

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**Witness Statement of**

PGI [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My full name is PGI [REDACTED]. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1950.

Background*Reception into Widowers' Home*

2. I was referred to as PGI [REDACTED] when I was a child. I went into the Widower's Home in Corstorphine, Edinburgh with my older brother PEH [REDACTED]. I was aged nearly 3. That was in [REDACTED] 1953. Because I was so young, I was put in with the older girls so they could look after me. I was separated from my older brother PEH [REDACTED]. The girls lived on the other side of the building from the boys.

Pre-school care

3. Being looked after by the girls was okay to start with. They had to change me and wash and clean me. When the girls had to go to school I would be put into the laundry. I was too young for school. I would be put into a basin. There were 3 large sinks and a mangle. There was also a pulley. There was an old pram too. I had to stand on and jump on clothes in the sinks. I would catch clothes from the mangle. That happened 5 days a week.

The regime in early years

4. I had a friend called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was born in 1950. He was admitted to the Widowers Home on [REDACTED] 1955. He left in about 1962. He was left to play with me at the laundry. We used to play with the pram. We would push each other around in it. If we pushed the pram to the boys' end, we would get our legs slapped. [REDACTED] was about 4 when he first came. RGO [REDACTED] would do the slapping. She was SNR [REDACTED]. I never saw Ms RJD [REDACTED]. RGO [REDACTED] was responsible for looking after the boys. She would belt us with the palm of her hand. She would hit us wherever she could hit. This included the tops of our heads, our backs and our ears. This probably happened once in the morning and once in the afternoon. She would be shouting get back up there, to the girls end. It was a strict rule.

Meal times

5. At breakfast we were given a bowl of porridge and some rhubarb. We ate out of a bowl and a mug using a spoon. There were no knives and forks. There were about 40 children in the dining room. One day [REDACTED] and I were sitting having breakfast. I said, "he wants more". We then both stood up together and asked for more. We were told to sit down. We were belted and put in the corner by RGO [REDACTED]. I think we would have been of school age then.

Bedwetting

6. If you wet the bed you were made to sit at a separate table in the dining room. Both girls and boys had to sit at this table. It was just to embarrass them in front of the other children. I had to go to that table lots of times. Wetting the bed caused them work.

7. A woman called RJD was in charge of the older girls. She was under 40 I think. RJW or the older girls would do the work. She was there when I first arrived. She took the children to school.

RJD

8. Ms RJD was SNR of the home. She didn't rise until 10am. At 6pm the fire doors on the top area of the building were shut. That was where her bedroom was. 6pm was bed time for everyone, unless there was a special occasion. I rarely saw Ms RJD. She had her meals in her room at the top of the house.

Layout and VIP visits

9. Ms RJD's room was at the top of the house. The office was on the ground floor at the entrance. The dormitories were in between. There was a basement floor where the dining room was located. The laundry was in the basement too. There was a visitors' room on the ground floor. When any committee member visited SNR took them into the visitors' room, which she called the playroom. She called it the playroom to make it look good. We would be taken up there from the basement to be seen to be playing in that room. We would have our clothes changed first into better than our normal clothes. Then, when the visitors had gone, we would be taken back downstairs to the real playroom and our clothes would be changed back into our normal clothes. This happened right up until Ms RJD left in about the summer of 1959. So in my experience this happened between 1953 and 1959.

Routine and punishment

10. We just did things like normal boys do. If [REDACTED] and I did something wrong, like go down to the girls end, we'd be slapped. The we'd be put in the corner until bed time at 6pm. This would be from after school at about 4.15pm. If you wet the bed, your sheets were changed and you had to sit at

the bedwetters' table in the dining room. If you didn't get caught, you'd take the bottom sheet on your bed and put it on top and vice versa. Otherwise you'd get belted.

11. One time I was put in the corner. I started seeing pictures. The one that hit me most was my sister [REDACTED]. I asked to see her. Ms RGO [REDACTED] said [REDACTED]s not here. RGO [REDACTED] would shake me when I was in the corner. She would slap me and shake me when I was in the corner.

Moving to the boys' side of the home

12. I moved to the big boys' side with [REDACTED]. We had to wait until there were empty beds. I was about 6 or 7 at the time. Once we were moved to the boys' side we were not allowed to go to the girls' side. RJW [REDACTED] or RGO [REDACTED] would give you a belting. Ms RJD [REDACTED] could see it all from the top floor landing. She'd just shout. She never did the belting. She wouldn't have known that the bedwetters were put at a separate table. I think the staff were as scared of RJD [REDACTED] as we were.

