

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PFO

Support person present: No.

1. My name is PFO and my date of birth is 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I lived in in the north of Edinburgh with my parents and my brothers and sisters. I was the oldest, then my brother was two years younger than me, then , and .
3. My mum didn't work, but my dad did. For a time he was a cook in the army, based at . After that, he became a plasterer. My relationship with my dad was okay, but he wasn't about much due to work. My dad was a drinker, he was a gambler; he was basically a jack- the- lad but I loved him. He wasn't cruel to me or my siblings. He tried his best but he was never going to be father of the year. Both my parents were very selfish. They had to get married because my mum was pregnant with me.
4. My relationship with my mum wasn't good because she was cruel to us all. She physically and mentally abused us. My grandparents did what they could. It was the 1960s, so things were different then. I adored my grandparents. Even the way my mother treated her own parents was very cruel. I never ever had a relationship with my mother because of what happened.

5. On one occasion, my mum burnt my feet with a hot poker. Even to this day, I can't have anybody touch my feet. My grandparents used to bring us sweets and comics at the weekend. She would share the spangles out with us. She took the wrappers off, threw the spangles in the fire and gave me the wrappers. I preferred her to hit me than do things like that. I remember my brother had chicken pox. He had to get purple stuff put on with bandages because they were infected. I remember her pulling them off and he was screaming.
6. When my dad worked away, my mum would have other men in the house. We weren't looked after properly. We weren't going to school or anything. We were like tramps. I had to steal food for my brothers and sisters. I would go up to my granny's at Drylaw to beg her for money and food for us. We were left at home alone a lot. My mum would be away with whichever boyfriend she was seeing and my dad would be at work or doing his jack the lad stuff.
7. I attended West Pilton Primary School. I remember my first day at school. It was the best day ever because I was getting away from my mother. I took myself to school because my mum didn't take me. Even on [REDACTED] first day, I took him to school myself. I think my poor attendance at school was the reason the social work department got involved initially.
8. I was also being sexually abused by two neighbours and I told the people at school about it. One of the abusers was called Mr [REDACTED]. He was married and had two children of his own. The other was the son of our next door neighbours, but I can't remember his name. I was pulled aside by the teacher because I hadn't been at school. She asked if I had been ill. I told her about being in the pigeon hut with my neighbour. Then after that, a lady came to school and asked what had happened in the pigeon hut. I don't know where she came from, I just remember she had a really flowery dress.
9. After I told the teacher about the sexual abuse, everything seemed to happen really quickly. One day, we were with our parents, the next day we were in the Home. The day we were taken into care, I had been up at my granny's to get a loaf of bread. I

came home and later on at night there were people in the house. It was almost like a raid. All five of us were taken out of the house. We were screaming because we didn't know what was happening. I can't remember my parents being in the house at the time. [REDACTED] was just a baby, about eighteen months old. I was eight or nine.

10. We were put into a van and taken to a room somewhere. I'm not sure exactly what was said, but we were then told that we were being taken away from our parents. My brothers went into a home in Edinburgh and my sisters and I went into Templedean. I never went back to stay with my mother or father. Around the time we went into care, my mum and dad separated and they later divorced.

Templedean Hall, Florabank Road, Haddington, East Lothian

11. My sisters and I were in Templedean for about nine months. Secondary Institutions - to be published

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Templedean

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions We left Templedean so we could be with our brothers. Secondary Institutions - to

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Widowers' Children's Home, 235 Costorphine Road, Edinburgh

24. My brothers, sisters and I all went into Widowers'. It was like a Tudor building, the bottom half was brick and the top half was white. There was a girls' dormitory with partitions, sectioned off into cubicles. There was one section with three beds and several sections with two beds. The sections were grouped by age, so I was in the same dormitory as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but in a separate cubicle. There was a separate boys' dormitory at the other end of the building. There was also a big girls' dormitory with two beds and a big boys' dormitory with four beds. It was much smaller than Templedean and accommodated about 25 children. There was quite a lot of coming and going, but some children were there for a long time.

