

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

RBK

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is RBK. My date of birth is 1985. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. I have been deaf from birth.

Background

2. I was born and raised in . When I stayed there with my family it was and easy to get around. I don't know how many people live there.
3. I lived there with my mum, dad and two . I remember my life with my family as being a happy, normal childhood. When I stayed with my family I attended two hearing, mainstream schools, both in .
4. I can remember that prior to going to Donaldson's there was a woman, Val, who came to the house asking if I wanted to go to Donaldson's school. I thought, "why not?" because it was a specific school for the deaf. That's why I moved there. I was taken to the school for a visit before I went to the school full time. I am not sure what Val's role was or what her link was to my family or Donaldson's.

Donaldson's School for the Deaf, Edinburgh

5. I was to stay at Donaldson's Monday to Friday and go home at weekends. The main reason for this was because I lived too far away. It would have taken me over an hour to get back and forth from school. I think I got funding for residential care. I moved

into Donaldson's in 1998, when I was thirteen, and stayed there for four years. I left in 2002.

Staff

6. When I moved to the school, Mr Scott, was the headmaster. I can remember a couple of the teachers were a husband and wife, but I can't remember their names. I am not sure of the names of the other teachers in the education side or the staff on the residential side. If I saw their faces or photographs, I would be able to say who were my other teachers, it's a visual cue. It would be the same in the residence. There were a lot of staff in residence because it was half girls, half boys. The two units had their own names, but I can't remember what the names were. The English translation for me staying there, is the residence.
7. In residence, it was rare to have a deaf member of staff, most were hearing staff. There was a lot of changes of staff during my time at the school. The teachers in the education side were hearing, but some of support staff were from the deaf community. One of the staff, who was like a key worker for me, was deaf.

Children

8. There was a mix of boys and girls at the school, but I can't think of how many there were in total. If I was to guess I would probably get it wrong. I feel like that part of my life in Donaldson's, I have allowed to close and I really struggle to recall that information. I can't remember how old the children were in the school, and I don't remember how old they were in the residence. I don't know how long the children stayed in the residence.
9. When school finished at the back of three, we'd go up to the residence and mix with the girls. When it was time to go to bed, we were separated and then they closed a partition.

Mealtimes / Food

10. The food was okay. Dinner was about 6pm which was quite late, so it really made our evening quite short I felt, if we were going outside to play or whatever. We did ask to move it to five o'clock for dinner, so we could get outside to play a bit longer. I remember them doing that, but I can't remember how many kids there were. I don't think it was something I usually thought about and registered when I was at the school.
11. Other people maybe thought the food was fantastic, but for me it was okay, because I am a fussy eater. If I didn't like the food I would just leave it. At lunch and dinner you would help yourself, it was like a buffet style thing. It wasn't like their decision that 'this is what you're eating, this was what you must have'. They would put up what food we were expected to have on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. There was a food list, but you would help yourself. So, we knew what was going to be available all week. With it being a buffet style, if there was something you picked you didn't like, you could go back.

Sleeping Arrangements

12. In the residence, there were four or five in one room, three in another room, and there was maybe two in another room. The staff decided who I would be with. When I first started there was four in my room. We were all about the same age and then after that summer they moved us all around. The following year, there was three of us. I think there was three of us for most of my time, but I can't fully remember that. I do remember one was my really good friend and then there was another boy, so altogether there was three of us. The staff decided to change where everyone was sleeping. There were maybe new children who arrived, or the same children from the year before, so it generally didn't fit the same people all the way through. It generally changed.

Washing and Bathing

13. There was a separate bathroom, and it was private.

Leisure

14. When I was not at school, I went home on a Friday. I would go out on my bike. I would stay at home and do different things.
15. Monday to Friday after school there was a mix of activities. We went swimming, played football, or went to the park. Sometimes the staff would ask us what we wanted to do. Some of the children would say they wanted to go to this place or that place.
16. There were different places, but as we had our own swimming pool in the school buildings, we would usually use that for swimming. There were other big pools that had diving boards, flumes, and tunnels, so sometimes they would organise to go there. Swimming was my favourite activity, because we could play and splash each other and mess around with each other. Sometimes the staff would go, "Don't do that and calm down." It depended on who they were with and who they liked, because we didn't all necessarily like every member of staff. So, it kind of depended on what member of staff you were with as well. If the staff were good then the mood was more relaxed. If they were in a bad mood. They might be more strict.

