

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PFP

Support person present: No

1. My full name is PFP. My date of birth is 1962. I am 55 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Edinburgh and was the eldest child of my parents. My parents then had my sister who was two or three years younger than me. I remember when she was born and came home to live with us.
3. My mother and father had quite an acrimonious separation soon after. I think my father was a compulsive gambler and heavy drinker at the time. There was some legal action between them. My sister and I were both kept in separate children's homes during this period. Eventually, my mother gave up and said she'd take my sister and my father could take me, so that was what happened.
4. I was split up from my sister, who was put into a children's home on Howdenhall Road in Edinburgh. The actual building is now a Toby Carvery pub. It is opposite Morton Hall Crematorium. I lived with my father in the Corstorphine area of Edinburgh. He worked all week so I was dumped into Widower's Children's Home on Corstorphine Road when I was four or five years old.
5. I would stay with my dad most weekends. My mother initially had access to me every second Sunday, but that soon stopped. My mother had met somebody else, which

my father couldn't handle. I have come across letters from my mum's solicitor to my dad, which show that she was trying to have contact with me. I think she got sick of the psychological harassment from my dad and gave up. I lost contact with both my mum and my sister when I was about seven years old. I didn't see them both again until I was 25 years old.

6. I believe my placement into Widower's Children's Home was made through Edinburgh District Council. The Council now deny that they had anything to do with Widower's Home, but my records show that my father paid money to Edinburgh District Council as part of my upkeep while I was in there. I think Edinburgh Council were also putting money in. The receipts have the old Edinburgh coats of arms on them.

#### **Widower's Children's Home, Edinburgh**

7. I went into the home in 1966 or 1967 when I was four or five years old. I think the home was run by a group of trustees who had shares in the home. The trustees also had three or four houses next door to the home in Beechmount, just off Corstorphine Road. The home was run on a profit and loss basis, and I suppose the children were just cattle for the trustees to make money from.
8. I was situated on the east side of the building with all the other boys, and the girls were on the west. I was put into a dormitory with about twenty other boys around my age. I remember the curtains in the dormitory had giraffes on them and reminded me of animals from the zoo. My bed was an old, hospital, cast iron bed. I was put next to a boy called [REDACTED]. I remember crying myself to sleep, but I stopped crying after a short while because nobody answered. That was it; I was there.

#### *Staff*

9. As you walked into the dormitory, there was a cubicle on the left hand side. It was in the room but it had barriers about ten feet high. That got staffed from 10 or 11 pm at

night for any young kids who would cry. There was a girl member of staff who was fifteen or sixteen years old who slept in that cubicle, and she would regularly have sex with one of the older boys in the home called [REDACTED], who was only twelve or thirteen at the time. You couldn't see anything because of the barriers, but you could hear it. [REDACTED]'s bed was next to the cubicle. We helped each other climb up to see what was happening, and got shouted down.

10. [REDACTED] is no longer alive. He had two sisters in the home called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think the female member of staff was called PZO [REDACTED]. She would be about sixty years old now and I presume she is still alive.
11. It wasn't uncommon for girls from the home to stay on and work in the home once they turned sixteen years old. They didn't feel like staff to us because we knew them, and they weren't abusive towards us. A girl called [REDACTED] stayed for a little while to work in the home after she turned sixteen. She lives in America now.
12. We called the staff members "Aunty." Most of them were only seventeen or eighteen and straight out of school. There was always a high influx of staff. Some, like Aunty HRE [REDACTED], were older. She was particularly ruthless. SNR [REDACTED] was called Aunty HRF [REDACTED] and she was also older.
13. The cook who prepared the meals was called Mrs RHV [REDACTED]. She stayed in a [REDACTED] on the grounds of the home with her husband. Mr RGM [REDACTED] was the handyman in the home. He would change light bulbs, stoke the boilers and cut the grass. They were in their fifties. Mr and Mrs RHV-RGM [REDACTED] daughter and two granddaughters stayed with them in [REDACTED]. The daughter worked in the home as one of the staff members who we called aunty. The grand-daughters were called [REDACTED], and I think the other was called [REDACTED]. They used to play with us.