25. My dad paid money to the council for us and then the council paid the home. There was a committee in charge of the home with lots of members. The home was [REDACTED]

HRF [REDACTED], SNR [REDACTED]. We called her Aunty HRF [REDACTED]. Aunty HRE [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED]

SNR. The other three aunts when I arrived were Aunty June, Aunty PZU and Aunty PZX. They was also Mrs RHV, the cook, and her husband. Later staff were called RHJ, RGS and PZO. When I left, only Aunty HRF remained. There was quite a high turnover of staff.

Routine

Mornings and bed-time

26. The staff would come and wake us up in the morning at around 7 o'clock. We'd get washed, get ready for school and have our breakfast. Our bathroom was along at the bottom corridor at the boys' end.
27. After what happened on my first night, I was never able to sleep properly. I used to get into trouble because I'd sit up reading all night. There was a light at the bottom of the dormitory which gave me enough light to see my books. I kept switching it on and it would get switched off again. I used to wander about at night. In a way, I was trying to guard everyone. I really did feel protective towards the younger kids, especially my brothers and sisters.
28. My sister, [REDACTED], was in the next cubicle when I was in the wee girls' dormitory. She would snore like a trooper and it would drive me insane. I used jump up on my bed and throw things down on her to get her to stop. One night, I slithered along the wall a bit and she said, "If you lay a hand on my Donny Osmond poster, I'll kill you." She was awake all the time. There are some funny memories as well.
29. After Aunty HRF went to bed, we never saw her again till morning. We used to get hot chocolate before bed-time. I sometimes wondered if we were being doped. I always had that feeling because everybody would just conk out after the hot chocolate. That didn't happen all of the time, just some of the time. I never used to drink it.

Food

30. We got school lunches, which were incredible compared to the food in the home. The food was like something out of Oliver Twist. It was disgusting. Mrs RHY would cook with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth.
31. I remember the porridge. We didn't get sugar or milk with it. My grandparents would give me sugar lumps and I'd sneak them into my porridge to make it more edible. We got fish and chips on a Friday and I hate fish. The chips were like rubber. They used to put jam on the table. You had to eat three slices of bread with the most disgusting margarine on it before you could get any jam. They tried to fill us up with lots of bread. The food was very basic. It was all tins and things like that.
32. If you didn't finish your food, you got it at the next meal. For example, if you didn't eat your porridge in the morning, you'd get it for your dinner. If you didn't eat it then, you'd be force-fed. We were force-fed quite a lot. My sister [REDACTED] had problems eating the porridge. She would store it in her cheeks and would spit it out later. Her nickname ended up being [REDACTED] because of that. She had eating problems all of her life because of the home. She over-ate all the time.

School

33. I attended Carrick Knowe Primary School when I first arrived at Widowers'. They realised I had a hearing problem so I was held back a year. So many other things were happening, that was the last thing I was worried about. It meant I was in the same year as one of the girls in the home, [REDACTED], so I think that gave me a sense of comradeship.
34. I attended Craigmount High School. We weren't given any support at the home. I don't remember having a table to sit at to do our homework. Nobody supervised us doing our homework. I remember when [REDACTED] started school, I had to help her with her homework. I remember doing that with [REDACTED] too.

35. I did okay at high school. I got six O-levels, I wanted to stay on at school, but because I had to leave the home I wasn't allowed. When I was at Widowers', I would have stayed at school all the time – I would've slept there. I did activities every night, apart from on Friday. I did volleyball, basketball, hockey; anything that would delay going home. I absolutely hated being sick and off school because that was when things happened.

Clothes

36. You got what clothes you were given up until the age of thirteen or fourteen, when you had a bit more of an identity. I remember being given money by Auntie [REDACTED] to go and buy a pair of Levi's. I was so proud.

Holidays

37. We were sent away to random people for holidays. The first time, I went to Eyemouth with a young couple. They were nice. They had just had a baby so it was extra money for them. I used to go fishing. I remember I got a fish hook through my nose. The next year, I went to Wales with [REDACTED]. After that, I refused to go on holiday again.
38. I got to go to Norway with the guides. I went to France, Switzerland and Belgium with the school. Your family had to pay for most of it, but the home put some money towards it.