Trips / Holidays

17. At the end of summer, towards the end of school term, the staff would organise a trip to the funfair.
18. Through the year we would have school trips, one time we went to London. We went to the Dome and to see the London Eye. We stayed for two nights. That was around the millennium, in 2000.

Schooling

19. I think to be honest, I also kind of felt I never really wanted to go there, in the first place. For the first three to four years I was there, it was fine. It was normal. It came to my fourth year, towards the end, that's when I kind of started to enjoy it less.
20. Before I started there, I went for a visit first. When I arrived for the visit there were [REDACTED] boys who were already in the school that I recognised, because they had been in the mainstream school that I went to. So, I already knew them and when I saw them, I thought, great my friends are there, I already had friends there.
21. When I went to the school, those [REDACTED] boys had [REDACTED]. It meant I didn't have any friends that I had expected to have. I started because I expected to have these [REDACTED] friends, because I knew them, but they were gone by the time I started, and I had no friends there. Because I had no friends there, that was what made me feel like I did not want to be there.
22. I felt homesick, because I was staying at the school, in the residence. I wasn't with my [REDACTED] anymore. When I was at home, my [REDACTED] were there and we used to always play together and everything like that. I had my mum and dad there. When I moved to Donaldson's I didn't have any family, I didn't know anybody, so that was quite a lot to deal with.
23. Obviously over time, I started to get to know people and started making friends. People were helping me out, getting settled in, so it was alright.
24. School started about ten to nine and finished in the afternoon about twenty past three. I did go to school for that whole day.

Chores

25. In the residence, we didn't have to do any chores like tidying up. We had to make our beds ourselves. When we got to our room, we had to get the sheets and pillows and

get everything sorted. That was the one thing we had to do. Of course, when I arrived I didn't know how to do it. Over time I had to figure it out, like how to put the sheets on and sort the pillows and everything.

26. We did that on the Monday and on the Friday we had to strip our beds and take all the bed sheets and things off. We were in charge of making our beds and stripping the beds. That was the only chores we had to do.

Visitors

27. My family didn't visit me in the residence. Only if it was things like sports day, they would come for that. If we were putting on a play during a school show for example, that's the only kind of thing they would come to visit. I was home every weekend.

Review of Care/placement

28. I never got a visit from a social worker. I did not have a social worker or anything.
29. I did not have any visits from any psychologist.
30. I didn't have any visits from any psychiatrist.

Discipline and Punishment

31. There were rules at Donaldson's that we had to obey. Things like bedtimes, I remember because I was thirteen and bedtime was at 9pm. If you were a bit older, you would get like an hour later. If you were fourteen your bedtime was maybe 10pm. Depending on the age you were, you'd get a different bedtime.
32. Other rules were for example, not fighting with each other. If there was any problem you should report it to staff, that kind of thing. For example, it was kind of like a hotel almost, you tried not to be too noisy, be nice to each other.

33. If you broke the rules, you would have to go and see the head of residence and talk about what rules were broken, why they were broken. I don't remember ever getting a punishment as such.
34. I don't know who made sure the students followed the rules.
35. If I got angry or upset, I think maybe the staff would sometimes take you away to a different room, and just talk to you to know what's happened, ask what's wrong, something like that. I don't really remember anything else. It's that long ago, I'm not sure.

Trusted adult/confidante

36. I'm not sure how many staff there were upstairs, because the girls and the boys were separate. I think there were maybe four male staff. Each staff member would be responsible for two or three boys. If any one of those boys had a problem, they had a designated member of staff to go to talk to. You would know that was the person that you go to if you had an issue with anything when you were in residence. As pupils we always nicknamed that person as 'The Godfather'.
37. Later on in the year I had one person as my 'Godfather' who was deaf. I think before that the other person was hearing. To be honest there wasn't a lot of deaf staff in there. I can't remember the person's name. That person changed from year to year because obviously the groups of children would change, because people would leave, new pupils would come in. So then sometimes you would get assigned to a different person, it depended on how many children were there, how they assigned the groups.