Rules, enforcement and bullying

13. As far as rules are concerned, you couldn't play outside before 10am. You would disturb RJD [REDACTED]. It was the older boys and RGO [REDACTED] who beat me. RGO [REDACTED] had more to do with the boys. RJW [REDACTED] had to do with the girls.

14. We were frightened to death of the older boys. One in particular wasn't right in the head. RGO [REDACTED] and RJW [REDACTED] knew. We were taught boxing and had boxing lessons from a man who used to box. It was bare knuckle boxing. Brother would be made to fight brother. RJW [REDACTED] and RGO [REDACTED] knew that the older boys were hitting the younger boys.

Staff and chores

15. There were around 40 boys and girls coming and going while RJD was SNR, RJD, RGO and RJW were the main staff. There was also a sewing lady who came in. She'd make a fuss of me. She would bring in cream to put on my sores. The sores were caused by beatings and slapping. The lady would bring me a sweet. I can't remember her name. I had hand marks, bruises and, when I was younger, nappy rash. She saw marks on my arm first. She then saw there were marks on my legs while I was sitting. She would pull my shirt up and see bruises on the top of my shoulders and arms. I suppose I told the lady I got punished downstairs. She would be repairing the charity clothes that were brought in for us to wear. I think she was a volunteer. She worked in a cubicle. This was when I was still on the girls' side.

16. There was a cook called [REDACTED]. She was a member of staff. If she wanted the kitchen cleaned then we'd brush up etc. As we got older on the boys' side, we'd have to clean the toilets etc. This was from age 6 or 7. We used carbolic soap.

Toilet facilities

17. For toilet facilities, there was no toilet paper. We used newspaper to wipe ourselves after the toilet. Usually there was no newspaper. We used our hands to wipe ourselves then we wiped out hands on the walls. We used to pinch newspapers from letter boxes to use in the toilets. Staff made no provision at all for toilet roll for the boys to use. In the upstairs toilets on the girls side you would find toilet roll sometimes.

Ms RJD's departure

18. I was 8 or 9 when RJD left. There two other SNR before Ms HRF. One of them lasted for a weekend. The other lasted for a couple of weeks. Everyone just up-roared.

Boiler room incident

19. When we were moved to the boys' side we were lifted at night to be taken to the toilet. This was when I was 6 or 7. We were in our beds from 6pm. One night it wasn't RGO who came to lift me. It was two older lads. They took me downstairs to the boiler room where the coke was kept for burning. One held me by the legs and one by the arms. A man was standing in the middle of the floor with a rake and had black coal staining on his face. He opened the boiler. It was sizzling. It had clocks on it. They picked me up. They put my head towards the opening of the boiler. I could feel my hair singeing. The man was screaming "now get him in there". They put my feet in. My feet were very close to being inside the boiler. My feet were left blistered and bleeding. Then they started laughing. I tried to run up the piles of coke to get away. I wet myself in bed. I was really, really frightened. I continued to wet the bed after that and to get punished. I didn't receive any treatment.

20. The man in the boiler house was [REDACTED]. His nickname was [REDACTED]. Mr RHM was the boiler man. He lived in a cottage in the grounds and kept the gardens. Mr RHM got [REDACTED] a job as a tea boy. He would use a Billy Can and carry tea for workers. [REDACTED] was an older boy. But to me he was like a man. He had left school but he slept in the same dormitory as us.

Abuse that happened to me

21. Another time I was taken from my bed to an older boy's bed. This was during the night. I was made to take his penis in my mouth and to hold it and kiss it. I couldn't cope with that. I was taken by [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]'s bed. They bent my arm up my back. There was [REDACTED] and another boy of about the same age. They asked me to suck his cock. [REDACTED] said "suck his cock". [REDACTED] was lying on the bed.

He was about 14 to 15 years old. I was about 6 or 7 years old. They were laughing. I don't know if anyone else was aware of what happened. It happened only once. My brother ^{PEH} would have been in the same dorm at the same time. This and the paragraph about the boiler room incident detail the worst incidents that happened to me during ^{RJD}'s time. was not involved in the boiler house incident. There were 5 boys (including) in total involved in the two incidents. They were like grown men. I didn't tell anyone about either of these incidents. You didn't shop or squeal on anyone. I kept silent then and afterwards. I eventually told auntie ^{HRF} (Ms ^{HRF}) when she came as ^{SNR}.