Birthdays and Christmas

39. On birthdays, we got a cake and some presents at tea time. Unless your family dropped presents off, the presents were always secondhand. New stuff would be handed into the home, but we never saw it. If good toys or good food were handed in, I think they went to staff and their families. On two separate Christmas days, I was locked in the laundry cupboard for the whole day. Every Christmas, somebody was locked in the laundry cupboard.

40. We used to have a Christmas party. It was always at the start of January. It was in the wee kids' playroom. It was good, but I hated having to wear a dress.

Leisure time

41. We used to have a pound day. We would get a half day from school specially. We would put bunting up. People would come and donate food, toys and clothes. I remember winning half a dozen eggs in the raffle and I gave them to my granny. I enjoyed those days because they were something different. We got some treats, like cakes. Because there were other people about, we knew we were safe.
42. I used to play football out the back. I had gerbils and a cat. We didn't get to watch TV very often. Sometimes, we were allowed into Aunty **HRF**'s sitting room to watch Top of the Pops. There were good times, but they were overshadowed by whatever else was happening.

Pocket money

43. My grandparents gave me pocket money. The staff used to steal it. If possible, I would hide it. I would use it to go through to Glasgow on my own. I would go to Celtic Park and I knew I'd be lifted over the turnstile. They didn't care where I was all day. We could walk out the home any time we wanted. We lived on the main road, but there were no locks on the gate or anything even though there were young children in the home.

Visits/Inspections

44. Aunty **HRE** was quite cruel to some of the children, but she was okay to me and my siblings because she was having an affair with my dad. He also had an affair with Aunty **[REDACTED]** and Aunty **PZX**. This happened when he visited. He never did us any harm, but he didn't do us any favours either. At one point, they arranged for us to leave the home and stay with our dad. I wasn't happy about it because although

what was happening in the home was awful, I would have been left to look after my brothers and sisters again. It didn't work out anyway because he didn't do what he said he was going to do. In a funny way, at least we were still being looked after at the home.

45. My mother came to visit us very occasionally, but we were classed as not really having a mother. That's why we were admitted to Widowers'. The weekends were set aside for grandparents or your father to take you out. I used to visit my grandparents at the weekend. I would go by myself.
46. I wasn't a big fan of the social work department because they used to try and make me see my mother. They used to come now and again, I'm not sure how often.

Discipline

47. I caught three of the younger girls smoking: my sister [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were nine or ten. I told on them because I knew it wasn't good for them to smoke. The staff made them smoke twenty cigarettes, one after the other. They were holding their noses and they were choking and sick. All of them smoke like chimneys now so it never stopped them from smoking.

Medical care

48. There was a sick room. When I was fourteen everybody got jaundice, apart from me. They put me in the sick room. While I was in the sick room, I put a chair against the door to stop anybody coming in. I was in there for two weeks. I wouldn't open the door.

Abuse at Widowers'

First night

49. The first night we arrived, the five of us were taken into the kitchen and given scrambled egg. I knew I had an egg allergy and I told them. I was force-fed. Somebody held my nose and made me eat it. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institution I was quite happy to be with my brothers and sisters, but I just knew it was wrong from the first minute I went in. Even when I was little, I expected people to be nice on the first night but they weren't, not even on the first night.
50. If I eat egg, I get pains in my stomach and I'm sick. I was ill later on that night because I'd eaten egg. I got up because I was sick. I came out of the dormitory and a pillow case was put over my head. I was taken to a room, possibly the sick room. My pyjamas were taken off me. I think there were two or three people there, touching me everywhere. I know now that the wet bits on me were from men ejaculating on me. I was then taken to the staff toilets to clean up. The cover remained on my head the whole time. I thought I was going to drown because the cover got wet when I was being washed. I was taken back to my bed and told that my brothers and sisters would be killed if I told anybody.
51. Even at that age, I knew that whatever had happened was wrong. From that night on I don't think I've ever slept properly because of the fear of it happening again. I think there were males that had access to the home at night time. All of the staff in the home were women, apart from Mr RGM.
52. When I woke up, the pillow case was gone but I'd been sick all over my bed. I was pulled off my bed and screamed at by a member of staff. She said, "Now we'll have to change your fucking bed." I remember saying that I'd told them I was allergic to eggs. The following night, I was worried it would happen again but it only happened once.
53. Periodically, one of the girls would be taken out of the dormitory. We would speak about it amongst ourselves. I only ever saw [REDACTED] being taken out. She was taken out by one of the committee members. I went out after them and she got put back in the dormitory. When new girls arrived at the home, the attention was taken off you for a while. That wasn't nice because I wouldn't wish what happened in