**Routine at Widower's Children's Home**

14. We got up in the morning and got our clothes out of our lockers, and put them on. On school days, we would wear a school uniform, which was grey short trousers and a grey jumper. We would then go downstairs to have breakfast, which would be toast or cornflakes. I have no complaints with the breakfast.
15. There were three long tables in the dining room. After two or three years, the number of kids reduced and there were two tables. Aunty HRF used to sit at the top table with the older kids. The rest of us would sit at the other table with a few members of staff. We all had the same allotted seat for every meal time. We weren't allowed to talk at meal times, and if you did, you would be sent out the room or hit by any of the staff members. When I was about nine years old, I was moved to Aunty HRF's table.
16. After breakfast, we'd walk to Carrick Knowe Primary School, which was a short walk away. We would cut across the train tracks, which I think used to be Corstorphine Railway Station. It hadn't been in use since 1955 or 1956. Then we would walk over Traquair Park to get to school.
17. After school, we would walk back and change into casual clothes. I think my father bought my clothes but they were also provided by the home. The clothes were passed down. We didn't have a choice in what we wore. The shoes used to be passed down in the home, so my father used to buy me shoes of my own.
18. There were two laundry rooms in the home where all the washing was done. One had an old Bendix washing machine in it. The other one was at the back of the home and had old Belfast sinks in it.
19. We would then have tea in the dining room. There was plenty food at mealtimes. If you didn't eat your tea, you would get it served to you the next day. I remember a girl called ██████████ didn't eat her tea of smoked fish and milk. She was served up the same plate of food for three or four days and it was absolutely stinking. She

didn't get anything else. I think her sister, [REDACTED] would later go into the pantry and steal food for her.

20. After tea, you could ask to sit on the floor in Aunty <sup>HRF</sup> [REDACTED]'s room and watch television, but you were only allowed to do that if you were good. There was another black and white television in one of the kid's sitting rooms where the other staff used to sit.
21. We didn't get any supper, but we would sometimes get a hot chocolate or Ovaltine at night. Stealing food was a regular occurrence in the home. I remember when I was away one weekend, the kids decided to have a picnic and stole the ham out of the fridge. When I came back on the Sunday night, the staff hammered me for it even though I hadn't been there. I told them it wasn't me, but I wasn't believed because the other kids had blamed it on me. The money for it was taken out of my savings.

#### *Chores and running away*

22. We would take turns to clean the dining room at night. This involved putting the plates away and sweeping the floors. As I got older I would avoid doing it and would run away when it was my turn to clear up. The other children would make an extra mess when it was my turn. I think they hated me because I was always running away.
23. The staff tried to keep an eye on me in the evening after tea time, but I would always get away. The home had a lot of escape routes and I would wait until the staff went out for a cigarette break to get away. I could go out the front and side doors, most of the windows, and also through the coal chute in the boiler room. I was about 8 or 9 years old at the time.
24. I ran away most nights. Some nights I would get caught. I was fortunate because my father just lived only about a mile along the road from the home, which was a ten minute walk. If my dad wasn't home, then I would just hang around the snooker room and go back as late as possible. I would always come back to the home because my

dad would make me come back. I would get a good skelping when I came back but it was worth it to be away for a while. It didn't stop me; I would run away the next night.

25. Sleeping times were staggered amongst the kids. The younger you were, the earlier you had to go to bed. Somebody would escort you up to your bed and that was it. We all had our own toothbrushes but nobody supervised us to brush our teeth, so we didn't have to brush them.
26. Stoking the boilers was another chore. It was Mr RGM job to do, but we would have to do it if he was busy or on holiday. RKE was the biggest of the boys in the home so he would be told to do it, but because he was a bully, he would make us do it. That was dangerous and we got no supervision. If you were big enough to carry a shovel or throw a bit of coal into the boiler, then you would be made to do it. Sometimes there would be one of us and sometimes there would be six of us. I got a few burns from doing that. If the boilers went out in the middle of the night, it would take hours for them to heat up again and for there to be hot water. That was another thing the staff would hammer us for.

