

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

PJD  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is PJD [REDACTED]. My surname at birth was PJD [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1962. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. Before going into care, I lived at home with my parents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], at [REDACTED]. I have two brothers and one sister. My brother [REDACTED] was twelve or thirteen years older than me, [REDACTED] was two years older than I was, and my sister [REDACTED] was four years younger than I was.
3. I lived at home until [REDACTED] 1967 when I was five. I don't have many memories of home. My dad worked on the buses and we practically lived in the kitchen, because my mum was always baking. My mum passed away in her sleep due to a brain haemorrhage. Family members couldn't take us and my Dad couldn't cope, so my younger siblings and I went into care. My brother [REDACTED] was seventeen by this time, so he didn't go into care. [REDACTED] and I went to the Widower' Children's Home on St John's Road, Edinburgh.

### **The Widower' Children's Home, 235 St John's Road, Corstorphine, Edinburgh**

4. I remember a social worker in a little blue car collected us. We were told we were going on a holiday, but everyone was crying. I didn't understand why everyone was crying. I didn't understand that we would be away for years.
5. There was a mixture of boys and girls at St John's Road, from two or three years old, up to fifteen or sixteen. There were about twenty or thirty kids there in total.
6. The woman <sup>SNR</sup> was Aunt <sup>HRF</sup>, her surname was <sup>HRF</sup>. There was a Mrs Witherspoon, and a woman called <sup>PZO</sup> who made the beds and dealt with bathing the kids. Mr <sup>RGM</sup> was the gardener, and his daughter, Mrs worked in the house, helping alongside Aunt <sup>HRF</sup>. They lived in a cottage behind the house and they had three children, and . I was friends with and , I'm still friends with to this day. There were other staff, Mrs was the cook, there was <sup>HRE</sup> who I used to call, "<sup>HRE</sup>" and June, I can't remember her second name, she was really nice.
7. The grounds were big, we had a sandpit, a monkey frame, and a seesaw. We weren't allowed in Mrs 's cottage.

### **Routine at 235 St John's Road**

#### *First day*

8. Someone took our cases, we just looked about the place ourselves. You walked in the front door and straight ahead was Aunt <sup>HRF</sup>'s sitting room, then her office, the dining room, the boys' playroom and the staff room. There were stairs down to the basement on both sides. I can't remember anyone showing us where our beds were, or where the toilet was.

9. In the basement, there was a laundry, a toilet, a kitchen they didn't use, a cloakroom, boiler and storage rooms. On my first day, I got lost in the basement. It was dark, I didn't know which door led where, and I couldn't find a light-switch. I went down a corridor and it was getting hotter and hotter, it lead to the boiler room. Later on, I loved the basement, it was my getaway space.
10. There was a staircase in the dining room leading up to the first floor where there was a dormitory for boys and a room for older girls on the right-hand-side. Opposite, there was a staff room, the bigger boys' dormitory, Aunt HRF's bedroom and bathroom. Then you went through fire doors to the girls' dormitory and bathroom.

*Mornings and bedtime*

11. The girls' dormitory had divider partitions separating it into cubicles of two or three beds. There were nine of us in the dormitory. There was a wardrobe and cabinet at each bed. I slept in the smaller girls' cubicle to begin with and as I got older, I moved into different partition rooms within the dormitory. I shared a room with a girl called ██████ and I shared a room with my sister, when she got older and came to Widowers'.
12. Most mornings, Aunt HRF would wake us up. Things would be okay until breakfast, when you might be hit, depending who was on duty. We got washed and dressed before we went down for breakfast and after that, brushed our teeth and got ready for school.
13. Bedtime was about eight or nine o'clock. Nobody put us to bed, the staff would come up with us and Aunt HRF came round last thing at night and made sure everyone was accounted for and in bed. We didn't go to sleep, we would be jumping on our beds and sliding along the linoleum floor.
14. As you got older, you moved in the dormitory. It was the same room, you just moved cubicle. I didn't think that there was any difference between the way ██████ or ██████ and me were treated, but now I think that there was, they just grew up with it.

