

Tuesday, 27 January 2026

1

2 (10.00 am)

3 LADY SMITH: Good morning. Now, we return this week to  
4 evidence in Phase 10 of our case study hearings and  
5 today we're still looking at Widowers' Children's Home,  
6 which we began hearing evidence about last week.

7 Now, Ms Forbes.

8 MS FORBES: My Lady, unfortunately our live witness is not  
9 able to attend this morning and so I would just proceed  
10 to read in his statement.

11 LADY SMITH: Very well, thank you.

12 'Gary' (read in)

13 MS FORBES: My Lady, it's a statement from an applicant  
14 who's anonymous and is known as 'Gary'.

15 The reference for his statement is WIT.001.001.5324.

16 My Lady, 'Gary' tells us he was born in 1962 and he  
17 talks about life before going into care from paragraph 2  
18 onwards. 'Gary' says he was born in Edinburgh and he  
19 was the eldest child. There was then his sister, who  
20 was two or three years younger than him. And he says  
21 his parents had quite an acrimonious separation after  
22 his little sister was born, that his dad was  
23 a compulsive gambler and heavy drinker, and then there  
24 was some legal action between them and that resulted in  
25 his sister and him being kept in separate children's

1 homes during this period.

2 'Gary' tells us eventually his mother gave up and  
3 said she'd take his sister and his father could take  
4 him, and that's what happened.

5 He and his sister were split up, and she was put  
6 into a children's home on Howden Hall Road in Edinburgh,  
7 and he initially lived with his father in the  
8 Corstorphine area of Edinburgh. But then, due to the  
9 fact his father worked all week, he was put into  
10 Widowers' Children's Home when he was 4 or 5 years old,  
11 but he would stay with his dad most weekends.

12 'Gary' says his mother initially had access to him  
13 every second Sunday but that soon stopped, and he says  
14 then he lost contact ultimately with both his mum and  
15 his sister when he was about 7 years old and didn't see  
16 them again until he was 25.

17 'Gary' thinks his placement into Widowers', he tells  
18 us at paragraph 6, was made through Edinburgh District  
19 Council and he says his records show that his father  
20 paid money to Edinburgh District Council as part of his  
21 upkeep whilst he was there.

22 And my Lady, we do have some records in relation to  
23 'Gary'.

24 LADY SMITH: Yes.

25 MS FORBES: It says he was admitted to Widowers' on

1           ██████████ 1967, so he would have been just aged 5 years  
2           old there --

3   LADY SMITH: Yes, his recollection's about right then.

4   MS FORBES: Yes. And we know then he stayed there until he  
5           was about 12, 12 and a half years old. The official  
6           record says he was transferred to his father on  
7           ██████████ 1974. However, 'Gary's' recollection seems  
8           to be that he was there a lot earlier than that. It  
9           might have been he went home in the summer and was not  
10          then officially off the books until ██████████.

11   LADY SMITH: Okay.

12   MS FORBES: So there is some reference to him spending a lot  
13          of time at home and not coming back.

14           Certainly, my Lady, in his records, they do say that  
15          it was really due to his father working during the week  
16          and being unable to look after him that led to him being  
17          in Widowers'.

18           'Gary' goes on to tell us about Widowers' from  
19          paragraph 7 and he says that he thinks the home was run  
20          by a group of trustees who had shares in the home, and  
21          it was run on a profit and loss basis. And he says:

22           'I suppose the children were just cattle for the  
23          trustees to make money from.'

24           He tells us at paragraph 8:

25           'I was situated on the east side of the building

1 with all the other boys, and the girls were on the west.  
2 I was put into a dormitory with about 20 other boys  
3 around my age. I remember the curtains in the dormitory  
4 had giraffes on them and reminded me of animals from the  
5 zoo. My bed was an old hospital cast iron bed. I was  
6 put next to a boy called [REDACTED] [and he gives us his  
7 second name too]. I remember crying myself to sleep,  
8 but I stopped crying after a short while because nobody  
9 answered. That was it, I was there.

10 'As you walked into the dormitory, there was  
11 a cubicle on the left-hand side. It was in the room but  
12 it had barriers about 10 feet high. That got staffed  
13 from 10.00 or 11.00 pm at night for any young kids who  
14 would cry. There was a girl member of staff who was 15  
15 or 16 years old who slept in that cubicle, and she would  
16 regularly have sex with one of the older boys in the  
17 home called [REDACTED] [and he also gives us his surname],  
18 who was only 12 or 13 at the time. You couldn't see  
19 anything because of the barriers but you could hear it.  
20 [REDACTED]'s bed was next to the cubicle. We helped each  
21 other climb up to see what was happening and got shouted  
22 down.

23 [REDACTED] is no longer alive. He had two sisters in  
24 the home [and he names them]. I think the female member  
25 of staff was called PZO [REDACTED]. She would be about

1 60 years old now and I presume she is still alive.

2 'It wasn't uncommon for girls from the home to stay  
3 on and work in the home once they turned 16 years old.  
4 They didn't feel like staff to us because we knew them  
5 and they weren't abusive towards us. A girl called [REDACTED]  
6 [REDACTED] stayed for a little while to work in the home  
7 after she turned 16. She lives in America now.

8 'We called the staff members "Aunty". Most of them  
9 were only 17 or 18 and straight out of school. There  
10 was always a high influx of staff. Some, like Auntie  
11 HRE, were older. She was particularly ruthless. SNR  
12 SNR was called Aunty HRF and she was also older.

13 'The cook who prepared the meals was called  
14 Mrs RHV. She stayed in a [REDACTED] on the grounds of the  
15 home with her husband. Mr RGM was the handyman in the  
16 home. He would change light bulbs, stoke the boilers  
17 and cut the grass. They were in their 50s. Mr and  
18 Mrs RHV-RGM daughter and two granddaughters stayed with  
19 them in [REDACTED]. The daughter worked in the home as  
20 one of the staff members who we called "aunty".'

21 Then he names the granddaughters and he says that  
22 they used to play with them.

23 At paragraph 14 'Gary' goes on:

24 'We got up in the morning and got our clothes out of  
25 our lockers and put them on. On the school days, we

1 would wear a school uniform, which was grey short  
2 trousers and a grey jumper. We would then go downstairs  
3 to have breakfast, which would be toast or cornflakes.  
4 I have no complaints with the breakfast.

5 'There were three long tables in the dining room.  
6 After two or three years, the number of kids reduced and  
7 there were two tables. Aunty **HRF** used to sit at the  
8 top table with the older kids. The rest of us would sit  
9 at the other table with a few members of staff. We all  
10 had the same allotted seat for every mealtime. We  
11 weren't allowed to talk at mealtimes and if you did, you  
12 would be sent out the room or hit by any of the staff  
13 members. When I was about 9 years old, I was moved to  
14 Aunty **HRF**'s table.

15 'After breakfast, we'd walk to Carrick Knowe Primary  
16 School, which was a short walk away. We would cut  
17 across the train tracks, which I think used to be  
18 Corstorphine Railway Station. It hadn't be in use since  
19 1955 or 1956. Then we would walk over Traquair Park to  
20 get to school.

21 'After school, we would walk back and change into  
22 casual clothes. I think my father bought my clothes but  
23 they were also provided by the home. The clothes were  
24 passed down. We didn't have a choice in what we wore.  
25 The shoes used to be passed down in the home, so my

1 father used to buy me shoes of my own.

2 'There were two laundry rooms in the home where all  
3 the washing was done. One had an old Bendix washing  
4 machine in it, the other one was at the back of the home  
5 and had old Belfast sinks in it.

6 'We would then have tea in the dining room. There  
7 was plenty of food at mealtimes. If you didn't eat your  
8 tea, you would get it served to you the next day.  
9 I remember a girl called [REDACTED] didn't eat her  
10 tea of smoked fish and milk. She was served up the same  
11 plate of food for three or four days and it was  
12 absolutely stinking. She didn't get anything else.  
13 I think her sister, [REDACTED], would later go into the  
14 pantry and steal food for her.

15 'After tea, you could ask to sit on the floor in  
16 Auntie [REDACTED] 's room and watch television, but you were  
17 only allowed to do that if you were good. There was  
18 another black and white television in one of the kids'  
19 sitting rooms where the other staff used to sit.

20 'We didn't get any supper, but we would sometimes  
21 get a hot chocolate or Ovaltine at night. Stealing food  
22 was a regular occurrence in the home. I remember when  
23 I was away one weekend, the kids decided to have  
24 a picnic and stole the ham out of the fridge. When  
25 I came back on the Sunday night, the staff hammered me

1 for it, even though I hadn't been there. I told them it  
2 wasn't me, but I wasn't believed because the other kids  
3 had blamed it on me. The money for it was taken out of  
4 my savings.

5 'We would take turns to clean the dining room at  
6 night. This involved putting the plates away and  
7 sweeping the floors. As I got older, I would avoid  
8 doing it and would run away when it was my turn to clear  
9 up. The other children would make an extra mess when it  
10 was my turn. I think they hated me because I was always  
11 running away.

12 'The staff tried to keep an eye on me in the evening  
13 after teatime, but I would always get away. The home  
14 had a lot of escape routes and I would wait until the  
15 staff went out for a cigarette break to get away.  
16 I could go out the front and side doors, most of the  
17 windows, and also through the coal chute in the boiler  
18 room. I was about 8 or 9 years old at the time.

19 'I ran away most nights. Some nights I would get  
20 caught. I was fortunate because my father just lived  
21 only about a mile along the road from the home, which  
22 was a ten-minute walk. If my dad wasn't home, then  
23 I would just hang around the snooker room and go back as  
24 late as possible. I would always come back to the home  
25 because my dad would make me come back. I would get

1 a good skelping when I came back, but it was worth it to  
2 be away for a while. It didn't stop me; I would run  
3 away the next night.

4 'Sleeping times were staggered amongst the kids.  
5 The younger you were, the earlier you had to go to bed.  
6 Somebody would escort you up to your bed and that was  
7 it. We all had our own toothbrushes but nobody  
8 supervised us to brush our teeth, so we didn't have to  
9 brush them.

10 'Stoking the boilers was another chore. It was  
11 Mr RGM job to do, but we would have to do it if he  
12 was busy or on holiday. RKE was the biggest of  
13 the boys in the home so he would be told to do it, but  
14 because he was a bully, he would make us do it. That  
15 was dangerous and we got no supervision. If you were  
16 big enough to carry a shovel or throw a bit of coal into  
17 the boiler, then you would be made to do it. Sometimes  
18 there would be one of us and sometimes there would be  
19 six of us. I got a few burns from doing that. If the  
20 boilers went out in the middle of the night, it would  
21 take hours for them to heat up again and for there to be  
22 hot water. That was another thing the staff would  
23 hammer us for.

