

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

RBI [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

BSL interpreters present: Bruce Cameron and Robert McCourt (29th July 2025 and 12th September 2025). Ruth Edgoose and Daniel Hepburn (22nd September 2025)

1. My name is RBI [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1971. This has been my name since birth. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life at home

2. I lived in [REDACTED] with my parents until I was ten years old. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] when I was fourteen I moved to [REDACTED] with my mum and stepfather.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I have one [REDACTED] called [REDACTED]

3. Everybody in my family is hearing. I have been deaf since birth. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

4. Home life was fine. Communication with my family was difficult and I did struggle because my parents were hearing and didn't use sign language. We communicated through gestures, finger spelling and very basic sign. It was a bit disappointing. Later on, when I learned to write, we would communicate by writing notes and that is still how I communicate with my mum.

5. I went to Donaldson's School at Henderson Row in Edinburgh from the age of about five. I was only there for a short time because it closed. Then I moved to the big Donaldson's building at West Coates.

Donaldson's School for the Deaf, Henderson Row

6. My mum and dad took me to Henderson Row when I was five years old. There was a mix of boys and girls there, who were about my age and maybe a bit older.
7. I stayed there as a residential pupil from Monday to Friday because my family lived far away in [REDACTED]. I would go home to my family at weekends.
8. I only remember little snippets from my time there because I was young. I can't remember the names of the staff. The headmaster was a bald man but I don't remember his name.
9. I think the building had three or four floors. The top floor was where we slept. I shared a room with boys. The dining room was on the floor below and the classes were on the floor below that.
10. I remember being in a class with windows. I had never met any other deaf people before and I couldn't use sign language when I started there.
11. I learned the ABC. The teacher who taught it, used one hand, which was American Sign Language. We were taught that way for a brief time and then we were taught ABC using two hands, which was British Sign Language (BSL).
12. It was fine and fairly normal at Henderson Row. I was perfectly happy there. I remember a nurse would sometimes give us medicine but I don't remember much else.

13. I left the school because it was closing, but I think it officially closed about six months after I left. When it closed, some of the kids were put into schools near to their families, in Glasgow or Stirling. I was put into Donaldson's School for the Deaf at West Coates with a few other people from Henderson Row. At the time, I couldn't understand why only a small number of people from the old building had moved to the new one.

Donaldson's School for the Deaf, West Coates

14. I was about seven years old when I started at Donaldson's School. It was like a massive castle and the rooms were really big with high ceilings.
15. There were about 150 children there when I first started at the school. I was one of the youngest. That number came down to about 100 as time went on and I got older.
16. When I first arrived there, we slept in dormitories upstairs. I was in a big dorm room which was separated with swing doors. On one side of the swing doors was one girl, and on the other side of the swing door, there were four boys. We all mixed during the day as well, in class and play times.
17. This changed when we turned eight years old, and boys and girls were separated. When you looked at the building from the front, the boys wing was upstairs on the left side and the girls were on the right. There was a clock on the outside of the building in between the two. There were always more boys than girls.
18. The boys' wing was huge. There were three areas, one for seniors who were almost leaving the school, one for boys aged about twelve to fifteen, and one with younger boys aged eight to twelve. We were in rooms with boys our own age group. When I first went in, I was in a room with five other boys, with three beds on either side of the room. We were all about eight years old.
19. The dining room and play room were also in the main building. The classrooms were in a wooden timber frame building attached by a corridor to the main building.

Staff

20. Mr RJE was SNR and Mr SBB was SNR.
21. There were teachers at the school who taught the classes. The teachers I remember are Mrs Reid, Mr PZC, Mr KNK, Mrs McGowan, Mrs Anderson, Mrs Clegg and Miss Glass.
22. There were different staff members who worked with the residential boys, upstairs, and looked after them. There was Mr PGJ, who was my worst abuser. There was Mr RDB, who was Mr RJE's nephew, and Mr KNJ, who was the deaf member of staff. There was also Mr Duncan, who was an ex-policeman. He was a lovely guy and I felt very comfortable and relaxed with him. I could talk to him. He left the job and moved down to Birmingham.
23. The residential care staff covered the night shifts and they would rotate. There would be one staff member looking after the younger kids and one looking after the older kids at night. They each had a bedroom, which was between the corner of the younger kid's area and the corner of the older kid's area.

