

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PIU [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is PIU [REDACTED]. My maiden name was PIU [REDACTED]. This is the surname I was known by whilst I was in care at Lagarie. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1946. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. As a child I lived in the Partick area of Glasgow. I stayed with my mother [REDACTED] and father [REDACTED]. I had an older brother [REDACTED]. He stayed with my gran in the Highlands. I think he was about ten years older than me but I can't be sure. [REDACTED] used the surname [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was my mother's maiden name. I also had a younger sister, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was fifteen months younger than me.
3. I remember my childhood being normal. Just the same as everyone else. My father was away a lot as he was in the Merchant Navy.
4. When I was ten years old my mother went into premature labour when she was pregnant with my brother [REDACTED]. This was when me and [REDACTED] went into care. I think it must have been because of my mother having [REDACTED] and my father being away at sea.
5. There was no explanation given to us about why we were going into care. One of the neighbours, Mr [REDACTED], came to our house and drove me and [REDACTED] to Lagarie in his

car. Lagarie was run by the Sailor's Society. I think my mother must have arranged it as I have already said because my father was a sailor.

6. I don't remember any social work or similar involvement with my family before I went into care.

### **Lagarie House, Rhu, Dumbartonshire**

7. When we arrived at the home it was dark. I remember Lagarie being a big house in its own grounds. Inside there was an echo when you spoke. There was no explanation made to us about what was going to happen to us. Even though I knew my mum was going to have a baby I didn't know at that time this was the reason why we were at Lagarie.
8. There was a woman who met us. I thought she was a nun as she was wearing a big white sort of sheet thing on her head. I now know that this was actually the matron. I was taken straight upstairs to a dormitory and put to bed. I think that there were two or three beds in the same room as me. I can't be certain but I seem to remember that there was boys and girls in the room with me. The bed was just the same as at home with a sheet on it. There was a sideboard in the room as well. This had a crucifix on it.
9. [REDACTED] wasn't in the same dormitory as me. She must have been taken to a different room. Nobody said anything to us about why we were put in separate rooms.
10. The only staff member that I remember was the matron. I don't know her name. She was a big woman. I would say that she was in her thirties but might have looked a bit older. She had sharp features and wore glasses. There was other male and female staff members but I don't remember anything about them or any of their names.

## **Routine at Lagarie**

### *First day*

11. I remember that the morning of the first day I was at Lagarie I was wearing the same clothes as I had arrived in. I can't remember if I had a bag of belongings with me when I arrived.

### *Mornings and bedtime*

12. I was always up early in the morning but I can't remember who it was that woke us up. Once I was dressed I would go to the bathroom to have a wash. After this I would go for breakfast.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

13. The dining room was downstairs on the ground floor. It was a big room. There was a table that seemed to be higher up on a platform. This is where the matron and some of the staff sat.
14. I don't remember if we were served our meals or if we had to go and collect the food from a counter.
15. All the children in the home had breakfast at the same table. My sister didn't sit at the same table as me. I did see her but at a table that was quite a bit away from mine.
16. The food was not nice. I can't say anything good about it. It certainly wasn't something I looked forward to. It was normally porridge or cereal for breakfast. I also remember being given semolina and prunes.
17. There were things that I was given at mealtimes that I didn't like. I didn't like the vegetables or cabbage. If you didn't eat your meal then whatever staff member was

on duty would tell you that you could have nothing for the rest of the day. Whatever you left would also be put in front of you the next day. This was even though they knew you didn't like it. I was never force fed my food.

18. I sometimes saw some of the other children being slapped on the back of the head at mealtimes. I don't know why they were being slapped.

*Washing/bathing*

19. The bathroom was on the same floor as the dormitories. There was one bath in the bathroom and a sink. I don't remember if there was more than one sink. This was also where we went to wash in the morning before breakfast.

*Clothing/uniform*

20. I might have been given some clothes at the home. I don't remember being provided with a school uniform.

*Leisure time*

21. In the afternoons I would go out and play in the grounds with the other children. I remember there being what looked like a big dolls house we would play in. There was also skipping ropes to play with.
22. When I was outside playing it seemed to be the only time that I really got the chance to be with my sister and speak with her.
23. There was no issues when I was outside playing. It was actually good to be there.
24. I don't remember there being anyone outside supervising the children. I would think that there must have been someone watching us.

### *School*

25. After breakfast we would go to school. I don't remember much about school. I think that some of the children in my class might have been older than me. I don't remember any of the teachers' names. I can't say if it was the same teacher all the time or different ones.
26. I remember that there was a big unit in the classroom with drawers. I had my own drawer where I would put my schoolwork into.
27. I didn't pay much attention at school. I just tried to keep my head down. I don't have any particular good memories about school. I hated the place. I was always just trying to think about the day that I would leave the place.
28. I don't remember any punishments at school. I was always at the back of the class. The teacher concentrated on the ones at the front.
29. From what I remember we didn't go back to school after lunch.

### *Healthcare*

30. There was no healthcare at Lagarie. I have tried to check my medical records but there is nothing for me either with the Sailor's Society or the local council.
31. I don't remember anyone else needing medical treatment. I didn't have any visits to the dentist when I was at the home.

