and trousers. When I was about ten or eleven we changed to a uniform which was a red polo shirt with 'R.B.S.' and a shield on it and a navy blue sweatshirt on top, along with black or grey trousers.
32. I was still living with my dad in Wester Hailes and travelled to and from the school in a taxi every day. When I was twelve or thirteen we moved to Blackburn and I used to get a taxi from there.
33. The move from primary to secondary was, I think, just like at any normal school. We did a test when we were in primary seven, however I was kept back a year because I failed that. I passed it the second time and moved into S1. It was pretty straightforward.

Secondary School

34. I was twelve when I started in the secondary school and, as far as I remember, it was alright. We followed a timetable and moved through the different classes as at any school, except that on a Monday we didn't start until 10:20 a.m. to allow people from further away to get to the school.
35. When I was about thirteen, it was arranged that I could stay at the school one night a week, on the Monday, so that I could participate in athletics training. I was taking my athletics really seriously by that time and it was much easier to stay over.

The Hostel

36. At first I stayed in Arran residence but, because my independence skills were developing really well, I was put into the Hostel, which was for the more able-bodied students.
37. There were about ten students in total in the Hostel, mainly boys, but a couple of girls as well. Some had their own room and some shared. I shared a room with a boy called [REDACTED], although he wasn't there every night.
38. I think there were four staff in the Hostel and there was also a staff sleepover room. One member of staff stayed up during the night and they came on duty about 8:00 pm. The rest of the staff bar one would go home and the one that stayed would sleepover, so that technically there were always two members of staff on duty.
39. The staff were there for support if we needed it in day-to-day life, or if we had any concerns. They looked after our general welfare, but in the main we were just left to our own devices really.

Daily routine at the Hostel

40. I stayed at home every night except the Monday when we would get back from athletics about 6:00 pm. We would have our dinner in the main dining hall and then we would make our way to the various residencies that we were all assigned to. After that we would generally just relax or we would go to the shops or for a walk, whatever we wanted. Bedtime was 10:00 pm or 11:00 pm, dependent on our age.
41. Breakfast in the Hostel on the Tuesday morning was between 7:00 am and 8:00 am. We'd all have chores to do, like cooking or setting the tables for breakfast, things like that. Basic household chores to get us used to independent living. After that we would go to school and during the day we would go back over to the Hostel for breaks.
42. At breaks during the school day, if we didn't go to the Hostel we might go to the shops, or have a kick about outside. Lunch was always served in the main hall on the second floor of the main school building. After lunch everyone would go to their various residences to relax until school started again at 1:30 pm. Depending what the schedule was, we'd have dinner in the main hall on the Monday evening as well, although sometimes it was in the Hostel.
43. When we were relaxing at the Hostel, we would generally watch the TV or have a kick about of a football, that sort of thing, until bedtime.

Washing and bathing

44. The residences in the main building all had disabled toilets that were equipped with showers and there was also one bath for each residence, which meant that each three rooms on each floor had two showers and a bath. In the Hostel there was a shower room next to my bedroom and another on the opposite side of the building. There was also a bath downstairs next to the kitchen and it was the same layout with two showers for the girls on the top floor.

45. We could use the showers and the baths whenever we wanted, there was no supervision.

Schooling

46. The structure of the academic side of the school was good and included all the usual subjects, which we moved about from class to class for. There was religious and moral education, but there wasn't any more by way of religious instruction.
47. I think I was getting on okay until I was fifteen when it all went downhill. I think I could have done better academically. I walked away with an 'A' in Higher History, an 'A' in Higher Music, a 'Level four' in English, which was never my strong point, and I just got a 'Level three' in Maths. I also got a 'two' in my I.T. GCSE.

Sporting Activities

48. I took athletics quite seriously, I enjoyed it and got a lot out of it. I also enjoyed swimming and I used to compete in both. The school encouraged sports and as well as being part of the school day you could do sports after school too. There was obviously the gym and P.E. and there was swimming, there were sports days when everyone in the school took part, and there were athletics.
49. When we finished school on a Monday at 4:00 pm, I would go and grab all my athletics kit, make my way to the reception area and then be taken to Meadowbank, where we would train for an hour. I used to run the 100 metres, 400 metres, 800 metres and I also did the long-jump and javelin.
50. I became good and used to compete with the athletics team. I became a member of the British Blind Sports Association, which was for people that might eventually compete in the Paralympics. I also became the [REDACTED] Champion in athletics and in disability swimming.

51. With both the athletics and the swimming teams, I went round Britain competing in various competitions. We went to Birmingham for athletics and Worcester for swimming and other places around the country too.