#### *Bath times*

27. We used to get baths and showers on a Sunday, but no more frequently than that. You would maybe get a bath if you had a doctor's appointment. I would come back from my dad's house as late as possible on a Sunday, at about 7 or 8 pm, and get a bath then.
28. The bathroom was on the west end. There was a girls' bathroom and a boys' bathroom at separate ends of the corridor. It had a stone floor and two big metal baths in it, or maybe even three. There were a few toilet cubicles as well. Bath time was a good time because it was like a cattle market. Sometimes there would be three or four of you in the bath. It was just like a sheep dip. You were in, got a quick scrub and got out. The baths took so long to fill up that the water wouldn't be changed; they would just top it up if it started to get cold. The water was grey if you were the last one in.

29. The younger ones got bathed first, because as soon as they got out, they got into their pyjamas and were taken up to bed.

*Leisure time and activities*

30. After having tea in the evening, you could watch television in Auntie HRF's room if she thought that you had been good. In the summer, we would play football in the garden after school. [REDACTED] was a tomboy and would play football with us. During the holidays, we used to sneak out and go to the zoo for the day. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was my friend in the home, but we all did things together. Even if somebody stole three oranges from the street, they would be shared.
31. There were also separate play rooms for girls and boys. They were just like big bare rooms. The girls' play room was better because they had a hamster or guinea pig as a pet. They also had a record player in their playroom. We didn't have one because the boys probably would have broken it. The boys' playroom had toys in it like ducks on a string, and broken cars. The older boys had a separate playroom but that wasn't much better.
32. We didn't have any of our own possessions in the home because if you brought anything in, it would be stolen or broken by other boys. We had nowhere to keep our own stuff so once it was in there, it was everybody's. I used to leave everything of value at my dad's house. You couldn't take even a bar of chocolate or a bottle of juice into the home because it would be stolen by other kids. I can't fault them for it because they had nothing.
33. I was fortunate and only stayed in the home for one Christmas. I would usually go home to my dad for Christmas. The one time I stayed in the home, I had presents left for me but they had been tampered with by the time I got them.
34. There was no real religious instruction apart from the Sunday school, which I didn't go to because I would be at my dad's house. There was also the usual assembly

leading up to Christmas. Christmas time was the only time I wouldn't do a bunk from school, because there would be four or five parties organised by other charities in church halls. You would see Santa and get a present of an orange or something. That was something that was fun.

*Trips and visits*

35. I remember going to visit my sister in Howdenhall Children's Home for a while. It was only for about an hour and it was supervised. That was every fortnight, and then it stopped when I was about seven years old. I remember my dad telling me that I didn't have a sister or a mother anymore.
36. During the summer holidays, I would still stay in the home from Monday to Friday. I would sometimes stay with my Dad if he had time off during the holiday periods. This could be over Christmas or a week in the summer.
37. The home would organise trips during the summer holidays but I was either not invited, or I would be with my father. I have seen photographs of me on trips with the home, but I have no recollection of them.
38. The kids from the home went to Sunday school in the church across the road from the home. I didn't go because I was usually with my dad. The church would organise a trip for the kids during the summer, but I wasn't invited because I didn't go to the Sunday school.
39. We weren't allowed visitors, but we had a pound day sometime in the summer when the home put flags out. The local schools would have collections and people would hand in things like tins of beans and bottles of sauce. We used to have kids come up to us at school and tell us that they'd handed in food for us.

*Schooling*

40. I started school after I went into the home. I went to Carrick Knowe Primary school with other children from the home. It was a short walk from the home. Some other children went to Forrester's School and later on to Craigmount School when it opened.
41. School was ok. It was like anything else. It wasn't exciting. I would always get in trouble for not doing my homework. I ran away from the home most nights so never got a chance to do it.

*Discipline and punishment*

42. Aunty HRF used to have a day off every Tuesday. Her room looked over the back garden. Children would get in trouble and punished if we made a noise on her day off. This happened more during school holidays when we played in the garden and woke her up.
43. We would be locked in the dark laundry room at the back of the home as a punishment. There was no light in there, and the door was locked from outside. That happened to me many times, and it also happened to other children. I don't know how long I was kept in there, but it would feel like ages. I remember being locked in there with other children and we were all screaming.
44. We would be punished during mealtimes for talking. This could be by any member of staff who was there. I also saw people being served their food up again at the next meal if they didn't eat it.