Restraint

38. I have been physically stopped from doing something by the staff. That happened. I think that started happening more towards the end of my last year, my 4th year, I can't forget that. It's not so upsetting, I feel more angry about it. There are some memories about Donaldson's that I want to just switch off and don't think about. There are also

the little bits that are still there and they still bother me. They still stress me, and there's certain things that happened, I just say, "Why was it me?" That's related to one specific person. Stewart Ritchie, who I will speak about later in my statement.

39. I think I was physically stopped from doing something by the staff. I'm not quite sure if it's in terms of what their job was. I'm not sure if what they did was abuse or if it was more about keeping me safe, because I know at the time it was related to an incident where I've lost my temper. It felt a bit like the way the police grab you and hold you until it is sort of calmed down. That's probably what it was. When I think about it, I don't really know if it was abuse, but at the time it was quite a big thing that happened to me.
40. I think it was other children, just the name calling, and people calling me names. Then one of the kids said to me I was going to get sent home or something like that. At that point, that's when I got upset and blew up a bit and then the staff had taken hold of me and then got me on the floor. The staff held me and held me onto the floor, just until it calmed down. Stewart, along with another strong man, who was a hearing "Godfather", were who held me down. The head teacher was there watching what was going on.
41. I can't remember exactly, but I was around fourteen or fifteen. I don't remember the specific date. It was just that one thing that happened. I felt like I shit myself because it felt like everyone was on top of me and that they were holding me down. I couldn't move myself. Afterwards, I realised I lost my temper and I shouldn't have done that. At the time it was a lot. I think it was two people that were holding me down. It was two men, two male members of staff.
42. The two men had chased me to get me and they got me on the floor. The head teacher was there and he observed it as it happened. I felt like I kind of lost control of myself. Once they got me held down, it all happened very quickly. It happened out of the blue and then after, I calmed down. I realised where it had gone wrong.

43. I was never taken to any space and left on my own and I was never put to my bed early. I have never been given medicine or injections to keep me quiet, there was nothing like that. I don't know if the restraint, being taken away to a space, being put to bed early, given any medicines or injections, happened to other children.

Reporting of complaints or concerns

44. I think if it was an issue in the residence, I could talk to the head of residence. If it was a school issue I could go and talk to the head teacher. I could go to the office and see if the head teacher was there. If he wasn't there, there might be a deputy head teacher. They could take a message and pass it on to the head teacher. Then the head teacher could read it and see what happened and if something needs to be sorted. We normally sign the deputy as the 2nd
45. There was a clear system of knowing how to make a complaint and who to go to.

Abuse

46. It has been explained to me what the Inquiry means by abuse and I have been shown illustrations to help me understand the different kinds of abuse. At Donaldson's, I was not told what abuse means.

External monitoring

47. I don't remember any outside body or any officials coming into Donaldson's to carry out an inspection of the school.

Convicted Abusers

48. Again, it has been explained to me what the Inquiry means by an abuser and I have been asked whether I know if any person who worked at Donaldson's was convicted of abusing a child or children at the school.
49. I think there were teachers and some of the staff that I know, who were moved from Donaldson's. I think that was around the time when Mr Scott was the head teacher, around 1999. I know quite a few of the staff left and I think that was the headteacher's decision to take them out. Mr Scott also left that year and some of the other staff also left. As far as I know it was for the abuse of children.

Mr Scott

50. Mr Scott was the headteacher when I arrived at Donaldson's. I think when I first met him, he seemed kind of normal. He was an older man at the time. He seemed fine. I think when there were troubles or any issues, he could be quite strict and quite tough. But he was very much like 'We'll get the problem sorted out'.

Woodwork teacher

51. There was the woodwork teacher and there was a woodwork assistant member of staff. They both were involved in the woodwork class. They left when Mr Scott left. I can't remember if there's any others, but I know it was those three for definite.
52. The woodwork teacher was a big, tall man, really tall. He was a bit rough, but I know he has passed away now. It is the same with the assistant staff, he has also passed away.

Woodwork assistant member of staff

53. The assistant member of staff was deaf, and worked with his wife. She worked in the kitchen. She helped prepare the meals. He too is deaf. They were both nice people. They left and the husband has since passed away.

Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry about me

54. Donaldsons have told the Inquiry about an allegation of sexual assault made against me by PDJ [REDACTED] on 16 March 200[REDACTED].
55. I do not wish to say anything about the allegation.