the home on anybody, but it gave you a little break. If it wasn't happening to you personally, you knew it was happening to somebody else.

Bed- wetting

54. The way they treated bed- wetters was awful. My close friend, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] both wet the bed. [REDACTED] and I became close because of Celtic. He was victimised a lot. [REDACTED] was left in the wet bed. It was so cold that he got chilblains on his legs. I would get up and change [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s beds. There were no locks on the doors so I would go into [REDACTED]'s dormitory. I would take their sheets down to the laundry, wash them, hang them up and get clean sheets for them. The bed- wetters didn't get duvets, just old-fashioned blankets.
55. If the staff found out they'd wet the bed, they'd be pulled out of the bed. The staff were young, fifteen, sixteen years olds. They weren't capable of dealing with it. Nothing was done to help them stop wetting the bed. When Aunty ^{RHJ} started working at the home, they were hit over the head by her wooden sandal. She would hit their legs and backsides when their skin was still wet. I remember you could still see the imprint on their skin. They couldn't sit down. I saw that happen to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].
56. If we got sweets, Aunty ^{HRF} would keep them in her office in a tin. After school, we'd be lined up in the dining hall. Some of the sweets were fusty because they'd been there so long. She would go along the line. [REDACTED] wouldn't get a treat because she'd wet the bed. On one occasion, I gave my sweet to wee [REDACTED] and I got beaten for it.

Physical abuse

57. Aunty ^{RHJ} came in as ^{SNR} [REDACTED] when Aunty ^{HRE} left. I was about twelve. She was a huge woman with an American accent. At first, she was amazing because she was new and she would play with the younger ones. She would teach them songs and things. I even remember them lying in a row singing, "Aeroplanes,

aeroplanes all in a row; aeroplanes, aeroplanes ready to go." But as time went on, she became violent. We were all terrified of her. She had Scholl sandals with a wooden base. We could be walking along the corridor and for no reason, she would hit us. I had a dent in my head from it.

58. She used to nip us under the arms and at the backs of our legs. She would hold on really tight and we would end up with bruises. I hated wearing tights. I was a tom-boy and wanted to play football all the time. We were made to wear tights to cover up the bruises on our legs. I used to put football socks on under my tights. When I got to school, I would take the tights off. My primary school teacher noticed all the bruises on my legs. She told her colleague, Miss ^{RFQ} [REDACTED], who was ^{SNR} [REDACTED] of the infants in my school and also one of the committee members at Widowers'. Afterwards, I had the absolute shit beaten out of me by Aunty ^{RHJ} [REDACTED]. I was struck all over my face, head and body with the Scholl sandal.
59. One Christmas, I was locked in the cupboard for the entire day and I didn't get any presents or food. It was because I got caught changing ^[REDACTED]'s bed. A couple of years later, I was locked in the laundry cupboard again by Aunty ^{RHJ} [REDACTED]. I was with a couple of other children, including ^[REDACTED]. We were still in our pyjamas. If we were heard talking, we were taken out and beaten and then put back in again. We didn't get any food or presents that Christmas either.
60. Aunty ^{RHJ} [REDACTED] hit my sister, ^[REDACTED] over the head all the time. She used to get headaches when she was a teenager. She also had problems with food because of the home and over- ate. She was very overweight. She died of a brain hemorrhage at the age of 51. I think it's likely her death was connected to the abuse at the home.
61. It was like a game to Aunty ^{RHJ} [REDACTED]. Sometimes, she'd throw up the sandal, flip it, catch it and hit us. Other staff assaulted the children, but not to the same extent. I remember there was a monkey puzzle tree on the way to school. One of the staff said she had to nip us every time she saw the monkey puzzle tree. Aunty ^{RGS} [REDACTED] was always nipping us. Most of the staff were really young. When I got up to fifteen,