24 'We used to get baths and showers on a Sunday, but  
25 no more frequently than that. You would maybe get

1 a bath if you had a doctor's appointment. I would come  
2 back from my dad's house as late as possible on  
3 a Sunday, at about 7.00 or 8.00 pm, and get a bath then.

4 'The bathroom was on the west end. There was  
5 a girls' bathroom and a boys' bathroom at separate ends  
6 of the corridor. It had a stone floor and two big metal  
7 baths in it, or maybe even three. There were a few  
8 toilet cubicles as well. Bath time was a good time  
9 because it was like a cattle market. Sometimes there  
10 would be three or four of you in the bath. It was just  
11 like a sheep dip. You were in, got a quick scrub and  
12 got out. The baths took so long to fill up that the  
13 water wouldn't be changed. They would just top it up if  
14 it started to get cold. The water was grey if you were  
15 the last one in.

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

19 'After having tea in the evening, you could watch  
20 television in Auntie **HRF**'s room if she thought that you  
21 had been good. In the summer, we would play football in  
22 the garden after school. **██████████** was a tomboy  
23 and would play football with us. During the holidays,  
24 we used to sneak out and go to the zoo for the day.  
25 **██████████** was my friend in the home, but we all did things

1 together. Even if somebody stole three oranges from the  
2 street, they would be shared.

3 'There were also separate playrooms for girls and  
4 boys. They were just like big, bare rooms. The girls'  
5 playroom was better because they had a hamster or  
6 a guinea pig as a pet. They also had a record player in  
7 their playroom. We didn't have one because the boys  
8 probably would have broken it. The boys' playroom had  
9 toys in it like ducks on a string and broken cars. The  
10 older boys had a separate playroom, but that wasn't much  
11 better.

12 'We didn't have any of our own possessions in the  
13 home because if you brought anything in, it would be  
14 stolen or broken by other boys. We had nowhere to keep  
15 our own stuff, so once it was in there, it was  
16 everybody's. I used to leave everything of value at my  
17 dad's house. You couldn't take even a bar of chocolate  
18 or a bottle of juice into the home because it would be  
19 stolen by other kids. I can't fault them for it because  
20 they had nothing.

21 'I was fortunate and only stayed in the home for one  
22 Christmas. I would usually go home to my dad for  
23 Christmas. The one time I stayed in the home, I had  
24 presents left for me, but they had been tampered with by  
25 the time I got them.

1           'There was no real religious instruction apart from  
2           the Sunday School, which I didn't go to because I would  
3           be at my dad's house. There was also the usual assembly  
4           leading up to Christmas. Christmastime was the only  
5           time I wouldn't do a bunk from school, because there  
6           would be four or five parties organised by other  
7           charities in church halls. You would see Santa and get  
8           a present of an orange or something. That was something  
9           that was fun.

10           'I remember going to visit my sister in Howdenhall  
11           Children's Home for a while. It was only for about  
12           an hour and it was supervised. That was every fortnight  
13           and then it stopped when I was about 7 years old.  
14           I remember my dad telling me that I didn't have a sister  
15           or a mother anymore.

16           'During the summer holidays, I would still stay in  
17           the home from Monday to Friday. I would sometimes stay  
18           with my dad if he had time off during the holiday  
19           periods. This could be over Christmas or a week in the  
20           summer.

21           'The home would organise trips during the summer  
22           holidays, but I was either not invited or I would be  
23           with my father. I have seen photographs of me on trips  
24           with the home, but I have no recollection of them.

25           'The kids from the home went to Sunday School in the

1 church across the road from the home. I didn't go  
2 because I was usually with my dad. The church would  
3 organise a trip for the kids during the summer, but  
4 I wasn't invited because I didn't go to the Sunday  
5 School.

6 'We weren't allowed visitors, but we had a Pound Day  
7 sometimes in the summer when the home put flags out.  
8 The local schools would have collections and people  
9 would hand in things like tins of beans and bottles of  
10 sauce. We used to have kids come up to us at school and  
11 tell us that they'd handed in food for us.

12 'I started school after I went into the home.  
13 I went to Carrick Knowe Primary School with other  
14 children from the home. It was a short walk from the  
15 home. Some other children went to Forrester School and  
16 later, on to Craigmount School when it opened.

17 'School was okay. It was like anything else. It  
18 wasn't exciting. I would always get in trouble for not  
19 doing my homework. I ran away from the home most nights  
20 so never got a chance to do it.

21 'Aunty **HRF** used to have a day off every Tuesday.  
22 Her room looked over the back garden. Children would  
23 get in trouble and punished if we made a noise on her  
24 day off. This happened more during school holidays when  
25 we played in the garden and woke her up.

1            'We would be locked in the dark laundry room at the  
2 back of the home as a punishment. There was no light in  
3 there and the door was locked from outside. That  
4 happened to me many times and it also happened to other  
5 children. I don't know how long I was kept in there but  
6 it would feel like ages. I remember being locked in  
7 there with other children and we were all screaming.

8            'We would be punished during mealtimes for talking.  
9 This could be by any member of staff who was there.  
10 I also saw people being served their food up again at  
11 the next meal if they didn't eat it.

12           'I got some medical treatment for a cracked and  
13 bleeding rash on the inside of my thighs from  
14 bed-wetting, but it wasn't from any of the staff in the  
15 home. It was from another girl in the home called  
16 ██████████, who was older than me. She went away and  
17 stole cream and applied it for me.

18           '██████████ was like everybody's godparent at the  
19 time. She would steal plasters and creams if anybody  
20 needed it, because that was the only way you would get  
21 it. She was three or four years older than me.

22           ██████████ also had two sisters in the home called ██████████  
23 and ██████████. She also had two brothers in the home, but  
24 one of the brothers was always in and out of the home.

25           'I remember once having a doctor's appointment, so

1 a member of staff gave me a bath the night before. She  
2 was scrubbing my ears and got a bit of cotton wool stuck  
3 in my ear. I went to see Dr HRI [REDACTED] for a routine  
4 examination and he saw the cotton wool stuck in my ear.  
5 He couldn't get it out, so he sent me to the Sick Kids  
6 Hospital in Edinburgh to get it out. I think I was 7 or  
7 8 years old when that happened.

8 'I have been told by the girls in the home that that  
9 Dr HRI [REDACTED] used to make them take their tops off and  
10 would fondle them whenever they had to go and see him.  
11 I found this out as an adult. We used to call him HRI [REDACTED]  
12 HRI [REDACTED], because [REDACTED] was also a doctor. HRI [REDACTED]  
13 HRI [REDACTED] was also a member of the committee who would  
14 oversee the running of the home. He is dead now.

15 'I was admitted to the City Hospital in Greenbank  
16 after contracting jaundice. Other kids in the home had  
17 caught it too and the doctor suggested they should  
18 isolate it, so I was put into hospital. I was there for  
19 maybe two or three months. It was boring and I wanted  
20 to get back to school.'

21 And my Lady, we do have a reference in 'Gary's'  
22 records to him having jaundice in April 1969.

23 LADY SMITH: Mm-hmm.

24 MS FORBES: 'Gary' then goes on at paragraph 50:

25 'Social workers used to come to the home. There

1 were pre-arranged visits and everything would be sorted  
2 out before their visit. The place would be tidied up  
3 and we'd have nice clothes put on us. The contact with  
4 the social worker was basic. We wouldn't be in a room  
5 with them one-to-one. The social workers were tied in  
6 with the Edinburgh District Council. The social worker  
7 was only really called in if you were in trouble. I was  
8 fortunate that I didn't get into that much trouble, so  
9 I never really had to one. I don't remember ever  
10 speaking to a social worker on my own. My records say  
11 that I was a very happy child.

12 'One time, when Aunty **HRF** was on holiday, Mrs **RHV**  
13 took over **[REDACTED]** of the home. The place just  
14 descended into chaos. There were fists going and people  
15 were getting hit. I went to the phone box with [and he  
16 names another boy] and one of us phoned the police.  
17 I was forewarned by the staff at the home not to say  
18 anything if I was spoken to. They warned the other kids  
19 too. It was something along the lines of, "If anybody  
20 comes to visit you, you'd better watch what you're  
21 doing".

22 'I remember getting interviewed by the headmaster at  
23 Carrick Knowe Primary School about allegations that had  
24 been made about things going on in the home. We had  
25 been forewarned not to say anything, so I didn't,

1 because I knew I would get hit if I did. We would  
2 probably get our pants pulled down and hit on the bum.

3 'One time, a few of the girls, including [REDACTED],  
4 went to visit one of the trustees in Beechmount, just  
5 off Corstorphine Road. They told him about the  
6 ill-treatment of the kids in the home. He must have  
7 gone back and told Aunty [HRF] because she was furious.  
8 I wasn't there at the time but I was told that she was  
9 angry. Nothing changed.'

10 'Gary' then goes on to talk about abuse at Widowers'  
11 from paragraph 55:

12 'I had the same bed the whole five or six years  
13 I was in the home. Everybody got new beds except me.  
14 There was a reason for that and that was because I was  
15 a habitual bed-wetter. I was traumatised and used to  
16 wet my bed a lot. I was known as "Pishy Bed", which is  
17 what the staff and the kids called me.

18 'When the staff found out I had wet the bed, I would  
19 get skelped and made to sleep in the wet bed. There was  
20 a big red rubber sheet, so I would be lying in a puddle  
21 after wetting the bed. It wasn't uncommon for me to lie  
22 in the same wet bed sheets for five nights. If I wet  
23 the bed on Monday, I would have to lie in that wet bed  
24 until the weekend. Nobody changed the sheets.

25 I remember I got a really sore rash on the inside of my

1 thighs, which was cracked and bleeding from regularly  
2 sleeping in a wet bed.

3 'A few times when I wet the bed, I was taken  
4 downstairs to be given a bath by staff members and they  
5 physically held my head under water until I was gasping  
6 for air. I don't remember who did it. I also remember  
7 being force-fed tiny, yellow tablets that tasted bitter,  
8 which were supposed to stop me wetting the bed. I know  
9 they weren't prescribed for me, I think they might have  
10 been prescribed to [and he names another girl in the  
11 home] who also used to wet the bed.'

12 My Lady, we do know, again from 'Gary's' records,  
13 that he suffered from incontinence and had to have  
14 treatment for that. And there is a reference to him  
15 having Tryptizol, I think it says in the records,  
16 although it's difficult to read, but that seems to be  
17 a treatment for that.

18 LADY SMITH: Tryptizol?

19 MS FORBES: Yes. Seems to be a treatment, perhaps, for  
20 urine --

21 LADY SMITH: T-R-I-P-T-Y-S-O-L?

22 MS FORBES: Yes. The way I have it, my Lady, but again it's  
23 very difficult to read, but it says T-R-Y-P-T-I-Z-O-L.