Daily routine

24. Staff would come in to wake us up in the morning. We would get up, brush our teeth and get changed.
25. We would go downstairs for breakfast, which was at 8.00 am. We had time after breakfast to chat with everyone, then we went to our classes at 9.00 am.
26. We stopped for lunch, then went back to school in the afternoon.

27. We finished school at 3.30 pm. The day kids would go home and the residential kids would go upstairs. There would be indoor or outdoor activities, depending on the weather.
28. We would have our dinner and a bit more free time afterwards. Then bed time was at 8:00 pm when you were younger, then it got later to 9:00 pm and 10:00 pm when you were ready to leave school.
29. I went home to my family at weekends.

Mealtimes/Food

30. We had our meals in the dining room. We went in groups. The younger kids were at the front and the older kids at the back. The girls and boys were on separate sides of the room and the youngest kids were at the front.
31. The food was like prison food. You went up to where food was being served with your tray and you just moved along the row and got your food. There wasn't really any choice and it would often be cold because there were no hotplates. It was always the same kinds of things like potatoes, fish and chips, cake and custard. We got peas and carrots sometimes but not much veg otherwise. It varied through the week but it was always fish, chips and peas on a Friday, which I hated. They also mixed water in with the milk.
32. The care staff would be there at mealtimes and they would make kids eat their food. Sometimes they would just make you eat a wee bit more and sometimes make you eat it all. They wouldn't physically force you but they would make you stay there until you finished.
33. I didn't always like everything and sometimes it would be cold and I wouldn't want to eat it. I never finished my meals. There were times that the staff kept me back after everyone else went out to play. Sometimes I would just eat a bit more but other times I would dig my heels in and say no, then they'd give up and just let me go.

Washing/bathing

34. Wednesday was bath night. There was a big room with bath tubs in one line. You would be in a big, deep bath by yourself but in a room full of baths with other boys in them, so there was no privacy. The bath water would be warm when you got in but would go cold really quickly because it was a big, cold building. There would be staff coming in and out as you were in there, telling you to hurry up and get out.
35. Showers were put in towards the end of my time there and then we started having showers every day. There were two showers in the room with a partition and we could shower without supervision at any time of day. I would usually go in the morning. We would tell staff when we were going so that they were aware.

Clothing/uniform

36. We had a school uniform, which was a shirt, tie, jumper and trousers. They gave us pants and socks as well, which were not new. I never wanted to wear them because I wanted to wear my own but the school made us wear theirs.
37. We had our own clothes that we could put on after the school day was over. I would put my own underwear on then as well so that I was comfortable.

Leisure time

38. We had break and dinner times during the school day. We then had free time after school to play, and then also some time after dinner.
39. We watched Blue Peter almost daily after school. Then, if it was a nice day outside, we would all be allowed to go outside together to play football or backball, which was our name for baseball. When it was cold or raining, we played in the playroom, which we called the "PR" for short. The boys and girls were separated during the indoor play times.

40. We would sometimes watch television and films on VHS. Mr PZC would sometimes sit on a stool beside the television and interpret for us. There were no subtitles or interpreters on the television back then. He would usually only do that on a Thursday, which was when he was in.
41. We sometimes played indoor hockey. There was also a pool and darts room and I quite enjoyed playing pool, which I did nearly every day. There was always fewer people in there and good staff, like Mr Duncan, so I felt safer there.
42. The boys spent a lot of time talking about football during the day. We would watch football on television sometimes and talk about tactics, but there were no subtitles on the television. We would learn the jargon from the newspapers.
43. Some boys had Atari and Commodore 64 consoles at home. They would bring in games to swap with other boys, and sometimes not get them back.