sixteen, I was the same age as the staff taking care of us. They obviously had no experience of looking after children.

62. I think Auntie PZX had mental health problems. There was something not right about her. She was sadistic to all of the children. There was an old laundry with deep sinks which had lids with clips on them. She used to put us in the sink, put the lid on and go out of the room and bolt the door. Sometimes, she would put hot or cold water on us. She did it a lot to the little ones. [REDACTED], my brother, [REDACTED], and I used to lift each other up to unbolt the door.
63. [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]'s [REDACTED]. Both were children at the home. The staff used to beat her up constantly. They tried to make her cry but she wouldn't cry. It got to the stage when children were doing it too. Because the staff were doing it all the time, the kids all picked on her too. When I got older, I tried to stop the other kids from hitting her.
64. When I got to the age of about fourteen, things changed a bit because I was able to stick up for myself. I also avoided being in the home.
65. I told Auntie HRF what was going on. I also told a policeman called RDY, but I didn't know that he was also abusing some of the boys.

Holiday in Wales

66. [REDACTED] went to Wales for the summer holiday when I went to Eyemouth. She got to ride ponies. The next summer, I got to go with her. I was about eleven years old. On the train there, she told me that she had been sexually abused. It sounds terrible, but I was more interested in seeing the ponies. We got down there and I was able to ride the ponies.
67. [REDACTED] and I think the people there were a satanic cult. We were there for two weeks. On three occasions, they put me on a cold table in a white gown. They were chanting things. I had a chicken held over me. Its neck was cut and the blood

dripped on me. I wasn't sexually abused, but I got locked in a cupboard and separated from [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a year younger than me but she was more sexually developed.

68. I was getting to ride ponies on the Welsh moors. That was more overpowering for me than what was happening on the table. We never spoke about it to any adults. I know other kids were abused when they were sent to random houses. After Wales, I refused to go on holiday again.

Doctor [REDACTED] HRI

69. It didn't matter what we went to the doctor for, we always had to take our top off. We would go along to the doctor's surgery. We had to strip naked. It was only ever touching. I remember him poking at my boobs and touching me down below.

Mr [REDACTED] RGQ

70. Mr [REDACTED] RGQ was the minister at [REDACTED] in Costorphine. We were made to go to church and sit at the front. I couldn't hear what he was saying, but his sermons would scare the hell out of us. He had a manse [REDACTED] from the church. He would give the girls sweets and fizzy juice. We were never allowed fizzy juice in the home. There was always more than one of us there. He would get us to take our tops off. He would touch us. He used to say that if we told anybody, we would go to hell.

[REDACTED] HRK

71. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] HRK-SPO lived in a cottage in the grounds of the home. They had a daughter who came to work at the home when I was eleven or twelve. [REDACTED] HRK abused me.. Next to the cottage was a store room. We called it the gym, probably because it had an old vault horse in it. We had tortoises that used to hibernate in there over the winter. We didn't have access to the gym, but some of the staff had keys. The first time it happened, [REDACTED] HRK told me that one of the tortoises was

coming out of hibernation. We went in and both the tortoises were still sleeping. It was quite a big place, full of rubbish.