*Mealtimes/Food*

15. Breakfast was porridge or cereal and toast. If you didn't like something, all hell would break loose. HRE would force-feed it to you, or beat you, slapping you on the body, arm, and legs. It was just with her bare hand, not an implement. She did it to me and others. One girl, she really hated porridge. She got bent over the table and beaten by HRE for that, while Aunt HRF just sat there. suffered a lot, she got beaten a lot. She's dead now, she died of a brain haemorrhage. That went on for years and now that I am older and I think back on it, I wonder how she could have gone to school after getting beaten like that first thing in the morning.
16. We didn't get a snack when we got in from school, but we got a variety of things for dinner. Aunt HRF made curries, stews, chicken, and sausages. The food was okay, but if you didn't like something, tough. You were made to eat it by HRE, or else. HRE wasn't on, the dinners were fine. You didn't get a pudding at dinnertime, you got a scone or something. You would get a pudding at lunchtime at school. You got to make toast and drinks later on, when you were a bit older. Sometimes the staff ate with us, but not so much their children.

*Washing/bathing*

17. Bath time was about 6.30 to 6.45 pm, but we didn't all get a bath each night, you got a bath once a week, mostly on a Sunday. Bath time was ok, it depended which member of staff was on. It wasn't ok when HRE was on duty. HRE and RHJ could both be quite rough when they were washing you and they would slap you when you were still wet. They would hit you anywhere, you didn't know why they hit you. They would hit you when you were in the bath. What could you be doing wrong in the bath? It would be for not keeping your head forward, or not keeping it back, or for getting soap in your eyes. When you got hit, your head would hit off the taps. They would hit you more often than not, but that was when you were younger. When you got older, about eleven, you got to wash your hair yourself.

*Clothing/uniform*

18. We just wore our own clothes at the house. We didn't go shopping for clothes, we had open days, where things were donated. Some of the clothes were new, some weren't. Your wardrobe got changed over, depending on the season. You would go to the big clothes cupboard and the staff would pick out stuff for you.
19. We wore a uniform to school, they were used uniforms but they were okay. I remember going round with a hole in my shoe for a while until they were changed. I got new shoes then, because I was getting older and there was nothing in the cupboard to fit me. The older children usually left care with their shoes.

*School*

20. Someone would walk us round to school in the morning, but you had to get ready for school yourself. We were at school until three o'clock, we had lunch there.
21. Primary school was Carrick Knowe, and the High School was Craigmount. I found it hard in primary school, I wasn't good at reading or maths, subtraction was the main thing I couldn't do. Sometimes, it was difficult getting crayons.
22. There wasn't any one-to-one at the home. When we got home from school, nobody helped you with your homework. There was no set routine about doing homework, it was just left to us. I can't remember anyone checking if I had done my homework. I can remember it was even a problem getting someone to sign my homework, sometimes I just signed it myself.

*Chores*

23. I remember having to sweep all four flights of stairs. That was from when I was eight or nine years old. I had to do chores on Saturday, tidying the dormitory, mopping the

toilet and bathroom floors, wiping down the kitchen surfaces, helping with the dishes and dishwasher after every meal.

*Leisure time*

24. I can't remember much from when I was younger, but as we got older, nine or ten, me, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] used to play hide and seek in the basement and muck about outside. There was a toy room, a mixed boys and girls room, with building bricks, a blackboard, and a seesaw. The bigger boys, the teenagers, had their own playroom and they had a piano in there. I can't remember there being any books, we were just left to our own devices, we were not supervised. We did have some of our own toys like jumping jacks, skipping ropes and tennis balls that we used to hit off the wall. On Saturdays, we got a wee bag of sweets, but no pocket money.
25. Me and [REDACTED] were great friends, we used to imitate Frank Spencer and his wife Betty, we used to put on shows in the room, all the other kids watching us. June, a member of staff, used to kill herself laughing at us.
26. Children can be cruel, we were called, "Homers" by other children at school, so we would all stick together. I did make some friends outside of the home, there was [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] lived in [REDACTED] with her mum and dad, in the house just behind [REDACTED], so that was an interesting place to go. We didn't have our friends back to the home for tea, but you could go to their houses for tea. When we got older, friends were allowed into the playroom.

*Trips/Holidays*

27. We used to go to the zoo as it was just across the road and we went to the beach at Gullane. We had bonfire night and you got to go guising at Halloween. We went to Brownies and Guides, and there was Scouts for the boys, there was a hall in the grounds.