24 LADY SMITH: Oh, right.

25 MS FORBES: So I don't know if this is the reference to the

1           tablets.

2   LADY SMITH:  It could be.

3   MS FORBES:  'Gary' continues at paragraph 50:

4           'I would stay awake worrying about falling asleep  
5           and wetting the bed.  This meant that I was so tired  
6           when I fell asleep that I would sleep in and be late in  
7           the mornings.

8           'The home was freezing in the winter.  The dormitory  
9           especially used to be freezing.  There were cast iron  
10          radiators in the dormitories but they were inadequate  
11          for the size of the rooms.  I remember there was  
12          a shortage of coal during the miners' strike, so we had  
13          no heating or hot water.  There were also power cuts at  
14          the time.  That was the same for people outside the  
15          home, too.

16          'I remember it being freezing every winter and we'd  
17          be shivering.  The blankets we had were inadequate.  
18          They were called "fireman's blankets" and were made of  
19          coarse wool.  We wouldn't get any extra blankets during  
20          the winter.  Sometimes I used to wet the bed just to get  
21          a heat, but then I'd have to sleep on the wet rubber mat  
22          all week with only the coarse blanket.  I was in the big  
23          dormitory.

24          'There was a smaller dormitory that had about four  
25          to six beds in it.  It was luxurious in comparison.

1       ██████ was moved into the smaller dormitory, but  
2       I wasn't, because of my bed-wetting. The smaller  
3       dormitory was not as cold and had newer, wooden beds.  
4       It also had a radio.

5             'The girls had small dormitories that had partitions  
6       without doors, so it was sectioned off for some privacy.  
7       Their beds were nice compared to mine. Some of them  
8       even had patchwork quilts. That was luxury I could only  
9       dream of.

10            'The older boys would come into the dormitory after  
11       we had gone to bed and wake us up by being boisterous.  
12       They thought it was a game to attack us with pillows.  
13       The pillows were filled with feathers and were solid.

14            'The noise used to alert the staff who would come to  
15       check on us. The older boys would sneak out of the  
16       emergency exit door that they had a secret key for.  
17       I would pretend to be asleep, but it usually resulted in  
18       a mass spanking session as a punishment. I would have  
19       my pyjamas pulled down and be beaten with a wooden  
20       Scholl on the bottom. The kids' dormitory was like  
21       an orchestra of screaming kids.

22            'Some children managed to sleep through it and had  
23       no idea what was going on. The staff would then wait  
24       outside in the hall, listening for anybody who dared to  
25       cry or keep talking, so that they could be further

1           punished.

2           'Aunty HRE used to skelp you. She and Aunty PZX  
3           used to hit with us a wooden Scholl clog. There was  
4           such a high turnover of staff that it's hard to remember  
5           all the members of staff who did things to us. There  
6           was an American member of staff there at one point. She  
7           was a very tall and well-built woman, but I don't  
8           remember her name.'

9           I think that should say 'She used to hit us as  
10          well'.

11       LADY SMITH: Yes.

12       MS FORBES: 'We would get our pants pulled down and hit over  
13          the bum with a thick wooden Scholl --'

14          I don't know if I'm saying that right, my Lady.

15       LADY SMITH: Some people used to refer to it as Scholls, and  
16          yes, there were and -- it's described here as a clog,  
17          and there were clogs and there were Scholls that were  
18          a bit like flip-flops, heavy flip-flops.

19       MS FORBES: Okay:

20          'It was like a beach-coloured, narrowed-down clog.  
21          Some people also got hit over the ears with the wooden  
22          Scholl. This happened to me at least every week and  
23          I saw it happen to other children too. Most of the  
24          staff members would do this. They would also lock us in  
25          the dark laundry room as punishment. Some of the older

1 kids, including RKE [REDACTED], used to lock us in there  
2 as well.

3 'I remember seeing [REDACTED] get a particularly  
4 bad beating once. I think it was from the American  
5 woman. She had to be kept off school for a few days  
6 because she had black eyes and I think a bleeding ear.  
7 She didn't get any medical attention but she was  
8 showered with treats to keep her quiet. She used to get  
9 real bad beatings from one of the staff members, because  
10 she was tall for her age and used to try to stand up for  
11 herself. I saw it happening, and you could also hear it  
12 sometimes because she would be absolutely screaming.

13 'Aunty HRF [REDACTED] never used to physically hit us. She  
14 would punish us by making us stand in the corner of her  
15 room, facing the wall, with our arms outstretched in  
16 front of us. She would then put a pile of books on each  
17 upward-facing palm. We would be made to stand there  
18 until she told us we could stop. She would do this if  
19 we were talking in the dining room or talking when the  
20 television was on. She also made me do it when I ran  
21 away.

22 [REDACTED] told me that a female member of staff used to  
23 sexually abuse him and that it usually happened on  
24 a Saturday night. It might have been HRF [REDACTED], but I think  
25 it was Aunty PZX [REDACTED].

1           'Some of the girls have also spoken about being  
2           raped whilst in the home. ██████████ told me a few  
3           years ago that she was raped by the father of two of the  
4           children in the home. He was visiting them during the  
5           summer holidays and had walked upstairs and raped ██████████  
6           as there was no staff around. This is something she  
7           told me a couple of years ago.

8           ██████████ also told me that she was raped  
9           in the outbuilding ██████████ Mrs RHV ██████████ home. It had  
10          its own separate door and lawnmowers and other garden  
11          stuff was kept in there. ██████████ told me a couple of  
12          years ago that Mrs RHV ██████████'s daughter's boyfriend raped her  
13          in that building.

14          'Mrs RHV ██████████ lived in ██████████ on the grounds of the  
15          home. A lot went on in that ██████████ with other  
16          children, but not me. The only thing that happened to  
17          me in ██████████ was on the day of the wedding of  
18          Captain Mark Phillips to Princess Anne in 1973. I think  
19          it was during summer, so there were only a couple of  
20          kids in the home. I remember standing against the wall  
21          in ██████████ and being hit by a member of staff  
22          because, like any young kid, I didn't want to watch the  
23          wedding.

24          'The home was not a nice place. It was somewhere to  
25          get fed and sleep at night. You had to do chores and

1 stoke the boilers. If you didn't do it properly, there  
2 would be no hot water and you got skelped for it. The  
3 boiler room was a dangerous and frightening place.

4 'You saw other kids being battered and could hear  
5 them screaming. Hearing children scream when they were  
6 being hit or when they were having nightmares was  
7 a regular occurrence. If you screamed too much, the  
8 staff would shove a pillow over your head to shut you  
9 up. That was what life was like in the home and you  
10 learned to accept it. You learned that crying never  
11 helped you and other kids would just laugh at you if you  
12 cried.

13 'We never got any affection.

14 ' [REDACTED], RKE, who was 3 or 4 years  
15 older than us. He was physically fully developed and  
16 was a horrible person. He was a bully and a sexual  
17 predator and used to physically and sexually abuse the  
18 children in the home. The kids used to call him 'RKE  
19 RKE' due to his constantly exposed, dangling penis.  
20 RKE once masturbated on my back as I lay on my bed.  
21 I already lived in a urine-stained bed, so it was just  
22 more fluid to dry out. I didn't tell the staff. I knew  
23 from past experience that it would be foolish to do so.  
24 I contracted jaundice soon after that, but I don't know  
25 if that is connected.

1           '██████████ told me that he was raped by RKE  
2           RKE . He told me this as an adult.

3           'People used to complain to staff about RKE , but  
4           complaints were ignored because he was Aunty HRF 's  
5           favourite. He was always allowed to stay up late. He  
6           always got supper and would get treats of chocolate when  
7           the rest of us didn't. He was also allowed to stay at  
8           the home after he turned 16, although other boys weren't  
9           allowed to. I think there were also other favourites,  
10          but RKE was a particular favourite. Aunty HRF was  
11          aware what he was doing to other children but didn't do  
12          anything about it.

13          'RKE was terrified of ██████████ because she was  
14          a tomboy and had a violent temper. She was very  
15          protective of her brothers and sisters. She cared more  
16          for the kids than the staff did. She partially kept  
17          RKE in check.

18          '██████████, Mrs RHV granddaughter, told us that she  
19          saw RKE coming out of Aunty HRF 's room naked  
20          once.'

21          And then he tells us that RKE died in a car  
22          accident later.

23          Paragraph 82, 'Gary' says:

24          'There was a boy called ██████████ in the home [he gives  
25          his full name]. He used to wear thick, black, NHS,

1 bottle-type glasses. He also had a sister [and he names  
2 her] in the home. They were both older than me.  
3 Looking back, [REDACTED] should not have been in the home  
4 because he clearly had psychological issues. The kids  
5 used to keep away from him because he seemed to take  
6 pleasure in inflicting pain on other children,  
7 especially girls.

8 'I recall one occasion when he made a few of us sit  
9 in a circle in the garden next to a hedge. He then made  
10 us watch as he drowned a baby hedgehog in a bucket of  
11 water. All of the children were crying and upset and he  
12 seemed to take delight from it. He was clearly  
13 a troubled child. I think he was about 12 years old and  
14 I was about 9 at the time.

15 '[REDACTED] was in and out of the home about three or  
16 four times. Aunty [HRF] didn't like him and tried to get  
17 him out of the home.'

18 And then 'Gary' says he thinks his sister stayed  
19 while he was in but he can't be sure, and then he goes  
20 on:

21 'I remember that he returned to the home after being  
22 away for a few months or a year. He was not long back  
23 when Mrs [RHV] daughter caught him in the coal cellar  
24 with a boy who I think was called [and he names him].  
25 When she stumbled across them, [the boy] was naked and

1 dirty and his penis was covered in blood. He was very  
2 distressed. That must have been the last straw, because  
3 that was the last I saw of [REDACTED] in the home. [REDACTED]  
4 told me about this incident afterwards.

5 'I don't hold a grudge against [REDACTED]. I do think  
6 that the staff, social workers or even the committee of  
7 trustees knew about [REDACTED]'s problems. He should not  
8 have been around other children in the home with his  
9 underlying issues. I can only assume that it was  
10 financial incentives that made him come back, because  
11 Auntie [REDACTED] didn't like him. I know the home was  
12 struggling at the time with money.

13 'I left the home in the summer prior to starting  
14 secondary school. I was about 12 years old. I had made  
15 up my mind that I didn't want to go back. I was  
16 streetwise and able to look after myself. It didn't  
17 matter what my father said or even if he dragged me back  
18 to the home by the ear. I just wouldn't stay there. My  
19 father argued, but then said that if I agreed to go to  
20 school on a regular basis, then I didn't have to go back  
21 to the home. After about six weeks, a letter came from  
22 the home saying it would be better if I didn't return.  
23 It was brilliant. I wasn't going to go back anyway.