Personal possessions

52. Our bedroom doors locked and we all had bedside cabinets where we would keep any personal possessions. We also kept our clothes in chests of drawers in our own rooms and we had lockers in the school where we could keep things as well.

External Inspections

53. Every now and then external inspectors would come to the school. There would be a massive upheaval so that everything could be made perfect. People would be told to stay in line and everything would be as clean as possible. We never really got a chance to speak to any of the inspectors though. They would just pop their heads into classrooms and that would be about it.
54. I remember Prince Phillip came to the school at one time. There was security at the gates, snipers on the roof and the army. I think he was there to present some of the kids with their Duke of Edinburgh awards. I never did the Duke of Edinburgh award, it wasn't my thing really.

Discipline

55. If anyone misbehaved there was detention and if that didn't sort you, you would be sent to the headmistress or headmaster and they might phone your parents.

Abuse at The Royal Blind School

56. When I was fifteen and staying in the Hostel on a Monday night, I was raped by a boy from the year above called PWU [REDACTED] who would have been sixteen or seventeen at the time. I think he was from [REDACTED] and stayed all week at the school.

Some of my memories of what happened are flashbacks that didn't come back to me until a couple of years after, some I remember vividly from when it happened.

57. About 7:00 pm on [REDACTED] 2002, I was sitting in the living room of the Hostel watching the TV when PWU offered me a drink. Never in his life had he offered me a drink before, however I accepted a hot chocolate.
58. He sat down next to me and we were just chatting when he told me he had some issues with his laptop. Everybody knew that I was a genius with computers back then and I asked him what was wrong with it. He told me it had the blue screen of death so I told him to bring it down and I'd have a look. Instead he told me to come up to his room, so I agreed.
59. I went upstairs and into his room and he passed me his laptop. I booted it up and started to muck around with it, but I wasn't getting anywhere. As I sat there on the floor next to his bedside table, with my back against his bed, I started to feel a bit strange.
60. I shook it off and carried on, however the next thing I knew I woke up, feeling really drowsy and not quite sure where I was. I looked round to my right and saw a clock and at the same time I noticed that I was lying sideways over PWU bed. His face was in my face and I heard him say "I love you" before I passed out again. I can still see his big brown glasses in my face.
61. I came to again and the first thing I noticed was the smell of PWU breath. It smelt of really bad acid reflux. Then I realised that PWU was inside me and I passed out again.
62. I came to again as he was pulling himself off me and I realised that both his trousers and my trousers were down. I came to a bit more and turned round and, although I wasn't quite sure what had been going on, I said "What the fuck are you doing?".
63. I was confused and dazed and PWU panicked and put his hand round my throat and said "It's alright, you're alright". I pushed him off and he fell back and I pulled my

trousers up. I can still remember I was wearing a green athletics top and tracksuit trousers.

64. I staggered to the door and he went to pull me back, but I pushed him away and managed to get the door open and go into my room, which was next door. PWU followed me, constantly asking if I was alright. Panicking. He tried to stop me shutting my door, but I said I was fine and managed to shut it.
65. It must have been about 10:30 pm by then and I lay on my bed with the door locked, dazed and confused as to what had just happened.
66. The next thing I knew I looked at the clock and it was about 12:00 pm and I couldn't sleep so I went downstairs. There was one night staff on, Maisie I think her name was, and she was watching the news. I made myself a coffee and sat down on the sofa and all she asked me was "Can you not sleep". I told her I couldn't, without even looking at her and she carried on doing whatever she was doing.
67. I don't really blame Maisie, I never really spoke to her much anyway, but she was care staff and she should have noticed something was wrong. Instead she just carried on doing what she was doing, as if nothing had happened. I was just sitting there in a daze.
68. I finished my coffee and went back upstairs, feeling really numb and confused and curled up on my bed with my clothes on. About 2:00 am I couldn't sleep so I went and had a shower. I must have sat in that shower, fully clothed, for around two hours.
69. I finally came to my senses and went back to my room, changed out of my wet clothes and just lay on my bed, staring at the ceiling. I remember just staring at the light from the clock alarm for hours.
70. About 7:00 am, one of the staff came upstairs and shouted me to get up, so I did. I went down for breakfast, but avoided PWU and just sat staring at my bowl of cereal. One of the staff asked why I wasn't eating, but I never ate in the morning anyway, so

it was nothing new. I wasn't myself at all though. I was quiet, suppressed. I didn't want to talk to anybody.