28. When I was about ten or eleven, me and [REDACTED] went to stay with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], although we didn't meet them before we went for that holiday. He was a policeman and they had three children of their own. We went to Eyemouth. We went to the cinema, we went out for dinner and I think we went to a show. I got on well with the girl who lived next door to them, we went out on a bike ride. It was a good holiday.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

29. Christmas time was good, we went to parties here and there and Santa would come. Christmas day was a good day. We had a Christmas tree and we got to make decorations like paper chains and things. We used to decorate our dormitory, we wrote letters to Santa at school. When we woke up on Christmas morning, there was a stocking on the end of our bed and we got to open our presents, which was fruit, confectionery and stationery. We got to keep the presents we were given. After breakfast, we went into the big room and there were sacks full of presents with our names on them, and the seats had all our names on them. We got jigsaws, these kits with beads to make things, things like that.
30. On your birthday, you didn't go out for a celebration, but they had presents and a cake in the home after school, so you had to wait all day. The cake would be a jam sponge with icing. I think there was enough cake for everyone.

*Visits/Inspections/Review of Detention*

31. I did get to see my sister [REDACTED], as well as my brother [REDACTED] who was placed with me. [REDACTED] ended up taking his own life, he suffered from depression, and I think it had a lot to do with being in care. I didn't see my older brother [REDACTED] much. He and his wife did visit us, but not regularly. He did come round on, "Pound Day" which was an open day where people would bring donations and your family came along. My Aunt [REDACTED] used to come and see us regularly, and we would go and stay with her at weekends. My dad did come and visit us but not often. I remember one of his early visits, I was screaming to go home with him. We usually saw dad at Aunt [REDACTED]'s

house. Me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] all visited her together. I had contact with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] every day.

32. I remember my dad visiting when I was young, and I was screaming to go home with him, but he just ushered me back into the playroom. We went to Aunt [REDACTED]'s house often, if not every week, every month. Sometimes it was for one night, sometimes two.
33. I didn't have a social worker. The only time I saw a social worker was when I was getting ready to leave Widower's Children's Home. His name was Mick.
34. To my knowledge, no one official who came and visited or did any inspection or spoke to me about the place. There was no one identified to me as being someone whom I could talk to about care, nobody that I would call a keyworker.

#### *Healthcare*

35. We did see the doctor, I remember the doctor's room was quite weird. The doctor was Doctor [REDACTED] HRI, he was based at a practice further along St John's Road, then his practice moved down to Ladywell Road. He would feel you all over your body, your breasts, the top of your thighs, whenever you went to see him about something. One time, I went in to see him about a stomach-ache, and he was lifting my legs up and down. I didn't think anything about it at the time, but looking back on it now, it seems a bit strange. I'm not the only one who said that about that doctor.
36. I remember having the measles and I was put in a room on my own. You only saw the doctor if you were unwell, there were no regular or routine check-ups. We got the dentist every six months.

#### *Religious instruction*

37. There wasn't any religious instruction in the house. We went to church on Sunday, Church of Scotland, but there was no discussion about the service in the house afterwards. Nobody liked going to church.

*Running away*

38. I think I only ran away the once, when I was thirteen or fourteen. I didn't really run away, I just got on the train with my friend [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] and went to Glasgow. We just went on the train to Glasgow, had a look about the place, then came home again and went to bed. I used to talk about running away, planning it, but I never did anything about it. One night, [REDACTED] got up and said, "Right, are we ready?" and we would just say go back to bed. I do remember saying to Aunt <sup>HRF</sup> [REDACTED] that I didn't want to be there. I was older and I was seeing how the younger ones were being treated, how I used to be treated. By that time, I was able to walk to my dad's house and I wanted to get out of care.

*Bed-Wetting*

39. [REDACTED], [REDACTED]'s sister had horrendous problems with bed-wetting. She always got smacked for it. I don't know who smacked her, I never saw it happen, she just told us about it. They also hung her sheets out of the window, so everyone knew when she had wet the bed. I don't know how the staff dealt with bed-wetting, I think [REDACTED] had to stay in bed sometimes, without the sheets being changed.

*Discipline*

40. For misbehaving, you got grounded and didn't get to go to visit family members, or you were not allowed to go swimming, which we got to do from the age of eleven or twelve. The staff didn't come with us for swimming.
41. <sup>RHJ</sup> [REDACTED] used to hit us with a wooden shoe, Scholl's. [REDACTED] used to always get that, from the age of six or seven, and half the time it was just for fidgeting. She would hit [REDACTED] on the legs, sometimes once, sometimes two or three times.