*Medical Treatment*

45. I got some medical treatment for a cracked and bleeding rash on the inside of my thighs from bed-wetting, but it wasn't from any of the staff in the home. It was from

another girl in the home called [REDACTED] who was older than me. She went away and stole cream and applied it for me.

46. [REDACTED] was like everybody's godparent at the time. She would steal plasters and creams if anybody needed it because that was the only way you would get it. She was three or four years older than me. [REDACTED] also had two sisters in the home called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. She also had two brothers in the home, but one of the brothers was always in and out of the home.
47. I remember once having a doctor's appointment so a member of staff gave me a bath the night before. She was scrubbing my ears and got a bit of cotton wool stuck in my ear. I went to see Dr [REDACTED] for a routine examination and he saw the cotton wool stuck in my ear. He couldn't get it out so he sent me to the Sick Kids Hospital in Edinburgh to get it out. I think I was seven or eight years old when that happened.
48. I have been told by the girls in the home that that Dr [REDACTED] used to make them take their tops off, and would fondle them whenever they had to go and see him. I found this out as an adult. We used to call him "[REDACTED]" because [REDACTED] was also a doctor. [REDACTED] was also a member of the committee who would oversee the running of the home. He is dead now.
49. I was admitted to the City Hospital in Greenbank after contracting jaundice. Other kids in the home had caught it too, and the doctor suggested they should isolate it so I was put into hospital. I was there for maybe two or three months. It was boring and I wanted to get back to school.

#### *Visits / Inspections*

50. Social workers used to come to the home. There were pre-arranged visits and everything would be sorted out before their visit. The place would be tidied up and we'd have nice clothes put on us. The contact with the social worker was basic. We wouldn't be in a room with them one-to-one.

51. The social workers were tied in with the Edinburgh District Council. The social worker was only really called in if you were in trouble. I was fortunate that I didn't get into that much trouble so I never really had to one. I don't remember ever speaking to a social worker on my own. My records say that I was a very happy child.
52. One time when Auntie <sup>HRF</sup> was on holiday, Mrs <sup>RHV</sup>, took over [REDACTED] of the home. The place just descended into chaos. There were fists going and people were getting hit. I went to the phone box with [REDACTED] and one of us phoned the police. I was forewarned by the staff at the home not to say anything if I was spoken to. They warned the other kids too. It was something along the lines of: "If anybody comes to visit you, you'd better watch what you're doing".
53. I remember getting interviewed by the headmaster at Carrick Knowe Primary School about allegations that had been made about things going on in the home. We had been forewarned not to say anything so I didn't because I knew I would get hit if I did. We would probably get our pants pulled down and hit on the bum.
54. One time, a few of the girls, including [REDACTED], went to visit one of the trustees in Beechmount, just off Corstorphine Road. They told him about the ill treatment of the kids in the home. He must have gone back and told Auntie <sup>HRF</sup> because she was furious. I wasn't there at the time, but I was told that she was angry. Nothing changed.

#### **Abuse at Widowers' Children's Home**

55. I had the same bed the whole five or six years I was in the home. Everybody got new beds except me. There was a reason for that, and that was because I was a habitual bed-wetter. I was traumatised and used to wet my bed a lot. I was known as 'pishy bed,' which is what the staff and the kids called me.
56. When the staff found out I had wet the bed, I would get skelped and made to sleep in the wet bed. There was a big red rubber sheet so I would be lying in a puddle after wetting the bed. It wasn't uncommon for me to lie in the same wet bed sheets for five

nights. If I wet the bed on Monday, I would have to lie in that wet bed until the weekend. Nobody changed the sheets. I remember I got a really sore rash on the inside of my thighs, which was cracked and bleeding from regularly sleeping in a wet bed.