24 'I think the home was also trying to get rid of kids  
25 at that time because there were not enough kids and it

1           wasn't profitable.'

2           'Gary' then talks about life after care from  
3           paragraph 88 and tells us he was no longer in Widowers'  
4           when he started secondary school at Craigmount High  
5           School. He stayed at his dad's house, which he says was  
6           a bit of a rundown hovel, but better than the home.

7           And he says when he was in the home, he was never  
8           able to tell his dad what happened because he wasn't  
9           interested. And he says at paragraph 88:

10           'I have told him since and had arguments with him.  
11           He insists that he had no choice but to put me in there.  
12           He did have a choice. I could have had a normal life  
13           and stayed with my mum.'

14           He then tells us that he got an apprenticeship with  
15           a butcher when he left school, worked in  
16           a slaughterhouse and got in touch with his mother and  
17           sister again. He said he only vaguely had remembered  
18           his mother, and the sibling bond had been broken with  
19           his sister by then and she was just another person.

20           He then tells us he was made redundant and he went  
21           to live with his mother for a couple of years. He was  
22           still a teenager though and he says things didn't work  
23           out.

24           'Gary' then tells us he got married and became  
25           a father when he was in his 30s and then he worked as

1 a bus driver and he became aware of drivers being taken  
2 to court for abusing children and he realised that abuse  
3 happened in other homes too. And he says at  
4 paragraph 92:

5 'I would drive through the Corstorphine area of  
6 Edinburgh as part of my job and it triggered all my  
7 memories from the home. I started getting flashbacks  
8 and suffered from depression.'

9 'Gary' then goes on to tell us that he and his wife  
10 split up several times and got back together, but were  
11 not together at the time of this statement. At the time  
12 of this statement, he has a son who is 23 years old and  
13 they had a good relationship, and his son lives with  
14 him. He tells us at paragraph 94 that his mother is now  
15 dead but he still speaks to his sister once every couple  
16 of months, but, 'She's like a pal, not a sister',  
17 because their bond had been broken.

18 In relation to his dad, who he says is still alive,  
19 at paragraph 94 'Gary' says:

20 'He has never accepted responsibility for putting me  
21 in the home and for what happened to me. He's an old  
22 man now though, so there's no point shoving it down his  
23 throat. I just try to move on and get on with life.'

24 He then tells us from paragraph 95 that he spoke to  
25 the police in the past, about as long as 15 years ago at

1 the time of this statement. They took a statement but  
2 told him there was not enough evidence and that they  
3 would get back in touch with him, but he never heard  
4 from them again. He's heard that other survivors gave  
5 police statements and then the police told them that  
6 there were no records of the staff in the home and they  
7 didn't know where they lived. But he doesn't think the  
8 police tried very hard to look for them. He thinks the  
9 police were a waste of time.

10 He tells us that [REDACTED] wasn't well  
11 enough to give a statement to the police and asked them  
12 to get back to her in a fortnight, but that was eight or  
13 nine years ago and they never did get back to her.

14 He set up an invite-only, private [REDACTED] page for  
15 children of the home, which brought people back  
16 together. He says there are about 15 or 16 in the  
17 group, most of them still local, but some living further  
18 afield. He says most of their contact is online but the  
19 local ones meet up about once a month and that they  
20 carry out their support themselves.

21 Paragraph 99, 'Gary' says:

22 'One of the most difficult things to do was to tell  
23 [REDACTED] about the actions of [REDACTED] RKE. She  
24 was visibly upset when she found out, but I suspect that  
25 she knew.'

1 He goes on:

2 'I can see that there are people less fortunate than  
3 me and I try to help them with certain things and point  
4 them in the right direction. That has given me a bit of  
5 focus to carry on. [REDACTED] helped me in the home when  
6 I was little. Now that she is not as well as she could  
7 be, I feel like I can now give something back to her.'

8 He tells us he has a relatively good working  
9 relationship with an individual from Future Pathways and  
10 he redirects other survivors to Gary if it's something  
11 that he can help with.

12 Paragraph 102, 'Gary' says:

13 'Not everybody agrees with me about the home. Some  
14 people think the home was a wonderful place. One person  
15 has left the group, and I think it's because they might  
16 have been one of the abusers.'

17 'Gary' then talks about impact from paragraph 103,  
18 and says that his schooling didn't really start until  
19 after he left the home. He didn't do any homework  
20 whilst in the home and when it came to sitting exams, he  
21 says he didn't even bother going to sit some; he just  
22 did the basic minimum to get through school. He says he  
23 finds it difficult to hug people now and show affection  
24 because they never had it as children, and at  
25 paragraph 104, he says:

1           'I thought it was just me but I have spoken to other  
2 people from the home and they are the same now too.  
3 I struggled with giving my son affection when he was  
4 born, but he got affection from his mum. I tried to  
5 help him with more practical things like his homework.  
6 I was only able to help him until he was 10 years old  
7 because he was really good at maths.

8           'I have panic attacks and night terrors about  
9 drowning, and still have flashbacks about being held  
10 under water. This can even be triggered by watching  
11 a television programme with someone drowning. This is  
12 from having my head held under water at Widowers'  
13 Children's Home as a punishment for wetting the bed.  
14 The flashbacks started when I was in my 30s and when  
15 I drove buses through Corstorphine.'

16           He tells us that he suffered from depression and  
17 anxiety and sleep apnoea, that his driving licence was  
18 suspended and he was pensioned off from the buses. He's  
19 tried taking medication and tried counselling and group  
20 therapy, but that none of these things worked for him.  
21 He tells us that for him, alcohol has been the answer.  
22 He says he's not an alcoholic but he says he's a binge  
23 drinker, and he says that when he feels he's reached  
24 a precipice, he drinks 15 pints or a litre of vodka, and  
25 when he's tired he goes to sleep. And he says that

1           that's his coping strategy and it reboots his system so  
2           he is ready to go again.

3           He has taken part in various group sessions and  
4           attended counselling, which didn't really help. He says  
5           he finds it hard to get close to people emotionally and  
6           physically. He talks about some of his health problems  
7           with his weight and the consequences of that. And he  
8           says he doesn't work now but he says -- he admits at  
9           paragraph 111 that he could probably find some work, but  
10          what he says is:

11          'I don't know what type of 'Gary' is going to wake  
12          up in the morning. I could be bright as a button  
13          one day, and other days I can't even get out of my bed.'

14          He then talks about the Widowers' Trust Fund at  
15          paragraph 112:

16          'There was a significant amount of funds in the  
17          kitty when the home closed. It was handed over to the  
18          Widowers' Trust Fund which is still running. It's now  
19          run as a charity under the supervision of Geoghegans  
20          Chartered Accountants [I don't know if I'm saying that  
21          right, my Lady] who are based in the west end of  
22          Edinburgh. The money is to help former employees and  
23          children who lived in Widowers' Children's Home.

24          'I know some people have had help from the fund when  
25          they have had a fire or needed something. Anybody who

1 requires help has to go before a panel to be grilled  
2 about why they need the money. I have never had to go  
3 and see them, but I have heard it is a horrible  
4 experience. I have helped other people apply for funds  
5 when they have needed something. Every year, we also  
6 get a cheque of about £150 or something at Christmas.

7 'Some of the families of the trustees have been  
8 involved with the trust for years because they pass it  
9 down the family.'

10 And then he names one of the families in particular.

11 He says:

12 'One of the families is the Usher family. They made  
13 a lot of money from selling pale ale and whisky to the  
14 troops in India. They then built the Usher Hall and  
15 breweries in Edinburgh. I think the family is now in  
16 decline.'

17 And then he talks about a court action.

18 He goes on:

19 'The trust should use the money they have to help  
20 people who are living in squalor and to make their lives  
21 better. This is an immediate need. Nobody is there for  
22 them to make things better at the moment.'

23 And then he says he managed to get some of his  
24 records from Edinburgh Council, although he had to fight  
25 for them, and they weren't very good. They were on

1 microfiche and barely legible and a lot had been blanked  
2 out.

3 And he says at paragraph 117:

4 'The social workers who came to visit the home were  
5 tied in with the Edinburgh District Council. The  
6 council now deny that they had anything to do with  
7 Widowers' Home. But my records show that my father paid  
8 money to Edinburgh District Council as part of my upkeep  
9 while I was in the home. I asked the Widowers' Trust  
10 for records, but didn't get anything. Geoghegans hold  
11 an active database on behalf of the Widowers' Home  
12 Trust, containing names of former staff, and children  
13 who worked and stayed at the home.'

14 And then, final thoughts, 'Gary' says at  
15 paragraph 119 onwards:

16 'The Widowers' Children's Home should not have been  
17 allowed to operate in the way that it did. We were  
18 there for financial reasons and not there as children in  
19 care. There was no one person at fault. The council,  
20 trustees and committee all had a duty of care towards  
21 us. Social workers also need to take a healthy portion  
22 of the blame.

23 'There needs to be closer scrutiny of people looking  
24 after children. Social workers need to carry out checks  
25 without any pre-warning.'



1 LADY SMITH: Mr Peoples.

2 MR PEOPLES: Good morning, my Lady. The final witness for  
3 the Widowers' hearings today is Peter Yellowlees, who is  
4 here on behalf of the WCH Trust.

5 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

6 Mr Peter Yellowlees (affirmed)

7 LADY SMITH: Do sit down and make yourself comfortable.

8 The first question, I hope, is easy. How would you  
9 like me to address you, your first name or  
10 Mr Yellowlees?

11 A. Just Peter, yes, that's fine.

12 LADY SMITH: Peter, all right. Peter, thank you, and thank  
13 you for being here this morning so that we can ask you  
14 questions in relation to the roles you've held to do  
15 with the WCH Trust, and I know that you've been involved  
16 with it for quite a while.

17 Please tell me if you need a break at any time.  
18 I'll take a break around 11.30 anyway. Please say if  
19 you've got any questions or you don't understand why  
20 we're asking the questions we are asking, because it's  
21 really important that you are as comfortable as you can  
22 in communicating what you think you need to communicate  
23 about the work of the trust.

24 Thank you also for the written work that's been  
25 provided. We're not going to go through it line by

1 line, don't worry, but there are some certain aspects of  
2 that we'll want to focus on, perhaps some other more  
3 general matters to do with Widowers'.

4 If you're ready, I'll hand over to Mr Peoples and  
5 he'll take it from there; is that okay?

6 A. Fine.

7 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

8 Mr Peoples.

9 Questions by Mr Peoples

10 MR PEOPLES: Good morning, Peter.

11 A. Good morning.

12 Q. Can I begin by asking a little bit about yourself, I'm  
13 just going to take that fairly briefly. We have been  
14 provided with a CV to guide us, but I'll just take a few  
15 things, just to set the scene.