Schooling

44. I wasn't taught proper sign language when I started. I just picked it up from other kids and teachers as I went along. There would be the signing that was used in class, but then regional differences in the signing upstairs, because kids were from different places.
45. There were two classes that were my age group when I started. There were about twelve to fifteen kids in my class at first. That would change all the time because kids got moved according to their abilities. Three kids were sent to a school in London. One of them was called [REDACTED]. I think the teachers spoke to their parents, and they then sent them to a school based on their academic needs.
46. The younger kids were in one class for most of the day, like in primary school. When we turned twelve, we went to different classes for different subjects. We had English,

maths, science, art, woodwork and other subjects. It was the same as you would do in secondary school.

47. There was a weekly class where teachers would make us put on a headset with a microphone, like a pilot would wear. They would make us try to listen, learn lip patterns and vocalise words. We had to feel the mouth and nose of the teacher as they said words so we could feel the vibration and the structure of the word. There was a lot of repetition and it was really hard and tiring.
48. I am profoundly deaf [REDACTED] but I can hear certain words [REDACTED] when I have a hearing aid on. Even then, I only pick up a name or a word here and there but not sentences. The lessons with the hearing aids were really difficult for me and pointless because you would just use sign language as soon as you were out of class.
49. All the teachers used sign language to teach us. Some of them only had basic use of sign language when they started but then got better.
50. I was less academic than other kids, which was a bit disappointing. I wanted to do better at school but I couldn't concentrate because there was a lot of abuse going on at night. I was an anxious and emotional wreck all through my time there so I didn't do well at school.
51. I got an RSA in English and Mathematics.

Healthcare

52. There was a lovely nurse called Sue Thompson. She would give us medication if we needed it and note things in a book. She left and moved to Aberdeen.
53. We got occasional check-ups where we would go to the nurse's room and get our ears checked and a general check up and then we would be free to go.

Chores

54. We didn't have to do any chores. The only thing we did was make our beds. Our bedding and towels got changed on a Wednesday. The laundry was done for us but I had to make my own bed, staff would never help us to do that. Our school uniform was sent the laundry too and washed for us but I kept my own clothes and took them home at the weekend to be washed.

Trips and holidays

55. On Thursdays, when Mr PZC was with us, he would occasionally take us out. Sometimes we would go to Portobello Beach, ice skating in Edinburgh, walking up the Pentlands or to other places.
56. We went to Germany for two weeks in May 1988. We went to West and East Germany. We learned about the war and touched the Berlin Wall. About twenty to twenty-five of us went on that trip and we were all the same age. SNR, Mr RJE, and Miss Glass, the English teacher, took us.

Personal possessions

57. We could take our own things in to school and we had drawers and a cupboard by our beds to put them in. They didn't lock though, and things got stolen all the time.

Birthdays/Christmas

58. Kids had 'happy birthday' sung to them in class and got a card if it was their birthday. That happened to me. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
59. The Christmas party was always on a Tuesday. Sometimes hearing people from other schools would be there. I remember one of the schools was [REDACTED] High School in

██████████. They were about the same age as us. We just mixed for the night. It was fun and we would be trying to get a date.

60. I would be home with my family for Christmas.

Bed Wetting

61. Bed wetting happened but not often. The staff would be angry when it happened and tell the boy to change their bed. I never wet the bed so I didn't really know much about it.

Family contact

62. We went home at weekends. A council minibus came and picked us up on Friday after school and dropped us off at home. It would pick us up again on a Sunday evening and take us back to school. That happened every week.
63. Kids who lived further away, like in ██████████ or ██████████, didn't go home every weekend. It was hard for them as they didn't see their parents for a whole school term.

Discipline

64. The discipline used was that you would get lines to do. You would have to write 'I am sorry,' or something similar, 100 or 200 times.
65. Sometimes, teachers would send pupils to Mr RJE ██████████ if they had misbehaved. Whenever I was sent to him, he just told me off or shouted at me. There was never any physical punishment. I think that had all stopped by the time I went to Donaldson's.

Running away

66. I ran away once. I was about [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] years old and wanted to get home. I left the school but then didn't know which way to go or how to get back to my mum's so I went back to school.
67. Mr PZC [REDACTED] noticed that I was missing and told the care staff, so I was punished. I got in trouble and had to sleep in the hallway for a week. It was at the end of a dark corridor coming off the dormitory. It was awful because it was dark and I was alone there. I was actually made to sleep there two or three times.
68. I am not sure if any others ran away.