72. He took me over to a mattress with a cover. We sat there, talking about animals that he had had. I love animals. He was talking to me one minute and the next minute I was naked. I remember fighting with him and trying to pull my vest down. He removed my t-shirt and I remember my trousers being down at my ankles. I was raped and he also touched me on my breasts and down below with his hands. He made me lie down on the mattress and ejaculated all over me. He told me he did it with his daughter and it was a thing that dads do with their daughters. He said that because I didn't have a dad, he'd been asked been asked to show me this.
73. It happened several times. One day, the gym door was open. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and my sister were in there with him. They were all fully clothed. I don't know if anything would have happened if I hadn't walked in. I think seeing him with the younger girls gave me more determination to tell an adult. I'd already told Auntie HRF, but she didn't believe me so I told Mr RGM what he'd done. Not long after I told Mr RGM, HRK left the home and I never saw him again.

RKE [REDACTED]

74. RKE [REDACTED] was two years younger than me, but he was massive. Even at nine or ten, he towered over everybody. I remember him being the only boy in the home shaving, when he was about twelve. RKE [REDACTED] was Auntie HRF's favourite. He always got to sit next to her chair. She would run her fingers up his neck. I remember seeing him coming out of her room naked. I never, ever saw any other child in Auntie HRF's room because it was always locked. There was something strange about his relationship with Auntie HRF and it allowed him to abuse everybody else.
75. RKE [REDACTED] abused boys and girls, but mainly boys later on. My brother is an alcoholic because of him. RKE [REDACTED] would go and visit [REDACTED] grandparents at the weekend. When he came from those visits, he was always more violent and more sexually active. I don't know if something was happening to him outwith the home.

76. RKE used to beat me up until I got to the age of fourteen or fifteen and he became a bit scared of me. It started when I was about twelve. There were times when I would go for months with constant black eyes from fighting with RKE. I got up one night to go to the toilet. RKE tried to kiss me and touch me over my pyjamas. The next day, I fought him. We had a proper fist fight. I think he knew I wasn't going to put up with it. I didn't trust him and I never allowed myself to be alone with him. I never went to the toilet during the night again.
77. I was never abused by RKE the way [REDACTED] was. When I was in the big girls' dormitory with [REDACTED], he would come in and do things to [REDACTED]. He raped her. It started when I was about twelve. When he came into our dormitory, I would hide under my bed because I was absolutely terrified of him. [REDACTED] still blames me for him abusing her.
78. I can't remember how long it went on for but then his attention went on to the boys. He was in the big boys' dormitory with my brother, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were all abused by him. He had so much power in the home. It was as if he had a licence to do what he wanted.

Aunty PZO

79. The boys' dormitory was a big long dormitory. At the bottom, there was a cubicle which was Aunty PZO's room. When I was thirteen or fourteen, [REDACTED] came to tell me and [REDACTED] that Aunty PZO was doing things to him. [REDACTED] was about the same age as me. [REDACTED] and I decided we'd sneak into the boys' dormitory. The cubicle wall didn't go all the way up to the ceiling. There was a space at the top the wall. One of the boy's beds was up against the wall. [REDACTED] and I waited until we saw [REDACTED] and Aunty PZO go in to the cubicle. We took a turn each to look over. [REDACTED] was naked on the bed. I got caught looking by Aunty PZO.

80. The next night, Auntie PZO came into the big girls' dormitory. lay still. She took me into the cubicle. was already there. She tried to make and me do things to each other. She wanted us to have sex. She did this a few times. Eventually, we did it. We didn't have sex, but we were kissing. She would use our siblings against us. I told . We decided we weren't going to tell Auntie HRF .
81. Auntie PZO would take me and out and be nice to us. She'd take us ice skating, to the pictures and to see her family. I don't think any of it would have happened if I hadn't put my head over the cubicle. and I would go back to the cubicle. Maybe it was because she was nice to us.
82. One night, she took me into the room and wasn't there. The fact that a woman can do something like that to a child is beyond comprehension. What she did to me was terrible. She would take items and put them inside me. She put a hairbrush, a Mum deodorant and various other things inside me. I was completely traumatised by this and still have problems down there to this day.