16 You hold a degree of Bachelor of Arts in Accountancy  
17 and Finance; is that correct?

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. And I think that after an apprenticeship with John M  
20 Geoghegans?

21 A. Geoghegans.

22 Q. Geoghegans?

23 A. Geoghegans.

24 Q. Hard G. Geoghegans and company. You qualified  
25 in September 1984 as a chartered accountant?

1 A. Yes -- 1974.

2 Q. Yes, '74?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And then I'll take some of this short, that I think that  
5 on -- in October 1982, you were appointed a partner in  
6 that firm?

7 A. That's correct.

8 Q. And you continued there until you retired in July of  
9 2010, and you tell us in your CV that in 1997,  
10 Geoghegans took over from KPMG Edinburgh as the  
11 secretaries and treasurers of the Widowers' Children's  
12 Home Trust; is that correct?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And that when your partner Alasdair Campbell retired  
15 from practice in 2004, you took over responsibility for  
16 that role until your own retirement?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And following retiral from practice, you were approached  
19 to become a trustee of the charity -- can I call it the  
20 trust, if I may?

21 A. Yes, that's fine.

22 Q. In November 2010. And you were formally appointed  
23 in June of 2011. And in November 2014, you took over as  
24 chair of the trust and you've filled that role since  
25 then?

1 A. I have, yes.

2 Q. Now, I'll just ask you a little bit about the trust.

3 I don't want to get bogged down in detail. You've

4 provided a lot of information, but I think to maybe

5 correct some things that may have been said in the last

6 statement, I think I should just take a few points from

7 you about the trust issues and situation, if I may.

8 The -- prior to 1980, when Widowers' Children's Home

9 closed, there was a committee of management which was

10 effectively the governing body of the home?

11 A. So I understand, yes.

12 Q. And there was a constitution at that stage?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. And there were people known as subscribers who would

15 annually put in sums of money towards the running of the

16 home?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And so far as funding is concerned, apart from these

19 subscriptions, the home would receive, from time to

20 time, donations and legacies?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. They would also have parental contributions by working

23 fathers?

24 A. Yes, so I understand.

25 Q. And there would also be payments by the local authority

1 as well?

2 A. Yes.

3 LADY SMITH: Were the contributions from fathers  
4 means-tested or was it a flat rate?

5 A. I couldn't tell you --

6 LADY SMITH: Nothing in the records about that?

7 A. -- my Lady.

8 MR PEOPLES: Well, I think I can help you. I think they  
9 were negotiated.

10 A. Oh, right.

11 Q. I don't think there was a formula as such, but, I can  
12 stand corrected, but I think in broad terms, they looked  
13 at the person's individual circumstances and certainly  
14 steps were taken by the local authority to secure  
15 a contribution from a parent, because the theory was  
16 that this was an unusual type of home which was  
17 available to working fathers who, because of their work,  
18 couldn't look after their children when their spouse  
19 died?

20 A. Right.

21 Q. That was the original idea, I think?

22 A. Mm-hmm, yeah.

23 Q. And pre-1980, when the home was still in operation,  
24 the -- there was no large investment portfolio?

25 A. Not that I understand. Looking at the minute book,

1           there's none.

2   Q.   Yes, I think that we see from some of the annual reports  
3           as well, which I think you've only seen recently --

4   A.   Mm-hmm.

5   Q.   -- that there are usually some forms of simple  
6           accounting docket material which indicates the income,  
7           expenditure and so forth, and it doesn't appear from  
8           that that there was a lot --

9   A.   No.

10  Q.   -- beyond the home itself as the asset?

11  A.   No.

12  Q.   And sometimes, at the request of a surviving parent,  
13           children would be received into care by the local  
14           authority under its statutory powers and then they would  
15           be placed, in some instances, in voluntary homes such as  
16           the Widowers' Children's Home; that's the way that  
17           tended to work post-1948, I think?

18  A.   Yes.

19  Q.   And the parent out working was expected to make  
20           a contribution.  And we've seen from some of the  
21           evidence that's been read out and heard that some of the  
22           applicants have said, 'Well, my father paid for my  
23           care', and they, to some extent, feel rather aggrieved  
24           that, having paid for a home to look after their  
25           children, that their children had some of the

1 experiences we've heard about?

2 A. I can understand that.

3 Q. Now, so far as the -- again, to perhaps just correct  
4 something that maybe is a misunderstanding on the part  
5 of 'Gary', whose statement was read out, the members of  
6 the committee of management, and, indeed, the  
7 subscribers to the home pre-1980, didn't hold shares in  
8 the home --

9 A. Didn't seem that way.

10 Q. -- or any entity that ran the home?

11 A. Certainly, reading the financial information in the  
12 minutes, that's not the case.

13 Q. And in fact, what the committee of management was,  
14 legally speaking, was an unincorporated association of  
15 individuals?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And as far as I can tell from the material we've seen,  
18 there's no question that it was being run for profit?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Now, when the home closed in 1980, a new trust was set  
21 up at that time with a separate constitution?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And assets, principally, I think, the proceeds of this  
24 sale of the home, were transferred to this new trust?

25 A. Yes, that's right.

1 Q. And I think that was done by a resolution passed at  
2 a subscribers' meeting around June 1980. And I think  
3 around that time, the home itself was actually sold to  
4 Barnardo's, but for offices, rather, I think, than  
5 a children's home?

6 A. Yes, they were there for quite a while.

7 Q. Yes. And then, so far as the new trust is concerned,  
8 there have been some developments over time and perhaps  
9 I can just mention one: that in 2016 or thereabouts, the  
10 trust became what's known as a Scottish charitable  
11 incorporated organisation, regulated by the office of  
12 the Scottish Charity Regulator; is that correct?

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. And just for the sake of explanation, in simple terms,  
15 the benefit of that is that an SCIO, if I use the  
16 acronym --

17 LADY SMITH: SCIO.

18 MR PEOPLES: -- has separate legal personality?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. It's not an unincorporated association of individuals?

21 A. No.

22 Q. And also it provides limited liability for the  
23 protection of trustees of the body?

24 A. Yes. Yes.

25 Q. And unlike some companies, trusts, and unincorporated

1           associations which have charitable status, its very  
2           existence depends upon it maintaining its charitable  
3           status and registration with the Office of the Scottish  
4           Charity Regulator; is that correct?

5   A.   That's correct.

6   Q.   So to that extent, it differs quite significantly from  
7           the sort of arrangements that we'd have seen in the  
8           pre-1980 days?

9   A.   Yes.

10   LADY SMITH:  It's not uncommon now, I'm sure you know,  
11           Peter, to find that smaller charities, maybe SCIOs, as  
12           they're referred to, larger ones may be companies  
13           limited by guarantee, which is another structure that is  
14           used by charitable organisations.

15   A.   Yes, this --

16   LADY SMITH:  The common factor being that the individual  
17           trustees don't have exposure to personal liability.

18   A.   Yes.  I mean, this structure was created around that  
19           time and OSCAR encouraged charities to consider their  
20           current constitutions and, if appropriate, move into  
21           a SCIO.

22   LADY SMITH:  Yes.

23   MR PEOPLES:  But in the case of a SCIO, if its charitable  
24           status was withdrawn, its very existence is lost, unlike  
25           some other charitable bodies.

1 A. It would be, yes.

2 Q. Including companies limited by guarantee?

3 A. Yes.

4 LADY SMITH: Limited by guarantee, yes.

5 MR PEOPLES: Now, 'Gary' said something in his statement

6 about the use of funds by the current trust and trustees

7 of the fund. And, again, taking this as fairly short,

8 I think that post-1980, the new trust over the years has

9 given monetary gifts, for example at Christmas, to known

10 former residents of Widowers' Children's Home; is that

11 correct?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. But they've also given, from time to time, financial

14 assistance in the form of both grants and loans to

15 former residents?

16 A. Yes, that's correct.

17 Q. But the new trust is not set up exclusively for the

18 benefit of former residents and in fact it has wide

19 powers to make grants to a range of charities, and has

20 in fact done so over the years?

21 A. Yes. Yes.

22 Q. Now, with that introduction, can I just start by asking

23 you to just -- can I bring up a production, or a

24 document, which is a photograph of Widowers' Children's

25 Home, because I don't think we've actually produced one

1           during this hearing so far. But it's at SGV-001034725  
2           at page 2, and it should be on the screen in front of  
3           you and --  
4    A. It is, yes --  
5    Q. The large screen behind for the benefit of others.  
6           And I think that just -- it's self-evident, I think,  
7           that that is the -- it's a photograph of Widowers'  
8           around 1968, which was included in the annual report and  
9           accounts for that year.  
10           Now, I don't know if that is familiar to you as  
11           a building, or it's something that predated your  
12           involvement with --  
13   A. It isn't actually, but yes.  
14   Q. But it's in Corstorphine and it's quite close to the  
15           zoo. We've already heard that that -- if one's trying  
16           to locate it.  
17   A. Yeah.  
18   Q. And I think it still exists in structure, but I think  
19           it's maybe now residential flatted accommodation?  
20           Possibly?  
21   A. So I understand, yes.  
22   Q. Yes. It's not run by Barnardo's anymore?  
23   A. No.  
24   Q. Now, can I maybe move from there to another document,  
25           which I think I will just call 'the addendum', I think

1           you will know what I mean. And can I bring up  
2           WCH-000000082, which should come up on the screen.

3           Now, that is effectively a sort of report that was  
4           submitted on behalf of the trustees of the trust.

5   A. Yes.

6   Q. On or about 7 November of last year, to this Inquiry,  
7       updating, I think, an earlier report that had been  
8       submitted in 2017 by the trust?

9   A. Yes.

10   Q. And so far as the addendum is concerned, in short,  
11       I think you will confirm that the trust's position has  
12       altered quite significantly since the submission of the  
13       original 2017 report; is that correct?

14   A. It has indeed.

15   Q. And indeed, in particular, I think there are a number of  
16       acknowledgements about abuse having taken place at  
17       Widowers' and that there were systemic failings when the  
18       home was operational?

19   A. Yes, that's correct.

20   Q. And I think, would it be fair to say, that the trust  
21       position between 2017 and 2025 had developed for  
22       a number of reasons, but principally because, over that  
23       period, they were getting more information about people  
24       who were coming forward, who had been residents and  
25       who'd been telling the trust that they'd been abused

1 while at Widowers'?

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. Is that correct?

4 A. Yes, that's correct.

5 Q. And indeed, the trust was faced with a number of claims  
6 by residents?

7 A. Yes, it became apparent that there were -- we'd spoken  
8 to, prior to 2017, to two or three ex-residents, but it  
9 was obvious from what we were hearing that there was  
10 more than we had been previously aware of.