57. A few times when I wet the bed, I was taken downstairs to be given a bath by staff members and they physically held my head under water until I was gasping for air. I don't remember who did it. I also remember being force-fed tiny yellow tablets that tasted bitter, which were supposed to stop me wetting the bed. I know they weren't prescribed for me. I think they might have been prescribed to [REDACTED] who also used to wet the bed.
58. I would stay awake worrying about falling asleep and wetting the bed. This meant that I was so tired when I fell asleep, that I would sleep in and be late in the mornings.
59. The home was freezing in the winter. The dormitory especially used to be freezing. There were cast iron radiators in the dormitories, but they were inadequate for the size of the rooms. I remember there was a shortage of coal during the miners' strike so we had no heating or hot water. There were also power cuts at the time. That was the same for people outside the home too.
60. I remember it being freezing every winter and we'd be shivering. The blankets we had were inadequate. They were called 'fireman's blankets' and were made of coarse wool. We wouldn't get any extra blankets during the winter. Sometimes I used to wet the bed just to get a heat, but then I'd have to sleep on the wet rubber mat all week with only the coarse blanket. I was in the big dormitory.
61. There was a smaller dormitory that had about four to six beds in it. It was luxurious in comparison. [REDACTED] was moved into the smaller dormitory but I wasn't because of my bed wetting. The smaller dormitory was not as cold and had newer, wooden beds. It also had a radio.

62. The girls had small dormitories that had partitions without doors so it was sectioned off for some privacy. Their beds were nice compared to mine. Some of them even had patchwork quilts. That was luxury I could only dream of.
63. The older boys would come into the dormitory after we had gone to bed and wake us up by being boisterous. They thought it was a game to attack us with pillows. The pillows were filled with feathers and were solid.
64. The noise used to alert the staff who would come to check on us. The older boys would sneak out of the emergency exit door that they had a secret key for. I would pretend to be asleep, but it usually resulted in a mass spanking session as a punishment. I would have my pyjamas pulled down and be beaten with a wooden Scholl on the bottom. The kids dormitory was like an orchestra of screaming kids.
65. Some children managed to sleep through it and had no idea what was going on. The staff would then wait outside in the hall, listening out for anybody who dared to cry or keep talking, so that they could be further punished.
66. Aunty HRE used to skelp you. She and Aunty PZX used to hit us with a wooden Scholl clog. There was such a high turnover of staff that it is hard to remember all the members of staff who did things to us. There was an American member of staff there at one point. She was a very tall and well-built woman, but I don't remember her name. She used to hit us as well.
67. We would get our pants pulled down and hit over the bum with a thick wooden Scholl. It was like a beech coloured, narrowed-down clog. Some people also got hit over the ears with the wooden Scholl. This happened to me at least every week and I saw it happen to other children too. Most of the staff member would do this. They would also lock us in the dark laundry room as punishment. Some of the older kids, including RKE, used to lock us in there as well.
68. I remember seeing [REDACTED] get a particularly bad beating once. I think it was from the American woman. She had to be kept off school for a few days because she had

black eyes and I think a bleeding ear. She didn't get any medical attention but she was showered with treats to keep her quiet. She used to get real bad beatings from one of the staff members, because she was tall for her age and used to try to stand up for herself. I saw it happening and you could also hear it sometimes because she would be absolutely screaming.

69. Aunty <sup>HRF</sup> never used to physically hit us. She would punish us by making us stand in the corner of her room, facing the wall with our arms outstretched in front of us. She would then put a pile of books on each upward facing palm. We would be made to stand there until she told us we could stop. She would do this if we were talking in the dining room or talking when the television was on. She also made me do it when I ran away.
70. ██████████ told me that a female member of staff used to sexually abuse him, and that it usually happened on a Saturday night. It might have been <sup>HRF</sup>, but I think it was Aunty <sup>PZX</sup>.
71. Some of the girls have also spoken about being raped whilst in the home. ██████████ told me a few years ago that she was raped by the father of two of the children in the home. He was visiting them during the summer holidays and had walked upstairs and raped ██████████ as there was no staff around. This is something ██████████ told me a couple of years ago.
72. ██████████ also told me that she was raped in the outbuilding ██████████ Mrs <sup>RHV</sup> home. It had its own separate door and lawnmowers and other garden stuff was kept in there. ██████████ told me a couple of years ago that Mrs <sup>RHV</sup>'s daughter's boyfriend raped her in that outbuilding.
73. Mrs <sup>RHV</sup> lived in ██████████ on the grounds of the home. A lot went on in that ██████████ with other children, but not me. The only thing that happened to me in ██████████ was on the day of the wedding of Captain Mark Phillips to Princess Anne in 1973. I think it was during summer so there were only a couple of kids in the home. I

remember standing against the wall in [REDACTED] and being hit by a member of staff because, like any young kid, I didn't want to watch the wedding.