42. You would have to sit in the playroom with your arms and legs crossed. You were told, "Don't speak unless spoken to." If you did speak out of turn, you could get hit, sent to bed early, or made to stand in the corner of the room. [RHJ] did hit me with her wooden shoe. I can remember one time when we were all lined up and Aunt [HRF] hit us all with a slipper, a plimsoll. I can't remember what we were getting punished for that time.

#### **Abuse at Widow's Home, 235 St John's Road, Edinburgh**

43. The atmosphere in general was sometimes good, and sometimes bad. Every day, I used to think, "What will happen today?"
44. There was one night I got beaten by [HRE] because Mrs [REDACTED]'s daughter, [REDACTED], wanted into the house to see her mum and I unlocked the back door for her. I was beaten for doing that, because the door had been locked by Aunt [HRE], and I had opened it. I got bent over a chair, my lower clothes were removed and I was smacked on my back, my legs and my backside, anywhere. I had marks on my legs and backside. I got sent for a bath and to my bed, and the nice member of staff, June, gave me a bath. I showed her my injuries and she felt sorry for me.
45. I got slapped about quite a lot. Sometimes they put the TV in the corridor and we would have to sit there and watch it but I don't know why. It was always very cold, I think it was because we had to sit on the linoleum. If we were watching TV and we were really interested in what was on, if they noticed, they would send us to bed before we saw the end of the programme. That used to really annoy me.
46. I remember Aunt [HRF] would get us together if she thought we had been up to no good, like when I was twelve or thirteen and a policeman caught me smoking. She just spoke to me and said that she would not tolerate it and took my cigarettes off me.
47. Other times, she took a group of us in to her office and sometimes you could have your say about whatever it was, but other times she would just say, "Don't be daft." or,

"Don't be stupid." I never went to anyone and said, "I'm not happy about..." I just went in a strop. Aunty <sup>HRF</sup> would always just ask what had happened, never why it had happened. I can't recall any specific examples of why we would have to go into Aunty <sup>HRF</sup>'s office. You would try to tell her your side of the story, but it just got to the point where you were always in the wrong.

48. I saw [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] being beaten. If you didn't see it, you would hear it. I heard my brother [REDACTED] being beaten. I don't know what he had done. I heard him swearing and yelling as he was being slapped. He would have been ten or eleven, I would have been eight or nine.
49. [REDACTED] was another child in the home who wet the bed. I saw her getting beaten up by <sup>HRE</sup> for that. She slapped [REDACTED] all over her body.
50. My brother [REDACTED] was sexually abused by <sup>PZO</sup>, a staff member. He told me about it after he had left the home. He told me that she took him into her room, and he lost his virginity to her. [REDACTED] would have been at high school when this happened. He left the home when he was fifteen or sixteen.
51. One day, I was walking along the top landing, where the dormitories were and where Aunty <sup>HRF</sup>'s room was too. The door to her room was open and <sup>RKE</sup> was being abused by Aunty <sup>HRF</sup>, he was lying naked on her bed. He would have been at high school, about fourteen or fifteen. <sup>RKE</sup> went on to abuse other children in the home, I can't remember who, but I know that it happened from people speaking about it at Open Secret meetings. <sup>RKE</sup>'s [REDACTED] didn't know about the things [REDACTED] had done until she heard about them at Open Secret. <sup>RKE</sup> is dead now.
52. Children were violent to other children in the home. <sup>RKE</sup> had quite a temper, he could be quite aggressive. <sup>RKE</sup> used to pick up my sister [REDACTED] by the throat and throw her. There were no male staff, and the staff who were there found it difficult to control him. At that time, there was a difficulty getting people who were qualified, capable of caring for children in care. Some of the kids became staff, which was

strange, as they had no formal qualifications. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and RMH [REDACTED] all became staff. RMH [REDACTED], she was a child who used to bully other kids and then became staff. She would punch the kids, pull their hair, call them names or throw things at them. This would happen when there were no other staff around, and there was nobody you could go to and talk about stuff like that.