Abuse at Donaldsons, West Coates

69. Most of the teachers were ok. Mr KNK [REDACTED] would throw things at you in class. He would shout my name and I could hear it slightly but when he couldn't be bothered shouting my name, he'd throw something at me, like a pencil or blackboard duster, to get my attention. He did this to me and to other kids too.
70. The care staff were much worse than the teachers. Donaldson's became hell for me from the age of eight, after the boys' and girls' dormitories were separated.
71. Mr RDB [REDACTED] would sometimes dig his fingers down into your collarbone, which was really sore. He would hold his hand straight and jab it right into your collarbone and I remember it really hurting. He would do this if you had been a bit naughty or were fighting with another boy. He did that to me and to other kids too.
72. My worst abuser was Mr PGJ [REDACTED].

Mr PGJ

73. Mr PGJ would wake me up through the night and take me into the staff bedroom, where he would abuse me. His room was on the same floor as my dormitory, on the corner.
74. The sexual abuse started when I was eight years old and didn't stop until I was about thirteen or fourteen years old.
75. I was only eight years old when it started and I didn't really understand what was happening at that age. Mr PGJ would take me to his room where he would show me lots of porn magazines, like Escort and other ones. He would touch me and masturbate me. I was anxious and didn't know what was happening.
76. The abuse happened often. It could happen a few times a week, and then not happen the next week, and happen again the following week. It was quite regular. He built up to showing me porn videos and then put his penis inside my backside. He would have sex with me.
77. As time went on, Mr PGJ started abusing another boy called . was about my age. Mr PGJ would make me and perform oral sex on each other and he would watch. This happened on a few occasions. Neither of us liked it.
78. He just stayed the night sometimes, Me and did talk about the abuse but he said we couldn't tell anybody.
79. I would see Mr PGJ take other boys out of the dormitory at night so I think he was abusing other boys as well. He was quite clever about it though so you never saw it. The only other boy I saw him abuse was .

80. As I got older, I would try to refuse but then he would blackmail and intimidate me by saying he would lock me in an empty room on my own or make me sleep at the end of a dark corridor in the hallway as a punishment. He did actually lock me in this empty room in the building somewhere a few times. He would lock it from the outside and then only let me out the next morning. I hated those punishments because it was dark and scary, and I would be there alone. One time, he made me sleep in the hallway for a whole week.
81. I could never sleep properly at night because I was always afraid. I also couldn't concentrate at school during the day because I would be tired and full of anxiety about what would happen at night.
82. I didn't tell anyone and kept it to myself. I would cry when I went home and would beg my parents not to make me go to school but didn't say why. I even begged them to let me travel to and from school every day, or for them to move to Edinburgh so I could live with them. I didn't feel like I could tell them about the abuse. I think if they were deaf then maybe I would have been able to tell them, but I found it difficult to communicate with them because they were hearing.
83. We received a letter from the school during the [REDACTED] holidays in 1986 to say that Mr PGJ [REDACTED] had died. We learned later that the janitor at Donaldson's had found Mr PGJ [REDACTED] hanging in the school [REDACTED] in 1986. He had killed himself.
84. Mr PGJ [REDACTED] was being investigated by the police in 1986 because another boy had raised a complaint against him. I think it was a boy called [REDACTED] who blew the whistle. This was probably why he killed himself.
85. The police spoke to me in April 1987, during the easter holidays. This was at the Deaf Action offices in Edinburgh, who interpreted between me and the police. They asked me specifically about Mr PGJ [REDACTED] but I didn't tell them anything. I did try but I couldn't because I didn't know how to in front of my parents. I felt like there was a bit of suspicion from my mum, that something may have happened to me, but I never said

anything. I think the police spoke to other residential boys from Donaldson's as well but I don't know who.