74. The home was not a nice place. It was somewhere to get fed and sleep at night. You had to do chores and stoke the boilers. If you didn't do it properly, there would be no hot water and you got skelped for it. The boiler room was a dangerous and frightening place.
75. You saw other kids being battered and could hear them screaming. Hearing children scream when they were being hit or when they were having nightmares was a regular occurrence. If you screamed too much, the staff would shove a pillow over your head to shut you up. That was what life was like in the home and you learned to accept it. You learned that crying never helped you, and other kids would just laugh at you if you cried.
76. We never got any affection.

*Peer abuse*

77. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] RKE, who was three or four years older than us. He was physically fully developed and was a horrible person. He was a bully and a sexual predator, and used to physically and sexually abuse the children in the home. The kids used to call him 'RKE [REDACTED]' due to his constantly exposed, dangling penis. RKE once masturbated on my back as I lay on my bed. I already lived in a urine stained bed so it was just more fluid to dry out. I didn't tell the staff. I knew from past experience that it would be foolish to do so. I contracted jaundice soon after that, but I don't know if that is connected.
78. [REDACTED] told me that he was raped by RKE [REDACTED]. He told me this as an adult.
79. People used to complain to staff about RKE [REDACTED], but complaints were ignored because he was Auntie HRF's favourite. He was always allowed to stay up late. He always got

supper and would get treats of chocolate when the rest of us didn't. He was also allowed to stay at the home after he turned sixteen, although other boys weren't allowed to. I think there were also other favourites, but RKE was a particular favourite. Aunty HRF was aware what he was doing to other children but didn't do anything about it.

80. RKE was terrified of [REDACTED] because she was a tomboy and had a violent temper. She was very protective of her brothers and sisters. She cared more for the kids than the staff did. She partially kept RKE in check.
81. [REDACTED] Mrs RHV granddaughter, told us that she saw RKE coming out of Aunty HRF's room naked once. RKE died in a car crash at Balgreen in Edinburgh when he was about 22 years old.
82. There was a boy called [REDACTED] in the home. He used to wear thick, black, NHS, bottle-type glasses. He also had a sister called [REDACTED] in the home. They were both older than me. Looking back, [REDACTED] should not have been in the home because he clearly had psychological issues. The kids used to keep away from him because he seemed to take pleasure in inflicting pain on other children, especially girls.
83. I recall one occasion when he made a few of us sit in a circle in the garden, next to a hedge. He then made us watch as he drowned a baby hedgehog in a bucket of water. All of the children were crying and upset, and he seemed to take delight from it. He was clearly a troubled child. I think he was about twelve years old and I was about nine at the time.
84. [REDACTED] was in and out of the home about three or four times. Aunty HRF didn't like him and tried to get him out of the home. I think [REDACTED] stayed while he was in and out, but I can't be sure. I remember that he returned to the home after being away for a few months or a year. He was not long back when Mrs RHV daughter caught him in the coal cellar with a boy who I think was called [REDACTED]. When she stumbled across them, [REDACTED] was naked and dirty, and his penis was covered in blood. He

was very distressed. That must have been the last straw because that was the last I saw of ██████ in the home. ██████ told me about this incident afterwards.

85. I don't hold a grudge against ██████. I do think that the staff, social workers or even the committee of trustees knew about ██████'s problems. He should not have been around other children in the home with his underlying issues. I can only assume that it was financial incentives that made him come back because Aunty ██████<sup>HRF</sup> didn't like him. I know the home was struggling at the time with money.

### **Leaving Widowers' Children's Home**

86. I left the home in the summer prior to starting secondary school. I was about twelve years old. I had made up my mind that I didn't want to go back. I was street-wise and able to look after myself. It didn't matter what my father said or even if he dragged me back to the home by the ear; I just wouldn't stay there. My father argued, but then said that if I agreed to go to school on a regular basis then I didn't have to go back to the home. After about six weeks, a letter came from the home saying it would be better if I didn't return. It was brilliant. I wasn't going to go back anyway.
87. I think the home was also trying to get rid of kids at that time because there were not enough kids and it wasn't profitable.