Reporting of abuse at The Royal Blind School

71. I tried to get through the whole day being normal. I tried to figure out what had happened and at swimming later that day one of my pals took me aside and asked me what was wrong. I refused to tell him, but when it was time to get changed I didn't want to do so in front of my classmates. Even though they couldn't see, they could hear that I wasn't changing.
72. One of my pals, [REDACTED], came and sat next to me and asked me what was wrong so I told him. He went and got a member of staff from the pool, who then phoned the headmistress, Margaret Thompson, to tell her that I needed to speak to her urgently.
73. I went from the pool all the way up the drive into Margaret Thompson's office and went in. I sat there from about 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm, trying to explain and eventually I managed to get it out. She sat and listened and at the end all she said was "I'm going to have to inform your dad" and I just crumbled.
74. She left me and about half-an-hour later she came and told me my taxi was on the way and it would take me straight home. Usually I would speak to the driver, but I never said a word on that journey.
75. When I got home, I walked in, head down, not really sure what to expect. My dad was there, along with my mum and CID officers who introduced themselves as being from the Child Protection Unit. I can't remember much of the questions they asked, just that they asked me first off whether I knew what the definition of a lie is. I was interviewed in the livingroom, in front of my parents, and then the police left.
76. The following morning, someone from the school must have phoned my dad because he told me that the school had said I wasn't to go into the school for a week, whilst

investigations were ongoing. I stayed at home all week and phoned a few of my friends to ask if PWU was still around and found out that he was.

77. I couldn't believe that he was allowed to carry on at the school and I was made to stay at home. I felt like I had done wrong. I thought that the school maybe thought I was making the whole thing up.
78. The day after it happened I asked my dad what Margaret Thompson had said on the phone when she contacted him to make him aware of the incident. I can't remember the full conversation, but the bits that stick in my head are that as soon as my dad heard he told her he wanted her to get the police. Straight away Margaret Thompson said there was no need and that "Is this not just what kids this age do". She never did get the police, my dad did and that's why they were waiting at home for me.
79. The following week, when I went back to school, PWU had been expelled. The fact it took them a week to come to the decision to expel him beggars belief. As far as I'm aware, the school had no inquiry into what had happened.
80. When I went back, I was met by Margaret Thompson and Margaret Haggart, the transport executive, although God knows why she was there, and another lady. They sat me down, asked me how I was feeling and told me they didn't want what had happened to leave the school. They told me that if I needed to speak to anybody I was to speak to them.
81. Obviously with the conversation my dad told me he'd had with Margaret Thompson, that just put my guard up straight away. I knew their game, so I didn't complain. Every day they would ask how I was doing, but I said nothing.
82. Later that week, possibly Thursday, the press had got hold of the story somehow; I can still remember the headline in [REDACTED]. The whole school got called into assembly and Margaret Thompson told us all that there had been an incident, but that we were not to speak to the press, or to our parents, it was under control. She told us

that anyone who was found to have spoken to the press, or to their parents would be dealt with and if anyone had any concerns they must speak to the school.

83. I lost it. I stood up in the assembly room and started shouting and I was ushered out. I shouted "How dare you cover this up" and "Parents have a right to know" and things along those lines. After that I was basically silenced. Margaret Thompson told me that if I carried on I would be expelled.
84. I told my dad about it and to say he was annoyed would be an understatement. He got on the phone to Margaret Thompson, however she denied the school were trying to cover it up. My dad then wrote a letter to the board of governors, or whoever it is that runs the school, complaining about Margaret Thompson, but he got nothing back.
85. After all of that, something just clicked inside me and I turned to drink and drugs. I was smoking marijuana and I was taking cocaine to deal with it. I knew the school were trying to sweep it all under the carpet from the minute the headmistress told my dad there was no need to inform the police.
86. I was caught several times by various teachers and care staff with drink and drugs in the school. I remember one teacher who searched my pockets and found marijuana was called PWM who I think was Head of Care, although I'm not certain of her role. It was taken off me, but nothing was said to my parents, or to the police, even though they threatened to do so. They were scared of the repercussions.
87. On one occasion when I would have been about sixteen, one of the care staff in the Hostel found a can of lighter fluid under my bed. It was just for filling my cigarette lighter, but I got called in to see Margaret Thompson who accused me of having it for sniffing. I told her I had better things to do than that and when she challenged me I showed her the ounce of marijuana I had in my pocket. That was the second time I had been caught with drugs, but even then nothing was said to my parents.
88. My dad was only actually called in one time, although I can't remember what it was about, something to do with my behaviour. I was walking past the grand stairs when

all of a sudden my dad came out of Margaret Thompson's office. He just told me he'd see me at home and later he told me that he had told Margaret Thompson the school were going to have to do more to support me, but still nothing happened.