KNJ

86. The deaf member of staff, KNJ, was quite cruel but he wasn't sexual. He would make boys fight with each other.
87. When I was about ten, eleven or twelve, I told KNJ that boys were bullying me and doing sexual things to me. He just shrugged his shoulders and didn't do anything. He didn't seem to care.
88. When we played outside during the day, Mr KNJ would be looking after us. We would play a game, called British Bulldogs, where the kids were in two groups and one person had to charge through the other group that was facing them, the opposing team. It was similar to tig where one person would run into the group and KNJ would encourage the kids to be quite aggressive and order the boys to pile up on top of one boy. This would be really painful if you were at the bottom of the pile because you were getting crushed and couldn't breathe. He ordered that to happen to me a few times and he did it to other boys too. That happened outside but it also happened inside, in the dormitory a few times as well.
89. One time, , a fellow pupil, grabbed me and threw me on the ground during the game. My face smacked off the ground and I broke my nose. It happened so quickly and my nose started bleeding as soon as I hit the ground. It was really painful and my school uniform was ruined because of all the blood. This was while KNJ was watching. I never got any medical attention for that at school. When I went home that weekend, my mum could hear my nose making a crunching noise when I touched it. I couldn't feel anything. She took me to the hospital in and I got an operation on my nose. That was in 1985 when I was thirteen years old.

90. KNJ [REDACTED] gave me whisky and cigarettes when I was fifteen or sixteen years old. That was in the residential area. I remember the whisky burning my throat. I started smoking at a young age after that because of him.

Peer abuse

91. There were a group of boys who were two or three years older than me who were really cruel to me. They would bully me in the evenings in the residential area. They would take my sweets and pocket money from me and I would get beaten up if I didn't hand them over. One of these boys was [REDACTED]. He would take my money and sweets.
92. [REDACTED] also took my Casio watch off me, which my family had given me for my birthday. My parents asked me about my watch and I just said I had lost it.
93. [REDACTED] bullied me sexually as well. He would make me masturbate him. He did this regularly when I was ten, eleven and twelve. He was [REDACTED] older than me. I was quite small and thin and he was much bigger than me. He would threaten to batter me if I didn't do it. Sometimes I would do it and sometimes I would say no and he would batter me. He would kick and punch me. This would happen a few times in the boys toilets, then not happen again for a while, and then it would happen again if I went into the toilets and he was there.
94. [REDACTED] would also sometimes jump on my bed when I was sleeping and beat me up. He was in a different room from me but it was easy for him to come through and pick on me.
95. There was a boy called [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] who was in the same class as [REDACTED]. He would force me to masturbate him. That wasn't a regular thing. It would happen and then not happen for ages, then happen again. This happened when I was about ten, eleven and twelve years old, and [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] older than me. This happened in the toilets as well.

96. [REDACTED] had always been at the school from when I started, but [REDACTED], who was from [REDACTED], arrived at later during my time there. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
97. There was another boy called [REDACTED], who was from [REDACTED]. He was older than [REDACTED]. He was in the toilets when I went in one time and he wanted to give me oral sex but I didn't want it. He made me do it. I didn't like it and I was really upset and emotional afterwards. I was about nine or ten years old and he was much older and about leave school so was probably about fifteen or sixteen. This happened a few times with him when I happened to go into the toilet and he was there. Luckily he left the school after a while because he was older and I was glad when he did.
98. I was always looking over my shoulder in the residential area. My friends would sometimes warn me when I was going to the toilet, by saying that [REDACTED], [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] were in there. That makes me think it might have been happening to them as well, but I don't know for sure.
99. I was in a constant state of anxiety and fear from the age of eight until seventeen, when I left Donaldson's. On a Sunday evening, it was the worst, as I knew I was going to back to Donaldson's and the abuse that was happening to me there.

Reporting of abuse at Donaldson's

100. I didn't tell my parents that I was getting abused but did tell them that I didn't want to be residential at Donaldson's and wanted to be nearer home so I could come home after school. They both worked and we lived too far away so I couldn't do that.
101. I had told KNJ [REDACTED] about the bullying and sexual abuse from other boys but he didn't care and didn't do anything about it.

Leaving

102. I left Donaldson's when I was seventeen years old, which was the school leaving age.
103. Mr SBB SNR [REDACTED], had suggested that I look at [REDACTED] College because a lot of deaf people went there. I went for a visit and then decided to go there.
104. Not long after I left Donaldsons, I bumped into KNJ [REDACTED] and he said that he wished he had done more to protect me. He was talking about the bullying from other boys. I said it was too late and he should have done something at the time.
105. I bumped into KNJ [REDACTED] again years later with my wife, when she was pregnant [REDACTED] and he said that he hoped our child was born disabled. I blew up at that, it was a really inappropriate comment and I started shouting at him about all the things he had done at school. He's not a nice man.