Reporting of abuse at Widowers'

83. I told Auntie HRF about HRK abusing me, but she didn't believe me. I then told Mr RGM . I never saw HRK after that. His wife stayed at the home and became one of the aunties. I remember Mrs RHV saying that I'd caused their marriage to break up.
84. When RKE touched me, I told Auntie HRF . She did nothing. He was her pet and I think that's why he got away with so much. I remember and I went to tell Auntie HRF about RKE . It was the middle of winter. She put her big coat and scarf on and made us go for a walk. There was snow on the ground. We had to walk behind her. We didn't have shoes or anything on. I remember it seemed like a hundred miles. We were both in tears. We were soaking wet. It was horrible.

85. I told social workers what was happening with RKE [REDACTED]. Nothing was ever done. I told a nice male social worker. Afterwards, I never saw that social worker again. I told everybody I could about RKE [REDACTED] [REDACTED] did too.
86. There was a policeman called RDY [REDACTED]. He was meant to be around a lot to try and keep the boys on the straight and narrow. I told him what was happening at the home. I didn't realise it at the time, but apparently he was abusing boys in the home.
87. It got to the stage when we just didn't tell anybody anything. As we got older, we would talk amongst ourselves. We stopped telling people in authority because nothing was ever done.
88. A lot of the abuse was swept under the carpet. A lot of prominent people were involved with the abuse in the home. There are notes of people reporting what happened but nothing being done. It's a horrible way to treat children. It was an ideal heaven for paedophiles.
89. Other people from Widowers' have made complaints to the police. The police have been to see me a few times over the years. I've never felt able to talk to them. I didn't want anything to do with it. I never wanted to talk about it.

Leaving Widowers'

90. When I was sixteen, seventeen, I just did my own thing at the home. I didn't have anything to do with the staff or any of the goings on. I just wanted to try and do as well at school as I could. I wanted to be a vet, then I wanted to be a PE teacher. I left Widowers' when I was seventeen. We were meant to leave at sixteen, but I still had to complete my schooling because I was held back a year. I would have loved to stay on at school, but I didn't have the option. I had to leave the home.

Life after leaving care

91. When I left school, I got a job in the civil service, but it didn't start until the following March. One of the committee members at Widowers' got me a job at the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] hunt stables in [REDACTED]. When I was there, I was abused by [REDACTED]. He touched me and tried to rape me. I was paid £2 a week and our living conditions were awful. I did it for six months, then I moved back up to Edinburgh. Part of the deal was that they allowed me to stay at Widowers' for a couple of months.
92. I stayed with a friend for a while, then I rented a room in an old lady's house. When she had to give up her house, I was going to be made homeless. I used to go horse riding at [REDACTED] Riding Centre. They offered me a job with accommodation, so I took that. There was no way I was going back to the home again. I had been with the civil service for just over a year.
93. I lived in a really cold caravan for about three years. It was awful. It was so cold that your hot water bottle was frozen solid by the next morning. My legs used to stick to the side of the caravan. I got involved with a gay guy, John Wilson. He had stables. He flattered me a little bit because I'd never had a relationship before. He had a wife and kids. When I was 21, I ended up going to stay in his mobile home with his wife and kids. It was horrible. He used to beat me up.
94. I've worked off and on for most of my adult life. After the Riding Centre, I joined the [REDACTED]. I worked for the central payments office. I became a nanny for a while and went to Spain for a while. I got homesick so I came home. I worked in the office of a dairy for a while. Then I started hanging out with some gay girls and started working in the [REDACTED] bar. After that, I worked in [REDACTED] bar off and on for eighteen years, up until I got sick with my thyroid.
95. I've always been close to my youngest sister, [REDACTED]. I would still see her in the years when I didn't see the rest of the family. I still saw my sister, [REDACTED], before she died two years ago. We weren't very close because she wasn't happy when I came out as

being gay. I've never been overly close to my brothers. My parents are both dead. I went to my mother's funeral, but I didn't take part. My mum stood outside at my dad's funeral so she didn't upset me. Too much damage had been done.