### **Life after care**

88. I was no longer in the home when I started at Craigmount High School in Edinburgh. I stayed at my dad's house. It was a bit of a rundown hovel but it was better than the home. When I was in the home, I was never able to tell my dad what happened in there because he wasn't interested. I have told him since and had arguments with him. He insists that he had no choice but to put me in there. He did have a choice. I could have had a normal life and stayed with my mum.

89. I got an apprenticeship with a butcher when I left school, then I went to work in a slaughterhouse. I got in touch with my mother and sister again. I found them by trawling through paperwork and looking in the phonebook. I only vaguely remembered my mother. The sibling bond had been broken with my sister by then and she was just another person.
90. During the whole BSE outbreak, a lot of small businesses went out of business. The slaughterhouse I was working in needed renovation. I was made redundant, so I went to live with my mother in Dalkeith for a couple of years. I was still a teenager though, and things didn't work out.
91. I got married and became a father when I was 33 years old. I worked as a bus driver when I was in my thirties. I remember working with a man who had returned from Australia and got a job as a bus driver. He was arrested for abusing children in Clerwood Children's Home. I think a couple of drivers were taken to court for abusing children and faced jail time. I realised that abuse happened in other homes too. I have been told that this man got out of jail, and the Council have given him a house directly opposite to where he abused children.
92. I would drive through the Corstorphine area of Edinburgh as part of my job, and it triggered all my memories from the home. I started getting flashbacks and suffered from depression.
93. I split up with my wife and got back together with her a few times. We are not together now. My son is 23 years old and we have a good relationship. He lives with me, but he is a singer on a cruise ship so is away a lot. I speak to him every other day.
94. My mother is now dead. I speak to my sister maybe once every couple of months. She is like a pal, not a sister because our sibling bond was broken. My dad is still alive. He has never accepted responsibility for putting me in the home and for what happened to me. He is an old man now though so there is no point shoving it down his throat. I just try to move on and get on with life.

**Reporting of abuse and other action**

95. I spoke to the police during one of my dark spells of depression. It was maybe as long as fifteen years ago. I felt ready to talk about it and wanted closure. The police took a statement, and said there was not enough evidence and that they would get back in touch with me. I never heard from them again.
96. I have heard from other survivors that the police took statements from them, but came back and said that they have no records of the staff in the home and don't know where they now live. I don't think the police tried very hard to look for them.
97. I think the police are a waste of time. I know one of the other survivors, [REDACTED], wasn't well enough to give a statement to the police and she asked them to get back to her in a fortnight. That was eight or nine years ago and they never got back to her. The police officer was called Christine Robinson.
98. I lost a lot of contact with people from the home. I set up an invite-only private [REDACTED] page for children of the home, which has brought people back together. There are about fifteen or sixteen of us in the group. Most of them are still local, but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are in America, and a couple are in England. I think when some people came out of the home, they couldn't get far enough away.
99. Most of our contact is online, but those who are local meet up about once a month for a social gathering. I think we carry out our support ourselves. One of the most difficult things to do was to tell [REDACTED] about the actions of [REDACTED] RKE. She was visibly upset when she found out but I suspect that she knew.
100. I can see that there are people less fortunate than me, and I try to help them with certain things and point them in the right direction. That has given me a bit of focus to carry on. [REDACTED] helped me in the home when I was little. Now that she is not as well as she could be, I feel like I can now give something back to her.

101. I have a relatively good working relationship with Gary Smith of Future Pathways. If any other survivors need help, I also redirect them to Gary if it is something that he can help with. He has been really good. He has helped people get overseas to see their family members.
102. Not everybody agrees with me about the home. Some people think the home was a wonderful place. One person has left the group and I think it is because they might have been one of the abusers.