Life after being in care

106. I went to college in [REDACTED] and studied [REDACTED]
107. I then went to [REDACTED] University to do an MA [REDACTED], but I found it too much. It was all full of Shakespeare and I had never done any Shakespeare at school. I realised it was the wrong course for me. I then moved to [REDACTED] and started a BA Hons [REDACTED] there. I didn't finish it, though, and that is a big regret.
108. I moved back to Scotland because it was my home. I studied an HNC [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] College. I then started the HND but didn't finish it.

109. I met my partner and had kids and have been living in the same place since. Me and my partner are not together any more but I am very hands on with looking after my kids.
110. I have worked as a [REDACTED]. I also worked for the NHS, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for three months. I also delivered [REDACTED] for the NHS.
111. I left work [REDACTED] and it has been difficult to get jobs since. I have struggled to get a job, even though I have been to college and have qualifications.

Impact

112. My education was impacted at Donaldson's because of all the abuse. I was always distracted and anxious and couldn't concentrate at school. That has impacted my life in terms of qualifications and the jobs I could do.
113. I often have flashbacks of the abuse at Donaldson's and it will never go away. It is like a living hell and I always wish I could go back and do things differently. My mental health has suffered throughout my life because of it.
114. Donaldson's has had a huge impact on my life. I only really trust my ex-wife and can speak to her about my experiences. She understands how bad it is. I can't really talk to anyone else.
115. When I bump into someone from Donaldson's, they will bring things up about someone or something that happened there, so there are always reminders.
116. When I look at my kids growing up and they get to the age that I was when I was being abused, it makes me think about it a lot. If they were deaf, I would never let them go to a residential school because I wouldn't want them to experience what I did. I worried about them a lot as they were growing up because of what I went through.

Treatment/support

117. I have never had any counselling or anything like that. I would be happy to try something like that if it would help me but I also feel like maybe everything is too engrained. I would need an interpreter to access that support.

Reporting of Abuse

118. Another boy from Donaldson's reported Mr PGJ's sexual abuse in 1986 and the police spoke to me in April 1987 but I didn't tell them anything at that time.
119. I have never reported any of the abuse I suffered at Donaldson's to the police. As a child I don't think I understood how to report my abuse or how important it was. Nobody told me how to report it. I feel that if I had know a bit more I might have reported it at the time.

Records

120. I have never tried to get any records from Donaldson's. I only have my school reports that my parents got but nothing about the residential side of things. I never even saw anything like that.

Lessons to be learned

121. It is important for children to be protected. I wish when I was at school, there were people there who could have protected me, but it is too late for me now. I don't know if I could have trusted anybody at school.

122. I have spoken about my experiences with friends who have shared similar experiences that happened to them. I wasn't able to speak up at the time and I wish I had reported it if I'd had more awareness. I felt like it was normal and I didn't realise how serious or dangerous it was. I wanted to come forward now and share my experiences, it's always in the back of my mind and never goes away. It's been with for life, it never gets better.

Other information

123. When providing this statement, two British Sign Language interpreters, Bruce Cameron and Robert McCourt, interpreted for me on two of the three occasions when I met with the Inquiry (29th July 2025 and 12th September 2025). Ruth Edgoose and Daniel Hepburn, British Sign Language interpreters, interpreted my statement for me on the date of signing (22nd September 2025), which I was able to do having understood my draft statement, which was read out to me and interpreted by them.
124. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.... 

Dated.... 22/9/25

Declaration of interpreters

125. I declare that the facts stated in this written statement as interpreted by me are a faithful and true explanation according to the best of my skill and understanding.

Signed..........

Dated.....22.09.2025.....

Declaration of interpreters

126. I declare that the facts stated in this written statement as interpreted by me are a faithful and true explanation according to the best of my skill and understanding.

Signed..........

Dated.....22.09.2025.....