### **Leaving Widower's Children's Home, 235 St John's Road, Edinburgh**

53. When I was getting ready to leave care, I did have a social worker. I wanted to see about moving back to my dad's house. The social worker got me the basics like a bed, bedding, and I got a clothing grant. I got bus fares to go to my dad's and that was it. Nobody came with me to my dad's. At the time, I just wanted to go home to my dad's so I wasn't bothered about the arrangements, but thinking back it could have been done better, for example, if someone had accompanied me to my dad's house.
54. Again, looking back, I don't think my dad's house was the right place for me to be. Dad was an alcoholic, he took to drink after my mum died. When I moved back home, it was dad, [REDACTED] and me. Dad was always drinking, he would come home drunk when I was still at school.
55. Although I was glad to be away from the care home, my home-life was not great. I was off school a lot during my last year as I often didn't have bus fare to get to school because dad was drinking all the money, but I am not saying it was always my dad's fault that I was off school. I went to Craigmount High School. I didn't have any qualifications when I left school, I can't even remember sitting any exams. I just fended for myself from the age of fourteen or fifteen. I didn't see the social workers when I left care. I maybe saw Mike once, at my dad's.

### **Life after being in care**

56. Going back to my dad's after care didn't last long, as my dad was always drunk. I ended up staying with my cousin [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had two kids, so I was the baby

sitter. There was nobody there for guidance as I was entering adult life. [REDACTED] was family, but I didn't know her that well. I lived between my dad's and [REDACTED]s. I stayed with [REDACTED] until I was eighteen, when I fell pregnant, then I got my own house. [REDACTED] and my Aunt [REDACTED] helped me with care grant application forms and things. My sister, [REDACTED], used to come to my house every weekend. She had been moved from St John's Road to another young person's home. [REDACTED] would visit my house, with all of his mates too. [REDACTED] didn't visit as much, as he was married and I didn't have much to do with him until I left care.

57. After that, I met my partner [REDACTED], when my daughter [REDACTED] was eighteen months old. I had two more daughters with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Then we split up. [REDACTED] went with [REDACTED] and I was left with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and although we did co-parent, the girls started spending more and more time at their dad's as I was suffering from depression, but not because I was on anything.

58. Next, I met my partner [REDACTED]. We were together for four years, and I fell pregnant again. [REDACTED] was an alcoholic, so we split up. After that, I got together with my current partner.

### *Employment*

59. I have worked in shops. I started back at work when the kids went to school. I ended up as a dinner lady at [REDACTED] school in Edinburgh. I then worked for [REDACTED] in the photo processing and dry-cleaning section. Then the photo processing stopped with the rise of digital photographs. I now work as a carer.

### **Impact**

60. My time in care did have an impact on me. From my experience in care, I didn't want to discipline my kids. It was difficult for me to discipline my kids. If I had to punish my kids, I felt bad about it. It has affected the relationships I have had. At the home, I never heard anyone say, "I love you." even from the staff who were nice. I think you

were looking for someone to love you, looking for a happy ending, but that wasn't how it was meant to be.

61. I was an outpatient at the Andrew Duncan Clinic, in 1982. I couldn't function, I couldn't sleep. I had panic attacks and really bad headaches. This was during one of the periods when I was drinking, but that has passed. My partner [REDACTED] was often in prison, and I was left with the kids.
62. Lately, I have been thinking about my time in care a lot, because I was preparing to give my statement to the Inquiry. Before that, it would only pop into my mind now and then. The main impact upon me was in relation to my education.
63. I have sought compensation for what happened to me in care, but I have never sought an apology. I am involved with Open Secret, Celsius and Future Pathways. [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who had also been a child in Widower's, keeps us informed about developments, and Future Pathways has helped me to get driving lessons.

### **Records**

64. I have got my records from the Local Authority. It is not clear, you can't make anything out. It's like a bad photocopy. They have even got my date of birth wrong as well as other details. I got my records with help from Mick Armstrong, from Open Secret, but it wasn't easy to get them. At first, the Local Authority said they didn't have them, but eventually I got them.

### **Lessons to be learned**

65. Having a keyworker for when I was in care would have been a good thing, especially as you got older, going into secondary school. Having someone you could turn to would have made all the difference.

66. I hope the Inquiry will let people know about the abuse in care by staff and all the things that went on, that it wasn't all a bed of roses.

**Other information**

67. 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 <sup>PJD</sup>  .....

Dated 17-12-18 .....