### *Religious instruction*

32. Before I went into the home I was a practicing Roman Catholic. This stopped when I went into care. I wasn't given any religious instruction at Lagarie. I didn't have to go to church on a Sunday.

### *Work*

33. The only work we had to do at the home was tidy up after ourselves at mealtimes. We didn't have to clean our own room.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

34. I don't remember any Christmas parties at Lagarie. I was only there four months so I might have left before Christmas. I didn't celebrate a birthday at the home. I don't remember any of the other children having a birthday celebrated.
35. The only treats I received at the home was when the staff came round with sweets. You were only allowed to take a certain amount. This had to do you for the week. I would put the sweets in my drawer in the classroom.

### *Visits/Inspections*

36. I never had any visits from my family when I was in the home. I hold a grudge against my family. I think now that surely one of them could have taken me and my sister in rather than us having to go into care. At that time we had a lot of family in Glasgow that could have helped out.
37. I never had any visits from anyone like a social worker when I was in Lagarie.

### *Sibling*

38. There was never any effort made for me to have time with my sister whilst we were in care.

### *Personal possessions*

39. I was never given any pocket money. I do remember my mother gave me some money when I went into Lagarie. This was taken off me when I arrived. I asked for

the money back when I left. I was told that I didn't have any money. It was one of the staff members that said this to me. I don't know who the staff member was.

*Other information*

40. I was never taken to any other part of the grounds by staff. I don't remember any other buildings in the grounds. If there was I never went to these buildings.
41. I don't know if there was a handyman or gardener.
42. None of the other children ever said anything to me about being hit or punished by the staff.
43. I think back now and maybe I was seen as a threat to the staff. They might have thought I would have said something to someone about what was happening to me.

**Abuse at Lagarie**

44. One night when I was in bed I felt a hand coming under my sheets. I don't know if it was a male or female. I thought they were checking if I had wet the bed. I then felt the hand touch me intimately. I said out loud that I would tell me my mum. The hand went away when I said this. This was the only time that this happened to me.
45. There was one trip we went on but I don't remember where this was to. We walked from the home to where we were going. This was when I ran away with my friend. I don't remember her name other than it was something like [REDACTED]. Me and [REDACTED] hid in a chicken house. We obviously hadn't been missed. There was no particular reason why I ran away other than I hated the place and wanted to get away.
46. I don't know how long we were away. It was dark when someone found us and took us back to the home. I don't remember who this was.

47. When I got back to the home I was put in a room. I was then given a hiding. I don't know who it was that gave me the hiding. There might have been more than one adult in the room. I was hit on the head and my back. I don't remember how many times that I was hit. It was really sore. I think that I was just hit by someone's hand. I don't remember it being anything else other than this. I was then put up to bed. I don't remember any noticeable injuries. I think that they were quite clever this way. They knew where to hit you so as to not leave a mark.
48. I never saw what happened to [REDACTED] when we were taken back to the home. After this I never saw [REDACTED] again. I think that I might have been told that she was taken back home by her parents.
49. After I had ran away I was a marked person. I would be given a slap for nothing every day after this. The staff were always picking on me. There was an incident when I ate some liquorice. I don't remember the exact circumstances but I was slapped for eating it.
50. It would be different staff members who would hit me, including the matron. I don't remember anything specific about them.
51. I think that when I ran away it was around the middle of my time at Lagarie.

*Bath time*

52. You would go for a bath every night. A staff member would always be there. I don't think it was the same member of staff each night. Everyone had to line up as there was only one bath. It was boys and girls in the line. I don't know how many children were in the line. Everyone was naked waiting for their turn in the bath. I was always made to go last for a bath. I had long curly hair at that time. By the time I reached the bath it would be freezing. It was the same water for everyone. I always just wanted bath time to be over. It was cold and I was self-conscious standing waiting for my turn.

53. One of the staff would wash you with carbolic soap. The soap would be put in your mouth. It was done in a way where they tried to make it look like they never meant it.
54. After my bath I had to go to bed with my hair still wet. This was when I started to wet the bed. I had never done this before.
55. When I started wetting the bed I would be given a slap at bath time. The matron or staff member supervising would slap me and say about me wetting the bed.

*Bed wetting*

56. There were rubber sheets on all the beds. The staff would check your bed to see if you had wet it. They pulled the covers back to see if it was wet. I remember that the matron would threaten me about wetting the bed. I can't remember what she said it was just a threatening manner that she had towards me. Even if the matron wasn't there she would be told by the staff that I had wet the bed.
57. I don't remember if anyone else wet their beds.

*The Matron*

58. The matron would always give me a slap on the back of the head with her hand. It could be for anything but I think for me it was mostly because I would answer her back. I was never frightened to answer back. I did try and keep myself to myself most of the time. I tried to stay out of the way.
59. I don't remember seeing anyone else being hit by the matron. I asked my sister if she had ever seen anything but she hadn't. My sister was very timid and definitely wouldn't answer anyone back.
60. I always thought that I was picked on by the staff. They just didn't like me.