11 Q. And I think, indeed, the trust took a decision in more  
12 recent years to participate in the Redress Scheme, the  
13 independent scheme that -- independent of this  
14 Inquiry -- that is administered by the Scottish  
15 Government?

16 A. We did, yes.

17 Q. Because I think, in 2017, although the trust had had  
18 meetings and some correspondence with ex-residents,  
19 which raised the issue of abuse -- and I think that was  
20 between 1998 and 2017 -- in 2017, it put matters this  
21 way: that they'd been approached by a small number of  
22 ex-residents and therefore didn't consider that the  
23 trust was in a position to accept that abuse took place  
24 at Widowers'. Is that, in short, what the position was?

25 A. That, unfortunately, was our position, yes.

1 Q. Yes, and I think, with that introduction, if we just  
2 look at the addendum that we have in front of us. If,  
3 briefly, if I could go to Part D at page 32, I think it  
4 is, of that document. I'll just read part of that  
5 Part D that was submitted last year. 5.1(i) reads:

6 'The trust accepts that at periods of time, abuse  
7 took place at the establishment. The abuse complained  
8 of has included physical and mental abuse by staff, as  
9 well as complaints that staff allowed peer abuse and  
10 bullying to take place. There are also claims of sexual  
11 abuse by staff members, peers and others. The  
12 complaints have been mostly, but not always, against  
13 named individuals. Some of these individuals have more  
14 than one complaint against them.'

15 And indeed, it's recorded that the complaints do  
16 include complaints against SNR [REDACTED], HRF [REDACTED], who  
17 we've heard a bit of evidence about in this Inquiry.  
18 And there's some information about when these complaints  
19 were received, but I think the broad period is between  
20 1998 and 2025.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And when asked to assess the extent of the abuse at the  
23 time of submitting this report, the trust says this at  
24 5.2(i):

25 'The trust has only the complaints made since 1998

1 on which to rely. Around 15 individual complainers have  
2 come forward since that date, although some are no  
3 longer alive. The complaints vary in nature and in the  
4 severity of the conduct alleged. The trust assesses  
5 that at periods of time, there was abuse at the home  
6 that included harsh punishment and mistreatment from  
7 time to time by staff, but that it was not necessarily  
8 pervasive or the uniform experience at the  
9 establishment.'

10 Now, I think you'll know where I'm going with this  
11 because I think that at the time that that statement was  
12 submitted, you hadn't had the benefit of seeing the  
13 evidence that former residents had given to this  
14 Inquiry?

15 A. Mm-hmm.

16 Q. Or, indeed, evidence that they had given to the police  
17 in various statements over time, and I think you'll  
18 accept that there are quite a number of statements given  
19 to the Inquiry which you've, I think, had the benefit of  
20 seeing and hopefully reading, and there's also a number  
21 of police statements which you've also, I think, had the  
22 opportunity to look over; is that correct?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. I think, broadly speaking, if my arithmetic is sound,  
25 there's perhaps around 13 statements of former residents

1           who have given evidence to this Inquiry that have been  
2           shown to you, and you've indeed heard oral evidence on  
3           Friday from 'Isa'; I think you were present when she  
4           gave her evidence. But I think again the statements  
5           cover, broadly speaking, a period from around 1953  
6           through to the closure of the home in 1980. So we're  
7           covering the 1950s, 60s and 70s by that evidence?

8   A. Yes.

9   Q. And indeed, we have people who have spoken about abuse  
10       they suffered of various kinds, and also abuse that they  
11       witnessed?

12   A. Yes.

13   Q. And then, as far as the police statements are concerned,  
14       I think there are around 28 individuals who have  
15       provided statements to the police that have been shown  
16       to you, 21 of whom were former residents. Again, some  
17       in the 1950s, some in the 1960s and some of the 1970s,  
18       is that right?

19   A. It is, yes.

20   Q. And I think, in addition, there are four statements by  
21       former staff, including Aunty HRE that we've heard  
22       some evidence about; is that correct?

23   A. Yes.

24   Q. There's also one statement by a member of the committee  
25       of management when the home was open, and I think

1           there's a statement by a person who was related to the  
2           staff at the home who spent time at the home as a child,  
3           HSA [REDACTED] ?  
4       A.   Yeah.  
5       Q.   And there's also a statement by the partner of a person  
6           whose name has featured in the evidence, the late [REDACTED]  
7           [REDACTED] ?  
8       A.   Right, yeah.  
9       Q.   Now, can I just, without going to these statements in  
10           any detail, can I just perhaps remind you and those here  
11           today of the sort of nature of the evidence that these  
12           residents have given to the police and to this Inquiry.  
13           And I think we've heard evidence that there was  
14           a violent regime at Widowers', both in the era of the  
15           [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] in the 1950s, but also in the era of SNR [REDACTED]  
16           SNR [REDACTED] HRF [REDACTED], a regime in which children were  
17           regularly beaten by staff. I think you'll confirm you  
18           have seen evidence to that effect?  
19       A.   Yes.  
20       Q.   There's been evidence of physical abuse by staff,  
21           including HRF [REDACTED], SNR [REDACTED], sometimes using  
22           implements, and indeed we've, I think, now heard some  
23           evidence from a number of sources about the use of  
24           Scholl sandals by Auntie RHJ [REDACTED] or RHJ [REDACTED], I think  
25           is her surname?

1 LADY SMITH: Peter, do you remember Scholl sandals?  
2 A. I don't unfortunately, but I'm glad I don't.  
3 LADY SMITH: Late 60s, early 70s, they were very popular.  
4 A solid wood thick sole.  
5 A. Sounds like it -- yeah.  
6 LADY SMITH: Whether it was the clog or the flip-flop type.  
7 They were very heavy.  
8 A. Mm-hmm.  
9 MR PEOPLES: We've also heard of physical abuse by other  
10 residents on children. We've heard evidence of young  
11 female staff instigating sexual activity with residents,  
12 both male and female, and I think you'll be familiar  
13 with that.  
14 A. Mm-hmm.  
15 Q. And can I just say in passing on that matter, there was  
16 some evidence about a particular auntie, PZO [REDACTED], you'll  
17 recall that?  
18 A. Yes.  
19 Q. And how she had sexual activity with a boy named [REDACTED]  
20 [REDACTED] ?  
21 A. I do, yeah.  
22 Q. And I think the last witness, 'Gary', mentioned that  
23 fact and estimated that that person would now be around  
24 60 years of age at the time of his statement, which was  
25 2017, I think.

1 LADY SMITH: Yes, it was.

2 MR PEOPLES: Now, just for the record, the trust helpfully  
3 provided, I think, the only document, contemporaneous  
4 document, that it could locate that has survived since  
5 the closure of Widowers', and that was a minute book  
6 covering the period from about 1972 through to 1980; is  
7 that correct?

8 A. Yes, that's correct.

9 Q. And we haven't produced that, but be assured, I've seen  
10 it and I've read it from cover to cover, and can I just  
11 say this: I think you'll confirm that that minute book  
12 contains quite a lot of information about changes in  
13 staff in that period?

14 A. It does.

15 Q. And what I can say is that I think we can see that  
16 an auntie named PZO, who was aged 16 when she was  
17 appointed in either late 1973 or 1974, was at the home.  
18 And we also see from the same record that shortly  
19 afterwards, at Aunty HRF's instigation, the boy called  
20 left late in 1974. She wanted him out of  
21 the home.

22 Now, one could perhaps make some inferences about  
23 some of that, and link it to some of the evidence we've  
24 heard -- I don't know whether you would make that, but  
25 I think I'm suggesting that we have some documentary

1 evidence that a young houseparent or auntie was there,  
2 had the same name as the person we've heard, and that  
3 the boy that she has said -- that the auntie, PZO ,  
4 is said to have had sexual activity with, was there at  
5 the same time and left shortly after she did. I think  
6 she left slightly before him, around that time?

7 A. Right.

8 LADY SMITH: Mr Peoples, you added that 'she wanted him out  
9 of the home'. Is that something that comes out of the  
10 records?

11 MR PEOPLES: Yes.

12 A. Yes.

13 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

14 MR PEOPLES: Yes. Yes.

15 There was no indication -- I think it was to do with  
16 behaviour, but no suggestion that it had something to do  
17 with his behaviour with staff. So I make that clear.  
18 But certainly he's referred to in that book.

19 LADY SMITH: And, sorry, which of them left first?

20 MR PEOPLES: Sorry?

21 LADY SMITH: Which of them left the home first, Auntie  
22 PZO or the boy?

23 MR PEOPLES: I think it was actually PZO . Shortly  
24 afterwards, [REDACTED] left.

25 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

1 MR PEOPLES: So -- well, it's for us to perhaps consider and  
2 for the Chair to consider what significance that record  
3 has, but at least we can say this: that there was a time  
4 when a person called Auntie PZO was in the home at  
5 the same time as a person called [REDACTED].

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Yes.

8 Now, going back to the evidence of former residents,  
9 just in brief, we've heard evidence of -- from more than  
10 one source, of older boys abusing younger male and  
11 female residents, both sexually and physically. I think  
12 you'll recall that evidence and you'll probably have  
13 read some of that evidence in the statements that I've  
14 mentioned; is that correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And also of older boys taking pleasure in inflicting  
17 pain on younger residents?

18 A. It's a common theme.

19 Q. Yes. I think we heard some of that from the evidence of  
20 'Gary' that was read out this morning, but there are  
21 others who make the same point. And indeed, I think  
22 you'll probably remember quite vividly, the evidence  
23 about the 1950s of the boiler room incident which was  
24 spoken to by 'Robert', and the gang rape incident  
25 involving 'Andrew'?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. I mean, these stand out quite notably, I think, as  
3 examples of this abuse; is that right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And indeed we also heard, moving forward to the 1960s  
6 and '70s, the activities in the home of another boy,  
7 **RKE**?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Whose name appears prominently, I think, in a number of  
10 statements.

11 We've also heard evidence of a lack of supervision  
12 of residents at bath times, allowing older boys to force  
13 younger boys to touch each other while queueing in the  
14 bath, you'll recall that evidence, I think?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. We have heard evidence of male staff sexually abusing  
17 female residents. There was Mr **RGV**, **HRK** and  
18 I think we heard some evidence of another person,  
19 Mr **RGM**, this morning; is that right?

20 A. It is, yes.

21 Q. We've heard evidence of a lack of affection and kindness  
22 by staff towards residents, and we've also heard of **HRF**  
23 **HRF**'s sitting room punishment; children made to stand  
24 with arms outstretched for long periods, holding books  
25 in their hands, and being punished if they dropped the

1 books?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. We've heard evidence about the treatment -- perhaps  
4 I should say the appalling treatment -- of bed-wetters.  
5 There was the bed-wetters' table in the 1950s and the  
6 humiliation associated with that practice. There's also  
7 the evidence this morning about how 'Gary' was treated,  
8 including having his head held under water; do you  
9 recall that?