Impact

96. I got really involved in drugs for a while. I think it was just to try and forget what happened in the home, to hide the pain. I was taking a lot of cocaine and drinking a lot. It was a crazy time. I didn't see my family for about fifteen years. I just couldn't cope with seeing any of them. I had a small cancer in my thyroid four years ago. I reconnected with my family after that.
97. I've seen psychologists off and on. I used to see a lady at the Andrew Duncan Clinic at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. She was really nice and she was helping me through a lot of stuff. Half way through, I got changed to a different counsellor and I didn't click with her at all so I left. I've self-harmed. I've got scars [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. It's all to do with the home. I get counselling just now, but I only have one session left.
98. I suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder during the winter. I get really down. Over the years, I've tried to kill myself a few times. I can go about my life but the abuse always comes back to hit me in the face. I've even asked to see a hypnotist to take it out of my mind.
99. I kept in touch with [REDACTED] over the years. Through [REDACTED], I get together with other people who were in Widowers'. We've been out for a drink. [REDACTED] didn't know about [REDACTED], RKE, abusing people. [REDACTED] started being horrible to [REDACTED]. She didn't know why. I had to tell her what [REDACTED] had done because I didn't think it was fair on her. I find these meetings really difficult. A couple of times, I've just had a complete meltdown, screaming and everything. It's embarrassing, but I just can't cope with everybody being altogether and talking about it.

100. I stammer when I'm nervous. It's only when I speak about the home. I started to stutter when the abuse started. Because I had problems with my hearing, I attended a speech therapist at Donaldson's. I got treatment for my stutter as well and it got better. I can speak about everything else fine, but when I talk about the home the stutter comes back. I had a breakdown in January 2017 and my stutter came back for about two months. When I have a breakdown, it's always to do with the home.
101. I have a lot of problems with my bowels. I had to see a specialist the other week. She told me that the trauma I suffered from my childhood abuse had contributed to my bowel problems. I was taken aback by it. Because of what Aunty PZO did to me, I still have physical problems.
102. I've had so many different addresses. I've never had anywhere I can actually call home. Even now, I live in a room. It's horrible, especially in the winter.
103. I've had problems with food all my life because of Widowers'. I didn't want to eat. I was very thin growing up. I don't like to eat anything that somebody else has prepared. I hate people cooking for me, even to this day. I have to cook for myself.
104. I've never been able to have a relationship because of what happened to me at Widowers'. I identify as a lesbian, because I can't go with men. I don't know really know if I am because I've never been able to have a relationship. Any time somebody gets too close to me, I just can't cope with it. I hate people giving me cuddles. Even to this day, I'm suspicious of people and I always think they want something else. The family I nannied for were so cuddly, it was hell on earth for me.
105. I wanted to have children. I love children. I was too scared that what happened to me might happen to them so I have never felt able have children.
106. Even to this day, I don't sleep. I've never been able to sleep after the first night at Widowers'.

107. Every now and again, I feel dirty because of what happened to me. I can have up to twenty, thirty showers a day. I used to brush my teeth so much that my mouth would be pouring with blood.
108. I think being in care has ruined my life. I know I was clever enough to do something more. I don't have my own home, I don't have a car. I have nothing. I can't even have a relationship because of what has happened to me.

Records

109. I got some records, but I was really upset because it was an absolute pile of rubbish. It tells you nothing and there are lots of bits scored out. There should be bits about me telling the social workers I was being abused. Every paragraph starts with, "PFO [REDACTED] is a bit of a tom boy and likes football." I think everybody who has got their records back has been gutted by it.

Hopes for the Inquiry

110. The turnover of staff wasn't good. They were also so young and inexperienced.
111. I hope it never happens again to anybody else. I don't believe it's not going on in this day and age. There are abusers out there. There are more male carers nowadays. People with dementia are always getting abused. It just shouldn't happen to anybody, it doesn't matter if you're a kid or an old person. How do you stop it? It's terrible. It's the most horrific thing for anybody to go through. Children are like animals, they're defenceless.

Other information

112. 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... PFO [REDACTED]

Dated... 01/12/2017