89. They kept trying to talk to me, asking me why I was drinking and taking drugs, but they never offered me any specialist support. Even when the subsequent court case took place there was absolutely nothing whatsoever.

Leaving The Royal Blind School

90. I left the Royal Blind School at eighteen. I'd just stayed on for the sake of it, although I tried my best to get the grades that I did. I knew that if I'd left the Blind School and gone to my local school, they wouldn't have had the facilities the Blind School had, so I stayed there.

Life after being in care

91. I carried on with my athletics for a bit after I left school, until I got an injury and had to stop. I was still drinking and taking marijuana, probably for another year or two, until something clicked inside me. I realised I had to shake myself up.
92. When I left school I got a job as a child minder on taxis, doing the same as had been done for me when I was travelling to and from the Royal Blind School. I used to sit in the taxi with the kids, making sure they were safe and well. I did that for a while until I got sacked. The driver caught me sneaking a drink and reported me and I got the sack there and then, which was understandable.
93. I then got a job on a couple of building sites as a general labourer, however a brick fell on my head so I left that quite quickly.
94. I never had any support to stop taking drugs and stop drinking. I got chucked out of the family home when I was eighteen or nineteen, not long after I'd left school, after I'd accrued masses of debt from borrowing money from them. I managed to come off

the drink and drugs myself though and my life sort of evened itself out. I moved up to Aberdeen and got a job [REDACTED] there for a while. I did a bit of everything in that job, including security, working on the back door and in the stockroom, various things. I was in that job for three years.

95. After that I moved down to Falkirk to be with my girlfriend at the time and I tried to get another job, but I just couldn't find one. In 2019 my girlfriend and I had a little boy we called [REDACTED] however that relationship went sour and I've not seen my little boy since.

Impact

96. I believe that as a result of the school's reaction to what happened and the lack of support that there was, my education suffered. I became a lot more rebellious. I wouldn't do as I was told and I would get right up in the staffs' faces. I was sent to the headmistress, Margaret Thompson, quite a bit. I wouldn't turn up for detentions and I lost interest in being there and in being educated.
97. Often I wouldn't answer the door when the taxi came to take me to school. The driver would wait twenty minutes and then go. The school never even bothered phoning my dad when I didn't attend. Eventually, when I went back in Margaret Thompson or one of the other staff would ask where I'd been, but I would just tell them I'd been ill. It got so frequent that they just stopped asking.
98. I kept on at the athletics and swimming because it was an escape. It was something I felt good at, something I was succeeding at. Something that I could control.
99. I stopped staying over on the Monday night about a month after I was assaulted. I couldn't face being in the Hostel, so I ended up making my own way back home. The majority of the time I'd end up in the pub and then stagger home. I was sixteen, but the bouncers at the pub I went to never did anything. It was different then I suppose. I had my cane and they just used to help me in, telling me to watch the step. That pub became my second home for the next couple of years until I could legally drink.

100. I was regularly taking drugs as well. I took marijuana during the day and when I went out drinking, which was almost every night, I took cocaine. It was all just to escape.
101. I was quite an angry person because I didn't know how to deal with what had happened to me. With experiencing such negativity from the school I didn't see the point in speaking about it because nobody would help me. The school were supposed to support me and look after my welfare but they didn't, so I thought why would anybody else.
102. My life has been a rollercoaster with good times and bad times and I generally don't let what happened to me affect me, except that throughout my life I've never liked being in the company of men. I'm really wary, I always have my guard up and I always analyse other men to try and work out if they have an ulterior motive. Perhaps as a result I can't stand social events and I try and not go to any.
103. I suffered severe depression for years and I think that's linked to what happened. I didn't have a diagnosis as such, doctors just fob you off with pills and I never really wanted to talk about it.
104. I had a mental breakdown in 2011, while I was still in Aberdeen. I just didn't want to be here anymore so I spoke to my doctor, who handed me a note and I got a taxi to Cornhill Hospital. I handed the note to the receptionist and people came and spoke to me and I told them I didn't want to be here. They asked me what I would do if they let me go and I told them I would end it all.
105. I was sectioned, but they never got anything out of me. I never spoke to the psychiatrists, I didn't see the point. I was quite closed off and I suppose psychiatrists can only push so far. I was there for just under two weeks but, because the psychiatrists weren't getting anywhere, eventually they just let me go.
106. I also used to self-harm and did so since I was probably about nineteen or twenty. It became a coping mechanism when I was in a really dark place. It started off with me

██████████. I would get in fights just to feel pain and I was arrested a couple of time, although I was never charged. Eventually it progressed to cutting myself.