10 A. It's appalling, yes.

11 Q. And we've also heard evidence of keeping up appearances  
12 when visitors came, children being taken from the  
13 basement, changed from their normal clothing when  
14 official visitors came, and then returned to their  
15 basement and told to put their normal clothes back on.  
16 You'll recall that evidence, I think?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. We've heard evidence of force feeding by some aunties,  
19 including Aunty HRE ?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. We've heard evidence of children being locked in dark  
22 rooms or cupboards as a punishment?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And we've heard evidence that the staff really took no  
25 real interest in the education of residents, for



1 Mr Peoples.

2 MR PEOPLES: My Lady.

3 Peter, before the break I was just, to some extent,  
4 trying to capture, in broad terms, the type of abuse and  
5 the evidence of abuse that we've heard, both from the  
6 applicant who gave evidence live on Friday, live  
7 evidence, and from the statements that have been  
8 provided to the Inquiry and to the police.

9 I'm not going to go further. I think there's  
10 obviously a lot of different specific examples, but  
11 I think in general terms we have a flavour of the types  
12 of abuse that's sufficient for present purposes; we can  
13 read the statements for ourselves in detail.

14 A. Yep.

15 Q. What also emerged, I think, is that, from time to time,  
16 when Widowers' was open, there were residents who  
17 reported abuse, but it appears that either nothing  
18 happened, when, for example, the police were brought in.  
19 I think that happened in the 50s. Indeed, 'Andrew's'  
20 evidence was to that effect. And I think there was also  
21 evidence that, when abuse was reported to Aunty [HRF]  
22 [HRF], [SNR], that the children were disbelieved  
23 and the abuse continued as before.

24 So it does appear that there was knowledge that  
25 children were complaining of abuse, but clearly, on the

1 evidence, they weren't being listened to?

2 A. No.

3 Q. And we've also heard evidence, and you'll have read it  
4 in the statements, the evidence of the impact of the  
5 abuse they've told us about. And I think in general  
6 terms, for most, the impact has been devastating, and  
7 that not only has it ruined their childhood but, for  
8 many, it's ruined their adulthood. And for example,  
9 just problems with relationships is a major feature,  
10 I think, of many of the statements that you'll have  
11 seen?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Now, so far as that evidence is concerned, so that we're  
14 in no doubt, the trust's position today, so far as the  
15 extent is concerned, is, has it moved on from the  
16 addendum in the sense that, I read out to you how it was  
17 phrased in the addendum about -- that there wasn't  
18 necessarily evidence of a continuous abusive-type  
19 regime. But the whole picture coming out of the  
20 evidence we've heard and the evidence of the police is  
21 that for most of the period, abuse was taking place in  
22 one shape, or one form or another. Is that the way you  
23 see it?

24 A. Yes, it's clear, it was clear that --

25 Q. Almost endemic, if you like?

1 A. Yes, absolutely.

2 Q. And it wasn't confined to just one or two members of  
3 staff; it appears that some types of abuse were  
4 practised by all staff?

5 A. Absolutely.

6 Q. And indeed, I think the trust's position, and correct me  
7 if I'm wrong, is that there is no reason to disbelieve  
8 or not accept that body of evidence?

9 A. Not at all.

10 Q. And, indeed, I think, as this Inquiry well knows -- and  
11 I'm thinking of HRF's affidavit and some of the  
12 police statements by former staff are concerned -- as  
13 this Inquiry well knows, abusers often deny abuse and  
14 that's something we've come across frequently in earlier  
15 case studies. It's not an uncommon thing if someone's  
16 confronted with their past --

17 A. Yep.

18 Q. -- and there are things in it that they would either  
19 rather forget or would rather deny?

20 A. Mm-hmm.

21 Q. And, again, the trust was provided with an affidavit of  
22 HRF in 2009, as I think you're aware, in which  
23 I think she completely denies abuse, in effect, and is  
24 shocked by the idea that there would have been abuse; is  
25 that the gist of it?

1 A. That is correct, yep.

2 Q. Well, would you accept that one could reasonably  
3 conclude, in light of the whole evidence, that little  
4 weight should be put on the evidence of an old woman in  
5 her 80s, 30 years after the event, who has some memory  
6 issues and claims to be shocked by what she's heard?

7 A. Yes, it runs contrary to everything we've heard.

8 Q. And indeed, and I'm not going to -- her affidavit, by  
9 the way, I'll just give the reference, but I don't want  
10 to go to it in detail --

11 LADY SMITH: Do we need to look at any of it?

12 MR PEOPLES: No, but I'll just give the reference for the  
13 record, it's --

14 LADY SMITH: I'm happy to do so if you think there are any  
15 parts that we should do --

16 MR PEOPLES: No, I think it's sufficient to just draw out  
17 what we make of it. It's WCH-000000008. It's a bit of  
18 a mouthful but you don't need to worry about it.

19 And I'll just mention another reference here in this  
20 connection, which is WCH-000000076, and again I'm not  
21 going to take you to it, but I think you'll have seen it  
22 recently. It's a note of a meeting that was prepared by  
23 your former partner, Alasdair Campbell, that you mention  
24 in your CV, following a meeting with a former resident,  
25 [REDACTED], in January of 1999?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And following that meeting, he telephoned HRF on  
3 23 January 1999 and put in a handwritten note onto his  
4 note of his meeting.

5 A. Mm-hmm.

6 Q. And I think that there, she did give some information  
7 about some aunties who, I think, had featured in  
8 allegations, and she said she didn't remember them.  
9 Auntie PZO being one.

10 Would you like to go and see -- perhaps we should  
11 just bring it up.

12 A. Mm-hmm.

13 LADY SMITH: Maybe we should.

14 MR PEOPLES: It's WCH-0000000676 and it should be in ...

15 LADY SMITH: Sorry, how many zeroes, Mr Peoples? Six or  
16 seven?

17 MR PEOPLES: Seven.

18 LADY SMITH: And then 676 or 76?

19 MR PEOPLES: 76, I thought.

20 LADY SMITH: Ah, I think you said 676.

21 MR PEOPLES: Oh, sorry.

22 What about 85? Does that ring a bell? Yes,  
23 I think, yes, I think you'll have seen this recently?

24 A. Yep.

25 Q. It's probably not something that you have necessarily

1           seen before, but it is a note of a meeting --

2   A.   Yes.

3   Q.   -- between Mr [REDACTED] and your former partner, Alasdair

4        Campbell, and also two trustees of the trust,

5        in January 1999?

6   A.   Yes.

7   Q.   If we just scroll through to the -- that gives

8        an account of the meeting and if we just carry on, if we

9        can go further on in the document, to the end, the

10       following page perhaps, and then -- yes, if we -- the

11       bottom half of the page, could we just stop there?

12   LADY SMITH: Is this again 1999? It just says '23 Jan'.

13   MR PEOPLES: Yes, it's clearly 1999 because --

14   LADY SMITH: Must be the same year.

15   MR PEOPLES: Well, it's signed AFC, or -- yes, AFC is his

16        initials. And he says:

17           'I phoned -- '

18           This is the author of the note:

19           'I phoned Ms HRF [REDACTED] and she has no recollection

20        of -- '

21           And it's two people who were aunties --

22   A.   Mm-hmm.

23   Q.   -- that are mentioned there. But she has no

24        recollection of, and I'll give their names, it's PZX [REDACTED]

25        PZX [REDACTED], who has featured in the evidence and PZO [REDACTED].

1 A. Right.

2 Q. If that assists:

3 'Apparently staff came and went all the time. She  
4 said she'd only been aware of one incident when an older  
5 child sexually abused a younger one. She informed the  
6 social work department and the child was removed from  
7 the home.'

8 And then we can forget about the final paragraph,  
9 which is not relevant.

10 So there we have HRF [REDACTED] being telephoned in  
11 1999 about allegations and being asked about staff, and  
12 she has no recollection, at that point, of the two  
13 individuals mentioned to her, who were members of her  
14 staff.

15 A. Mm-hmm.

16 Q. But she does say that she does recall one occasion when  
17 there was an incident that involved sexual abuse of --  
18 by an older child of a younger child. And I think that,  
19 if that was to be compared with the later affidavit --  
20 and maybe we should bring that up then.

21 WCH-000000008 -- would that be right?

22 LADY SMITH: Is it eight or is it nine -- yes -- it's nine  
23 zeroes, is it?

24 MR PEOPLES: No, I've got it, I think it's come up.

25 LADY SMITH: Eight zeroes.

1 MR PEOPLES: Yes. So you see that's the affidavit, I think,  
2 that HRF produced in 2009.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. About 30 years after she had retired. She was then  
5 86 years old, because she was born, I think, on  
6 25 April 2023 (sic). She says in that affidavit, and  
7 I'll just read it short, but she says:

8 'I left the home when it closed in 1980, so my  
9 memory of my time there has faded somewhat.'

10 She says at one point in the affidavit, and I'm just  
11 going to again take this short, but be assured it is  
12 there:

13 'I have no paperwork from my time at the home, as  
14 I left all of this in the building when I retired.'

15 She's not entirely clear of the date she started at  
16 one point but then says it was a few days before  
17 Christmas in 1960. She's not too sure of the numbers in  
18 the home but thought it was around 60 or 70 when she  
19 arrived.

20 Now, I think she's probably a bit out on the  
21 numbers. I think historically there were high numbers,  
22 but I think latterly there were a bit less than 60 to  
23 70.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. She says during her -- in that affidavit that the

1           aunties were often young girls -- and I think the minute  
2           book confirms that -- and it was their first job after  
3           leaving school. And indeed she says some might not be  
4           much older than some of the older children in the home.  
5           And I think that's correct.

6           She said there was quite a high turnover of staff:

7           'I remember a spell when it was very difficult to  
8           get good staff.'

9           And then she goes on at some point to say that, when  
10          she's asked --

11       LADY SMITH: Which paragraph are we at now, Mr Peoples?

12       MR PEOPLES: Sorry, I'm just taking my notes. I haven't  
13          actually noted the paragraph, but perhaps we can try and  
14          find it.

15       LADY SMITH: Yes.

16       MR PEOPLES: I think it's further on from paragraph 9, if we  
17          keep going.

18       A. 10.

19       LADY SMITH: I think it's after that that we got to --

20       MR PEOPLES: I think it's after that again.

21       LADY SMITH: -- because it's after the reference to the  
22          young girls.

23       MR PEOPLES: Yes. I think it's there, at the top of that  
24          page, just paragraph 10, about not -- difficult to get  
25          good staff and so forth.

1           And at paragraph 12, if we just keep scrolling down,  
2           just, if we stop, the assistant matron for the majority  
3           of the time there was Miss Collins.