### *Discipline*

61. I don't remember any other forms of discipline other than the slaps that were given to me. I don't remember the strap being used or seeing anyone being given the strap.

### **Leaving Lagarie**

62. When I left Lagarie there was no preparation. I was just told one day that I was leaving. Myself and [REDACTED] were handed our coats. Mr [REDACTED] came back to the home for us. One of the staff members, it might have been the matron, handed him a letter. I have never seen the content of this letter. Mr [REDACTED] drove us back home. We left in the same clothes that we had arrived in. I was relieved to be leaving Lagarie. On the journey back home I don't remember anything being said.

63. I don't remember Mr [REDACTED] handing my mum the letter when we arrived back home.

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

64. Things were okay with my mother when I first arrived back home. My baby brother was in the house. He was tiny. When I was back home I told my mother that I didn't like Lagarie. This wasn't the first day that I was back home but soon after. I told my mother about what had happened to me but she didn't believe me. She said I was a liar and gave me a beating. I was told that my father could lose his job because of my lies. My mother made me go and see the local priest for confession about my lies. I felt really bad after this. I thought that my mother would have believed me.
65. I never told the priest what I had said to my mother about Lagarie. My mother obviously had told him as the priest passed the buck to the nuns at my primary school. This made my life a misery at school.

66. I went back to the same primary school, St Peters in Partick, that I had been in before going to Lagarie. The school was run by the nuns. My schooling had been that bad at Lagarie that I was cast aside when I went back to my old school. I was continually punished by the nuns, even though I had done nothing wrong. I would be slapped and given the strap across the hands. I believed that this was all because I had told my mother about what had happened to me at Lagarie.
67. Every day at school I was marked absent. This was because I wouldn't answer to the name [REDACTED] which the nuns wanted to know me as. I was told that [REDACTED] was a saint's name and this what I should answer to but I always refused.
68. Before I had gone to Lagarie I had no real issues at primary school. When I went back there was a change in the nuns' attitude towards teaching me. I think that there must have been something about me in the letter that my mother had been given from the home.
69. I lost interest in school. I started to think that what my mother and the nuns thought about me must be true and I was a bad person.
70. When I first arrived back home I continued to wet the bed. I don't remember how long this lasted for. It just seemed that one morning I was okay and I didn't wet the bed after this.
71. I loved when my dad was home from sea. I was a daddy's girl. I never said anything to him about what had happened to me in Lagarie. I didn't see the point in telling anyone else about Lagarie. I just thought that no one would ever believe me.
72. My sister was always treated differently from me. I think that it was obvious she was asked about Lagarie by my mother. She never said anything about what had happened there. I never discussed anything with [REDACTED] about Lagarie. I didn't think there was any point in talking about it with her.

73. I have been married twice. The first time was when I was only sixteen or seventeen. My first husband was a Protestant. I was excommunicated from the Catholic Church because of this. My first marriage didn't last long.
74. I was married again and I have been with my second husband for the last 48 years. I now have a large family.
75. For the majority of my adult life I ran my own café business. I have never not worked.
76. One of my biggest regrets is that my mother wasn't still alive when the BBC programme about Lagarie was shown. I could have said to her that what had happened to me was true all along.
77. I have never gone back to Lagarie for a visit.

### **Impact**

78. The time I spent at Lagarie affected my schooling. I have never been able to write and put a letter together. I have friends that live abroad but I could never sit down and write a letter to them. Thankfully I am able to use the internet to communicate with them.
79. If I had a better education I might have been able to do more with my life.
80. I have never had a lot of close friends. I don't get involved with large groups of people. I think this has a lot to do with what happened to me at Lagarie.
81. My time at Lagarie definitely had an impact on my relationship with my mother. My mother was always very strict but after I returned home things were different.
82. I always try to keep Lagarie at the back of my mind. If there is something on the television about Lagarie or children suffering abuse then it brings it back to me.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

83. After I saw the television programme about Lagarie I contacted the Sailor's Society by email. Stuart Rivers then got in touch with me.
84. I have provided a statement to the police about my time at Lagarie. I have not had any recent update from them.

### **Records**

85. Stuart Rivers has told me that after there was a flood a lot of the records from Lagarie were lost. He said that my records must have been part of this as there was none for my time at Lagarie.
86. I am in the process of tracing my medical records for the time I was in care. I have located the records for the 1960's but not 1950's.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

87. Children should always be listened to. They shouldn't be afraid to come forward and say if something is wrong. I don't like to think of my children or grandchildren wanting to say something and no one listening.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

88. I hope that the Inquiry will ensure that the abuse of children in care will stop. I feel better myself now that everything appears to be in the open. It's a pity my mother isn't here to see that and know that what I said was true.

89. People need to know what happened to children when they were in care.

**Other information**

*Counselling*

90. I was offered counselling by Stuart Rivers from the Sailor's Society. I declined this. I didn't see the point in it.

*Compensation*

91. My daughter has told me about the Government compensation scheme for people who were in care as a child. I have the forms for this but haven't filled them in yet. I just think it's not worth it because there are no records for me.

92. I am not a member of any survivor groups.

93. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....  .....

Dated..... 25 02 20 20 .....