The boys' dorm at night

22. There were 14 beds in a dorm, 7 on each side. There were other older boys in the dorm of a similar age to . was the ringleader and was in charge in the dorm. At night time and the older boys would spend some time in the staff room after we went to bed at 6pm. I do not know if what happened to me happened to anyone else.

Bath time

23. Bath night was a Sunday night, the night before school on the Monday. There were only 2 baths, one on the left and one on the right. We had to queue up outside the bathroom. We would have to queue from the little ones back to the big ones. There would be perhaps 10 to 12 of us. If you had a small cock (penis), you had to go to the front of the queue no matter what age you were. I think it was who organised this. He made us swing until we were bumming each other, in other word pressing our penises against the boy in front's bottom. Some of these lads went away with erections. ^{RGO} would wash us. She'd have a little feel at your private parts. We were naked at the time. She would drop the soap into the bath in order to have a feel at you. She knew what was happening. This happened regularly from when I was about 6 or 7. This also happened with older boys. These are important memories I have from the time ^{RJD} was ^{SNR}.

The end of the RJD era

24. My brother PEH left the home in 1958. That was shortly before Ms RJD retired. I did not feel at all safe in the RJD era. I felt frightened. I kept wetting the bed because of these things. I didn't tell anyone what had happened to me. There was no affection, love or even kindness shown by RGO and RJW. I did tell Ms HRF when she came. When my brother PEH had left and started taking me out, I used to cry when I had to go back.

My sisters

25. I had no contact with my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] during the time I was in the home.

Going out in Corstorphine

26. When we were taken out of the home in Corstorphine to school, we'd be lined up in two's. The villagers would cross over onto the other side of the road. However, when Auntie HRF, Ms HRF came we were allowed out to go and see friends. As long as we were back by an agreed time. She trusted us.

[REDACTED] SNR, Ms HRF

27. HRF was SNR who [REDACTED] Ms RJD. She wanted us to call her Auntie HRF. She wanted all of the female staff in the home to be called "Auntie" by the children. There had been a clear out of all the boys and girls before she came. 25 children went. RGO and RJW went too. Things began to change. Auntie HRF spoke to the older girls and said things were going to change. [REDACTED] became the oldest boy. I was about 9 or 10. I was one of the oldest.

28. One day Auntie **HRF** asked me into the office while I was doing chores. She asked if there was anything she could do. I said she could find my sister for me. She said there would be no more cleaning toilets. After that we got jobs to do. But they were not like a punishment. We had to tidy up after ourselves and tidy the dining room and dorm. I was in a learning class at school. We changed primary school from Corstorphine to Carrick Knowe primary school.

*Changes under Ms **HRF***

29. Every morning except on her day off Auntie **HRF** would have breakfast with us. She wanted more staff and the rooms were cleaned out. She decided to close the basement area down. The laundry had to stay down there. The dining room was moved to the visitors' room on the ground floor. The dining room then had tables and chairs and knives and forks. Auntie **HRF** was determined to close the basement because of the stories the children told about the basement. She asked how things were before. She planned for all of the children to sleep upstairs and she closed the basement. Auntie **HRF** used it only as a laundry. The basement was more or less shut up. She set up an older boys room with a library. She set up a younger boys' playroom. She did the same for the girls.

Meeting my sisters

30. Auntie **HRF** talked to my brother **PEH** about finding . She lived in England. Eventually after about 12 years absence I saw her. I saw her in 1965. She came to see me with **PEH**. It was 5 years before I saw my sister . lived only 3 miles away near the Western General in Edinburgh.

Girls at the home

31. I remember some of the girls. There was who has passed away now. There were and .

left in 1960. Auntie **HRF** would have talked to her. There was a girl called **[REDACTED]** too. She went to America.

More changes for the better

32. When Auntie **HRF** came I was one of the older boys. She tried to put boys of similar ages together and she managed that. The number of residents reduced from 40 to 25.. There was also a turnaround in staff. New staff came in. There was Auntie **HRE**, Auntie Christine and Auntie Martha. **RHV-RGM** came. He did the garden and boilers. Mrs **RHV** was the cook.