Convictions

56. On [REDACTED] 200[REDACTED] I was convicted at Edinburgh High Court of three charges, which I believe involved two girls. I have been advised that the Inquiry have been informed the charges involved three girls but I believe it was just two girls. Those girls, I believe, were PCY [REDACTED] and KYG [REDACTED]. It may have been three girls but I have put all the papers away and I always thought it was two.
57. I have been informed that the Inquiry has received a copy of the charges and a girl called [REDACTED] was included in the charges I was convicted of. That is all I am aware of. She is the one I don't remember being on the indictment. I don't have anything to say about that.

PCY [REDACTED]

58. One of the charges I was convicted of was of indecent assault involving PCY [REDACTED]. I have been asked how I was able to commit the offence.

59. I don't know, I had no choice but to say guilty, because I was being told the same story, over and over. She was underage, I was older and would never have done anything with as she was underage. I had no support at the time. My lawyer said it would be better if I plead guilty as I would not be sentenced to a long term in jail. If I plead guilty, which I did, my sentence would be much less. This was what he advised.

[REDACTED]

60. The other conviction is a charge of indecent assault involving [REDACTED]

61. I don't remember that charge. I only know of the two girls and three charges. That's all I am aware of, [REDACTED] is new to me. As I said earlier it may be on the indictment and I just can't remember that.

KYG [REDACTED]

62. I pled guilty to a charge of having unlawful sexual intercourse with KYG [REDACTED], who was under sixteen. I have been asked how I was able to commit this offence.

63. She was [REDACTED] older than me. I have been told that she was under sixteen at the time.

64. She was my ex. We had been together [REDACTED], on and off. We would be back for a day, back for a week, back for a month and then back together [REDACTED], it went on and on. All the kids and the staff knew we were on and off. But she is older than me.

65. As I said, I said I was guilty, because again I had nobody to support me at that time. The lawyer said to me that it would be better for me to say guilty and that it would be a quicker process. I felt like I was given two choices. I don't know exactly how to explain it, but it felt basically like blackmail. I had two choices, this or this, and this one's better for you. And, at that age, I felt, if I'm guilty, then everyone will think I am guilty, but I'm not guilty, but that was my choice.

66. I agree that I did have sexual intercourse with KYG [REDACTED]. I think was fifteen at the time. we were able to have sex in that environment because we were together. We were boyfriend and girlfriend. KYG [REDACTED] was not a resident t the school, she was a day pupil.
[REDACTED]
67. It was easy to find rooms in the school where we could hide. There were no staff walking around, there were no monitors in the school or anything like that. Before we went into class we planned to escape and do this and do that, so that's how we were able to do that. It felt like it was Donaldson's lack of care, really. It is a massive school, it was an old building, so many rooms, the doors were never locked. Sometimes you just tried doors, find it opened, and other times you tried doors, and they were locked. That's how we were able to do that.
68. Other people knew what was happening. Other residents were also doing the same.
69. When we were in the residence it was more difficult because there were more staff and more eyes on you, and we were all in one long corridor. But in the school you could wander freely anywhere, there were classes upstairs, classes outside, and classes downstairs, it was a big building.
70. I think it was 200 [REDACTED] I had somebody coming in, what they called the assistant staff, that was looking after me because my behaviour at that time was awful. I was playing truant, and I would never turn up for class. I would arrive late for class. I would go and hide. So, I had someone with me all the time in my fourth year, in 200 [REDACTED] between third and fourth year, I had support staff. They were great and helped me. They tried to help me with my behaviour. They were with me the whole time.
71. There was a time when I had support staff with me all the time.. I am not sure for how long that was, but certainly there was a period they were with me. It was before I got suspended from school, in between 200 [REDACTED] and the time I was suspended from the school.

72. Nothing was done about KYG and I having sex even though other people knew what we were doing. There were no staff around and it was easy to get a room and access that.

Charges to which pleas of not guilty were accepted by the Crown

[REDACTED]

73. My pleas of not guilty were accepted to a charge of indecent assault involving [REDACTED]. I don't not want to say anything about that charge.

KYG [REDACTED]

74. My pleas of not guilty were accepted to other charges of sexual assault involving KYG KYG. I have nothing to say about that.