107. My self-confidence has been lacking ever since too, but all that has been something I've learned to live with. As soon as I found out we were having my wee boy ██████████ I've not self-harmed. Something just clicked in my head and I stopped.
108. I can't stand the smell of condoms, they are a massive trigger for me. Although at first everything that happened to me was grainy, after a while I started having flashbacks. At first I couldn't remember everything that happened and I didn't really understand what had gone on. My mind sort of closed off for a bit. After a while I started getting flashbacks, smelling his breath, hearing him say "I love you", seeing his mole-covered face with his dark glasses and that went on for a few years.
109. For about a week before every ██████████ comes round and for about a week after I can't stop thinking about what happened. It's still there and it's not easy to deal with, but I just try and get on with life.

Treatment/support

110. Other than speaking to the psychiatrists at Cornhill Hospital, I've never had any treatment or support. I don't see how it could help.

Police Investigation

111. I was informed by the police ██████████, a few weeks after PWU ██████████ assaulted me, that he had been charged. I knew that by that time my friend PJN ██████████ had also given a statement about a few incidents whereby PWU ██████████ had indecently assaulted him. I wasn't aware of them at the time, PJN ██████████ hadn't said anything, it was only after I gave my statement that PJN ██████████ told me.

112. [REDACTED] months later [P]JN and I were called to testify at a trial against [P]WU at court in Edinburgh. It was a scary experience giving evidence, even though the court staff were fantastic. I was asked before I gave evidence if I wanted a screen so that I couldn't see [P]WU but I refused. I wanted him to look at me while I gave evidence. As it was, I couldn't see him much anyway, he was just a figure, because I kept my eyes on the judge and the prosecution.
113. [P]WU was found guilty, however the Scottish justice system let me down. I remember it like it was yesterday. The judge at the trial told [P]WU that he was considering a prison sentence, however when the court came back it was a different judge and he was much more lenient. [P]WU was put on the sex offenders register for ten years and told he wasn't allowed to be in the vicinity of any children and that was it.
114. I think the police had taken me seriously enough, I don't think they could have done any more or any less and I can't really fault their investigation. The punishment [P]WU got at court though was deflating.

Records

115. I've never thought about trying to get my records from the school. I thought they would only be kept for about five years so I don't know if there would be anything anyway.

Lessons to be Learned/Hopes for the Inquiry

116. Clearly the school were just wanting to sweep the whole incident completely under the carpet and keep it hushed up. Clearly the school were scared of damaging their reputation. Scared of losing their council funding. I'm sure that as soon as parents found out about what happened they would have dragged their kids out and the school would lose funding.
117. I've since found out through word of mouth that the school was in mountains of debt at the time of the incident. I did a bit more digging online and found that at the time the school was something like £16.9 million in debt.

118. I don't know how anybody who is involved in the care of vulnerable people could think of saying what Margaret Thompson the headmistress said to my dad. I don't know how she could have questioned the need for contacting the police. There was never any consideration given to how I was coping with what happened and I was never offered any counselling or support whatsoever.
119. Children need to be safeguarded properly. It doesn't matter if reputations are going to be affected, the damage has already been done so it needs to be repaired. Everything possible should be done to support any person in need and any incidents should not be swept under the carpet.
120. The headmistress should have let the board know what happened and they should have worked out what to do to try and rectify it and safeguard all the children.
121. It has been hard speaking about what happened to me, but it has been worth it. Hopefully my coming forward to the Inquiry can help somebody else come forward and open up too. Somebody has always got to be the first. I hope others can find the courage to speak out about the pain they have suffered. I hope lessons can be learned.

Other information

122. I went back to the Royal Blind School with my ex-partner before [REDACTED] was conceived, but I couldn't bring myself to go through the gates towards the Hostel. A lot of the buildings had been sold off by that time though. I just wanted to see if some of the staff who I'd had a good relationship with were still working there. There were still some staff and it was good to see them, however it felt strange being there, nerve-wracking.
123. I spoke to a solicitor recently about what happened and he has taken on my case. If it's possible, I want to seek compensation from the Royal Blind School.

124. About three or four years ago I found PWU on 'Facebook' so I rang him up. When I did he actually admitted what he'd done and apologised and I think that was a bit of a turning point for me. I think hearing him say the words maybe gave me some sort of closure.

125. 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..... KVI

Dated..... 25 March 2021