### **Impact**

103. My schooling didn't really start until after I left the home. We never did any homework or anything whilst in the home. When it came to sitting my GCSEs, I didn't even bother going to sit some of them. I just did the basic minimum to get through school.
104. I find it difficult to hug people now and show affection because we never had it as children. I thought it was just me, but I have spoken to other people from the home and they are the same now too. I struggled with giving my son affection when he was born, but he got affection from his mum. I tried to help him with more practical things like his homework. I was only able to help him until he was ten years old because he was really good at maths.
105. I have panic attacks and night terrors about drowning, and still have flashbacks about being held under water. This can even be triggered by watching a television programme with someone drowning. This is from having my head held under water at Widower's Children's Home as a punishment for wetting the bed. The flashbacks started when I was in my thirties and when I drove buses through Corstorphine.
106. I suffered from depression and anxiety, and I also had sleep apnoea at the time. My driving licence was suspended and then I got pensioned off from the buses.

107. I have tried taking medication for my depression and anxiety, as well as trying counselling and group therapy, but they didn't work for me. I tried power walking but it also didn't work. I now sleep with a mask on for my sleep apnoea.
108. I was married, and I split up and got back together with my partner a few times. This was due to depression and finding it difficult to cope. It took me a while to realise that alcohol was the answer for me. I am not an alcoholic because I don't drink every day. I am a binge drinker. Vodka and beer help me. Things can build up in my mind over weeks or a few months. I drink when I feel I have reached a precipice. I drink fifteen pints or a litre of vodka and when I am tired I go to sleep. I have a sore head and am lethargic the next morning, but my mind is clear. It is my coping strategy and it reboots my system so I am ready to go again. This works better for me than a daily tablet.
109. I have taken part in various group sessions and attended counselling, which didn't really help. I have no doubt that my early years have affected my wellbeing and my personality. I find it hard to get close to people emotionally and physically. It may have also made me a stronger person.
110. I have always been overweight, which means I am short of breath. I have gout in my feet and arthritis. I see other people who are worse than me and I am still lucky to be here.
111. I don't work now. I could probably find some work, but I don't know what type of PFP is going to wake up in the morning. I could be bright as a button one day and other days I can't even get out of my bed.

### **The Widower's Trust Fund**

112. There was a significant amount of funds in the kitty when the home closed. It was handed over to the Widowers' Trust Fund, which is still running. It is now run as a charity under the supervision of Geoghegans Chartered Accountants, who are based

in the west end of Edinburgh. The money is to help former employees and children who lived in Widower's Children's Home.

113. I know some people have had help from the fund when they have had a fire or needed something. Anybody who requires help has to go before a panel to be grilled about why they need the money. I have never had to go and see them, but I have heard it is a horrible experience. I have helped other people apply for funds when they have needed something. Every year we also get a cheque of about £150 or something at Christmas.
114. Some of the families of the trustees have been involved with the trust for years, because they pass it down the family. One of the families is the Usher family. They made a lot of money from selling pale ale and whisky to the troops in India. They then built the Usher Hall and breweries in Edinburgh. I think the family is now in decline. They lost a property to cover a court action against them. It was either repossessed or sold. That property is now a children's home in Balerno called Harmeny Education Trust.
115. The trust should use the money they have to help people who are living in squalor and to make their lives better. This is an immediate need. Nobody is there for them to make things better at the moment.

### **Records**

116. I managed to get some of my records from Edinburgh Council, but I had to fight quite a bit to get them. They weren't very good. They were on microfiche and barely legible. A lot of it had been blanked out for security or safety, but then some of it wasn't blanked out.
117. The social workers who came to visit the home were tied in with the Edinburgh District Council. The Council now deny that they had anything to do with Widowers'

Home, but my records show that my father paid money to Edinburgh District Council as part of my upkeep while I was in the home.

118. I asked the Widowers' Trust for records, but didn't get anything. Geoghegans hold an active database on behalf of the Widower's Home Trust containing names of former staff and children who worked and stayed at the home.

**Final Thoughts**

119. The Widowers' Childrens Home should not have been allowed to operate in the way that it did. We were there for financial reasons and not there as children in care. There was no one person at fault. The council, trustees and committee all had a duty of care towards us. Social workers also need to take a healthy portion of the blame.
120. There needs to be closer scrutiny of people looking after children. Social workers need to carry out checks without any pre-warning.
121. 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..... PFP  .....

Dated..... 14/6/17 .....