33. Doing chores under Auntie **HRF** was not a punishment. The practice of putting children at a bedwetting table stopped. She told me she was unhappy about some of the things that had been happening. The bedwetting table was stopped. The doctor stopped coming to us. We went to see the doctor like other people. This was in contrast with during **RJD**'s time. Doctor **HRI** used to make visits to the home. When Auntie **HRF** came a member of staff would take you to see the Doctor in Manse Road if you needed to go. Doctor **HRI**'s wife had been a committee member. She ran a charity and collected clothes for us.

34. Subsequently, I took my children there and we had a holiday. My wife will confirm this. This was in the mid 1970's. Auntie **HRF** had problems at that stage because she had some black children who had been abused by their fathers. They were from Glasgow. She also had a number of gay boys. Auntie **HRF** warned me to keep the children away from some of them.

35. I didn't think Auntie **HRF** was happy with the committee. They were short of the money and children necessary to keep the home open. Auntie **HRF** gave me a list after I had left. It was a list of all of the children who had been cared for in the home. I have produced it to the Inquiry. I received it

through the post. I got this from her about 10 to 12 years before she died in 2011. She didn't say why she sent it to me.

Records

36. There are some records from my time in the home. These are records of the Children's Department of Edinburgh Corporation. There appear to be records of visits to the home by persons referred to as "Councillor" and then the name has been blanked out. This is at page 54 of the bundle I have produced, dated 30 December 1957. There are other such entries. I see that these are perhaps records of someone visiting the home. I had never seen the records prior to receiving copies of them in 2011.

37. There is a reference in the records to effect that adoption was considered for me at the outset. However, RJD decided I would be better with my brother. This is at page 55 of the bundle.

38. There is another record from September 1959. This refers to me having been incontinent during the night. This was during Auntie HRF's time. There are only 2 references to bedwetting.

Visits by Councillors

39. I am asked about an entry at page 54. The records suggest someone coming to visit the home on a quarterly basis. I can see that, on the occasions when I was brought up from the basement to play in the visitors' room, and my clothes were changed, this could have been for the Councillor's visits.

40. When the committee members visited the home, RJD would meet them at the door. She would bring them to the visitors' room. The person would put his head round the visitors' room door to see me playing with another child. Tea and coffee would be brought up for them with cups and

saucers. Afterwards I was taken back downstairs and put into my old clothes again.

The committee members

41. As far as the committee members are concerned, I remember a Mrs Bonnar. She had a red or maroon Jaguar car. She wore a very Scottish tweed suit and a bonnet with a feather in it. I also remember Mrs Watherston. I remember picking fruit around August or September time at Mrs Watherston's. A gang of us would be escorted round to her house in [REDACTED]. When visitors came to the home [REDACTED] would say we were to be seen and not heard. I think we did a salute to visitors.

42. I am asked about Rev. [REDACTED]. We also saw him at Sunday School at [REDACTED] church. There was a scheme announced according to which a family could go to Australia for £10. I went to visit my friend in Broomhouse. They wanted me to go to Australia with them. I remember I wanted to go. I remember I was in the bath when Rev [REDACTED] was brought up by Auntie [REDACTED] to tell me that I couldn't go. It was because my sister [REDACTED] didn't want me to go. Rev [REDACTED] was around in [REDACTED]'s time too. We saw him when he visited and at Sunday School.

Annual reports

43. I am shown a series of reports from the Widowers' Children's Home. The first is the 59th annual report from 1955 to 1956. I was about 5 or 6 years old. There is reference to thanks being given to the residents of Corstorphine and Carricknowe for the continued kindness they had shown to the children in the home. There is a reference to interest and affection being shown to the children by [REDACTED] SNR, Miss [REDACTED] RJD, to Christmas parties, picnics in the summer and to a high standard of hygiene and care being maintained in the home. There were Christmas parties and we went to a pantomime. However, it is absolute rubbish to suggest, as the report does, that affection was shown by [REDACTED] RJD, [REDACTED] RGO and [REDACTED] RJW to the children.

44. As far as hygiene is concerned that is nonsense. We used to have to clean the toilets which were disgusting. We had to clean the toilets with carbolic soap. Dr HRI [REDACTED], for example, would not have seen the state of the toilets. No one did.