PCD [REDACTED]

75. My pleas of not guilty were accepted to charges of sexual assault involving PCD PCD. I do not want to say anything about these charges.

Leaving Donaldson's School for the Deaf

Suspension from Donaldson's School for the Deaf

76. One of the staff members, I'm not quite sure if I've got the name the right way or not. Stewart Ritchie, I think is the name, or Ritchie Stewart. He's ex-army and he was so tough. I feel that he was bad with me. It was great when it came to sports and stuff like that but there was one night, we'd been on a trip to the park. When it was time to go back, I was in the minibus, and I was sitting at the back. This staff member, Stewart Ritchie was sitting just in front of me.

77. I can't remember how this started. I remember tapping him on the shoulder, like deaf people do and he just ignored me. There was no help or support, and I kept tapping him and tapping him, to try and get attention. I could feel my temper building up in me. Then I thumped his shoulder, quite hard and I know I shouldn't have. He turned round and gave me the look of death. I was like, why are you not listening to me, I've been tapping you for such a long time? I was not the only one he did this to, I saw him behaving like that with other kids, after he was ignoring them.
78. The next day he told the headteacher, what had happened. I tried to speak to the headteacher, but he was not listening to my side. I was suspended and the head teacher asked Stewart to take me to the train station, to make sure I was going home. When I was back at the school on the Monday, I was told to apologise to Stewart, which I did. This was all before the allegations came out.
79. When I first started the school I liked him but as it got further on, schooling was quite hard. He was quite a hard character and he just didn't listen to me, ignoring me a lot. I don't really think he had any respect for the children. If a child's tapping, you feel their attention, you should listen to them. It got to the point where I had to lose my temper to get his attention. I regret losing my temper, but he had just continued to ignore me. I had to be rough to get the attention.
80. After being home, eventually I was back at the school, and I had to see the head teacher to get it sorted out. I had to go back, up to Stewart and apologise to him. From then on, I feel like he should have listened to the children's needs. I was really annoyed at myself for actually hitting like that. When I think back, I was losing my temper, and he wasn't listening. I had tried the motion, the gentle tap that deaf people do. The other children saw that, and they were all shocked.

Leaving Donaldson's School for the Deaf

81. I left because they were all accusing me [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I felt I was getting a lot of pressure, I didn't feel like I had any friends. I told the headteacher that I wanted to leave, I've had enough,

the problems ongoing. The headteacher said, "You're better to stay, it's important for you, you've got your exams, you've got your standard grades coming up." I said, "No, I want to leave." It was too late, and I got suspended and the police arrested me at that point. But I wanted to leave in the first place.

Helping the Inquiry

82. Donaldson's in Edinburgh was closed because of a lack of funding. They have now moved to a smaller building in Linlithgow. It seems to be a smaller thing. I don't know what is happening now in that school.
83. When I first started it was fine and then that situation happened with Mr Scott and when he left, what happened to me thereafter.
84. In my time at Donaldson's, the main problem was a lack of supervision. The school was far too big, with a small number of pupils. But it was good that we had access to a swimming pool. We had good workshop facilities. The art facilities were good, but the actual building itself was far too big. I remember walking in as a thirteen-year-old and thinking, wow, this place is massive. You felt like you were on the back foot. I am glad that school is now closed.
85. I think it's important for children in the future that the staff, that there's plenty of them, that we listen to the children, and the supervision of the children today should be paramount.
86. In the school there should be two or three members of staff in each of the very long corridors. It was easy when we were moving from one part of the building to another, for children to hide. Most children will try and hide or abscond. Hall monitors would have helped to stop this. Supervision, and enough staff need to be employed to carry out that supervision. In the old school there were only two.

Other information

87. When providing this statement, I had the assistance of Chris Bojas, Deaf Registered Intermediary, and two British Sign Language interpreters interpreted for me on both occasions when I met with the Inquiry (2nd September and 18th September 2025). Donna Jewell and Greg Colquhoun, British Sign Language interpreters, interpreted my statement for me on the date of signing, which I was able to do having understood my draft statement, which was read out to me and interpreted by them.
88. 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... 18/09/2025

Declaration of interpreters

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... 18/9/25

Declaration of interpreters

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... 18/9/25