45. I am now shown the detail in the 61st annual report, year to 30 September 1958. I am asked about the detail in the last two paragraphs on page 6. The detail is about continuity and stability supporting a solid and secure life under RJD [REDACTED]. The detail is not correct. I don't believe a word of it. Children didn't settle down quickly and securely as is suggested. I am asked about detail on page 8 of the report about children in the home having visits from their fathers. I do remember that my friend [REDACTED]'s father used to visit him. I used to get sweets from [REDACTED]'s Dad too. I was told not to do that. I was punished for that. I was told not to go outside and mix with them. Other children also said you don't pay any contribution. They said who's paying yours? The other material about SNR [REDACTED] being a mother to all the children is rubbish.

46. There was one girl that SNR [REDACTED] was a mother to, [REDACTED]. She took epileptic fits. We had to help her. RJD [REDACTED] took a big interest in her. She was looked after a lot better than us. She was the exception.

47. I am asked about the 62nd annual report. RJD [REDACTED] retired as SNR [REDACTED]. This is for 1958 to 1959. I am asked about a suggestion in the report about countless men and women throughout the world who knew RJD [REDACTED] as "Mum". She was never called "Mum". It is also said that the success of the home was undoubtedly due to RJD [REDACTED]'s enthusiasm, careful foresight and the love and affection she has devoted to the many children who have passed through her hands. None of that is true.

Recent meetings

48. There was a meeting with the agents of the trustees of the home on 15 April 2015. This was to discuss some of the things that happened to us. I told people about the boiler house incident when I was a child. But I didn't say anything about the sexual abuse, nor about bath time.

49. I am now asked about a meeting with police which took place on 28 February 2014. There is a brief summary of what was discussed which was produced by Ruth Berta. In particular I am asked about the reference on page 4 to activities in the janitor's room. I remember I was in the older boys' changing room. There were about 10 of us. They brought us in from the dining room. There were girls screaming in the janitor's office. It was during winter and about 4.30 to 5.45pm in midweek, Monday to Friday. There was screaming and crying. To me it sounded like a cry for help. I think there was more than one girl. I would have been about 7 or 8 at the time. It lasted quite a while, about 15 to 20 minutes. The janitor was Mr ^{RHM} [REDACTED]. I didn't see him at the time. I could see shadows moving in the corridor, under the door. I think it came from the janitor's room. I don't know who was there. There was no discussion afterwards. This was during ^{RJD} [REDACTED]'s time.

50. In ^{RJD} [REDACTED]'s time I didn't tell anyone about anything. I told Auntie ^{HRF} [REDACTED] about the incident in the boiler room but not about the other things. I have kept these things to myself. I did tell the police about them however.

Counselling and other help

51. I have been getting counselling through Jessop's medical centre. In the course of the 10 sessions I told of all 4 incidents, ie, the boiler room incident, the sexual abuse, the bath time incidents and the screaming from the janitor's room. The counsellor said you'll have to go to the police about this. This was 6 years ago. I suffered a bang on the head. I was knocked unconscious. I was taken in to hospital in Chesterfield. Everything came back into my head about what had happened when I was in care. I had the accident in 2008 and went to counselling.

Leaving the home

52. When I left the home I was working for [REDACTED] before and after school delivering fish. He didn't think I was big enough for the bike. Then I had a bike accident in Dovecot Road. I cut my leg. Mr Murdoch helped me. I was looking for a job at the time. Mr Murdoch wanted an apprentice builder. He had asked Auntie HRF [REDACTED] about me. I undertook chimney sweeping and repair work with him. There was another guy working for him called Eddie North. He kept calling me a bastard because I was from the home. Eventually I laid him out and was told to go back to the office. I worked with one of the sons, [REDACTED]. He used to go to [REDACTED] church and watch us in Sunday school.

53. I was discharged from the home in 1968. I went to Winchburgh, then to [REDACTED]. I was sleeping rough for a bit. I got into the company of [REDACTED] from the home. I went to Coventry with him. He was in trouble back here. That led to me being discharged from the home into the care of my brother PEH [REDACTED]. That was about [REDACTED] 1968.

54. I have received counselling and support from Clare Vickers, a counsellor at SV2, and from my GP, Dr Parrott. I do not still receive this support but it is available to me if I need it. I am currently supported by my son and daughter and by my wife. I would rather they knew what happened to me than that they did not. My education was terrible. That hindered me in life. I felt there was pressure in my head.

55. My brother PEH [REDACTED] and I were able to be re-united with our sisters. I went to live with [REDACTED]. I still see my sisters. I have managed to bring my family up without having too much of an adverse effect on them of my experiences or childhood events.

56. 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 to be true.

PGI


Signed.....

Dated..... 5-8-16