4           Well, with great respect to HRF [REDACTED], that's not  
5           a name I have come across at all.

6    A. No.

7    Q. There's no reference in the minute book, which covers  
8           the period 1972 to 1980, to a Miss Collins. There's  
9           reference to Miss RHJ [REDACTED]. There's reference to Janet  
10           Taylor, who was an assistant matron in 1973 but left  
11           after a few months. And then there's reference to Mrs  
12           [REDACTED] in 1973, and she was still there at  
13           closure, so she would be the one, if she had a memory,  
14           that was likely to retain --

15   A. Mm-hmm.

16   Q. Be retained in the memory, I think. But I haven't been  
17           able to find anyone fitting --

18   A. There were ex-residents, [REDACTED].

19   Q. Yes. That's right.

20   A. Mm-hmm.

21   Q. And she says later on, if we go down, I think she speaks  
22           about two particular aunties, including Aunty HRE [REDACTED].  
23           Perhaps we need to keep scrolling down. Again.  
24           Probably beyond. I'm looking for the paragraph that  
25           says that she had no concerns about PZU [REDACTED] or

1 HRE [REDACTED], that's Aunty HRE [REDACTED]. I think it's in  
2 the affidavit at some point.

3 Perhaps just keep going.

4 Paragraph 26. Yes. So she said:

5 'I agreed they would perhaps have been regarded as  
6 being strict, but I had no complaints about them at any  
7 time.'

8 And she said she had no complaints, at 27:

9 '... about anything from the children, either that  
10 they were unhappy because of the way they had been  
11 treated by a fellow resident or by the staff.'

12 Well, that can't be right, because she tells us in  
13 1999 that one child was abused by another child, and  
14 that older child was removed. So she's not remembered  
15 that.

16 A. No.

17 Q. And indeed, when asked about 'Andrew', whose statement  
18 has been read in, I think she says later on, if we keep  
19 going --

20 A. 30.

21 Q. Paragraph 30, she says:

22 'I would not imagine that 'Andrew' would make things  
23 up.'

24 Although she wasn't actually at the home at that  
25 time, she clearly had some dealings with him later on

1 because he came to visit his brother, 'Robert', in the  
2 60s.

3 She then is asked, if we keep going down, she's  
4 asked about PZX, whose name appeared in the 1999  
5 handwritten note. And she says -- and again, I'm trying  
6 to find the paragraph --

7 A. 35.

8 Q. 35, thank you very much. She says that she has no  
9 memory of her -- sorry, she has a memory of her. She  
10 says:

11 'I was not aware of any allegations against her.  
12 I did get rid of her but not for anything specific. She  
13 was just not up to the job. She was a young woman.'

14 Now, she had no memory of that person in 1999, when  
15 she was asked about it by your former partner, Alasdair  
16 Campbell.

17 A. Mm-hmm.

18 Q. And then she's asked at paragraph 36 about PZO. She  
19 says:

20 'I cannot remember her surname. I was not aware of  
21 any allegations against her. I did get rid of her, but  
22 not for anything specific. She was just not up to the  
23 job. She was a young woman.'

24 Well, she had no memory of PZO in 1999,  
25 according to the handwritten note by your colleague,

1 Mr Campbell. So her memory seems to be variable on  
2 matters like staff, but she seems to have a much clearer  
3 memory in 2009.

4 A. Mm-hmm.

5 Q. About both of these individuals.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And that she had to get rid of them.

8 And, of course, she says it came as a great shock to  
9 her, that there was abuse.

10 Now, she must have known in 1999 that there were  
11 allegations, so it can't have come as a complete shock  
12 in 2009.

13 A. No.

14 Q. But perhaps by way of mitigation, she says, I think, is  
15 it towards the end:

16 'You have to remember we had no real training and we  
17 learned very much on the job. We had no training to  
18 recognise what maybe were signs that things were not all  
19 well.'

20 So perhaps that's her fallback position; that, well,  
21 they did their best but they didn't have the training?

22 LADY SMITH: Was that affidavit taken in connection with  
23 civil litigation, do we know?

24 MR PEOPLES: Well, by that stage, there was a police  
25 investigation and I think, although I think there'd been

1 engagement with ex-residents by the trust before then --

2 A. Yes, two ex-residents came.

3 Q. -- in 1998/99, there was a police investigation by 2009.

4 LADY SMITH: Of course.

5 MR PEOPLES: And I think in that context it was thought

6 appropriate to speak to HRF on the matter.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And this was what she produced; is that correct?

9 A. That's correct.

10 LADY SMITH: And she was well into her 80s by then.

11 MR PEOPLES: 86, I think.

12 LADY SMITH: Yes.

13 MR PEOPLES: But, obviously, if she's right, and if Aunty

14 HRE's right in what she told the police, no child was

15 ever abused at Widowers'.

16 Now, I don't think that's a position you now accept?

17 A. Not at all.

18 Q. And indeed, we can't get any assistance from the minute

19 book on that matter, or indeed the annual reports. They

20 don't hint at any form of abuse. But you probably

21 wouldn't expect them to?

22 A. No.

23 Q. I think we've found in the past that these types of

24 records are not terribly informative on the day-to-day

25 lives or, indeed, any complaints that children might be

1 making. They don't tend to reach that level, in  
2 practice. I think that's how our -- I think I'm correct  
3 in saying --

4 LADY SMITH: They don't. They don't. And if there's  
5 an abusive culture in the home which can emerge from  
6 a series of small matters, that doesn't tend to come out  
7 in minute books either.

8 A. Mm-hmm.

9 MR PEOPLES: And I think in fairness to trustees, whatever  
10 was said in 2017, and I'm not going to take this at  
11 length, I think that, while initially, when the first  
12 suggestion of abuse came out in 1998, when I think there  
13 was a communication from [REDACTED], there was  
14 perhaps a feeling that there was no substance to it.  
15 But I think from '99 onwards, privately at least, there  
16 was a belief that what the trustees were being told,  
17 there was no reason to doubt or disbelieve. I think  
18 that grew over time, but I think there was a feeling,  
19 and one can see that, I think, in some of the entries in  
20 the meetings over time. And I think, indeed, you may  
21 have said something along these lines in 2017 after  
22 speaking to some of the committee of management when the  
23 home was open, that -- and some -- Jean Broadwood,  
24 I think, was she a trustee?

25 A. Yes. Yes, she is.

1 Q. I think she had felt that there was substance --

2 A. Mm-hmm.

3 Q. -- to what she had heard --

4 A. Mm-hmm.

5 Q. -- one of the residents say in a meeting in 2015.

6 That was the way things were developing, was it not?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Albeit the scale might have been difficult to assess at

9 that stage?

10 A. That's right, yes.

11 Q. And just on the staff, we have -- I'm not going to take

12 this at length, but one thing in the annual report for

13 1968/1969 which caught my eye, and I'm not needing you

14 to go to this report, but there was a statement to the

15 effect that:

16 'A trained staff under the matron is resident in the

17 house and looks after all the children's needs.'

18 Now, it appears that, in fact, most staff were

19 young, unqualified and untrained?

20 A. That's the impression I get, yeah.

21 Q. And indeed, perhaps it was put best by 'Whitney', whose

22 evidence was read out on Friday, that some staff, and

23 I think quite a lot of them, were just 'silly wee

24 lasses' who didn't have a clue how to deal with

25 children. And I think we know that there were very

1 young people employed, not just in the '60s, but the  
2 '70s, right through almost to the point of closure --

3 A. Mm-hmm.

4 Q. -- is that -- would you agree?

5 A. I would accept that, yes.

6 Q. In fact, I think the youngest I came across was 15.

7 Now, if that person was employed, she was actually  
8 younger probably than some of the residents?

9 A. Probably.

10 Q. Now, we've gone through the gist of the evidence that's  
11 been provided by former residents to this Inquiry and to  
12 the police, and there's been some reference in broad  
13 terms to the nature of that evidence.

14 Is there anything you would want to say in response  
15 to having listened to that evidence? You were here  
16 present on Friday but you've also had the opportunity to  
17 read the whole evidence of the residents.

18 A. I'm just appalled by what I've heard. They suffered  
19 terrible abuse. It was certainly not a home, as such.  
20 And, speaking for the trust, I apologise for any abuse  
21 they suffered. It was hell on earth.

22 MR PEOPLES: I don't really think I've got any more  
23 questions. I think that probably sums it up very  
24 accurately and succinctly.

25 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

1 Peter, is there anything else you'd like to tell us  
2 that we haven't covered already?

3 A. No, I -- no.

4 LADY SMITH: Well, can I thank you again for coming today  
5 and for also updating the trust's response. It was very  
6 helpful to have that, and to have your frank admissions  
7 and acknowledgments this morning. I'm grateful to you  
8 for that.

9 Now, please feel free to go and hopefully you can  
10 get back out there before this storm really brews up to  
11 something nasty.

12 Thank you.

13 (The witness withdrew)

14 MR PEOPLES: We've perhaps made better progress than I'd  
15 anticipated but --

16 LADY SMITH: Yes, so what's the plan?

17 MR PEOPLES: The plan now is that we will -- that was the  
18 last witness for this particular establishment.

19 LADY SMITH: Yes.

20 MR PEOPLES: And we will be moving on tomorrow morning to  
21 evidence about another children's home, St Margaret's,  
22 and there will be evidence from an applicant, there will  
23 be some read-in evidence, and we will also hear from  
24 a person we've heard from before, James Ross.

25 LADY SMITH: Yes. And although there are read-ins, you want

1 to postpone those until after tomorrow's evidence; is  
2 that right? There are read-ins scheduled for this week  
3 that we've not got to yet, but it's not sensible to get  
4 done now.

5 MR PEOPLES: Yes. Well, the read-ins that do relate to  
6 St Margaret's, I think I would rather just fit them in  
7 after I've taken the evidence of the first --

8 LADY SMITH: Absolutely. I rather thought that was the case  
9 but I thought I'd better check.

10 MR PEOPLES: Thank you.

11 LADY SMITH: Thank you, Mr Peoples.

12 Now, names again. There were no new names mentioned  
13 in Peter Yellowlees' evidence, apart from [REDACTED]  
14 and somebody called [REDACTED], and HSA [REDACTED] actually.  
15 They're not to be identified as referred to in our  
16 evidence outside this room, so please would everybody  
17 remember that.

18 And so I'll rise now until tomorrow morning, yes?

19 MR PEOPLES: 10.00.

20 LADY SMITH: Wait a minute, is there some puzzle? Have  
21 I missed somebody, or have I mentioned somebody who  
22 shouldn't be there?

23 MR PEOPLES: I think I mentioned a person who was related  
24 to -- she was a child at the time, she's not a child in  
25 care. HSA [REDACTED].

1 LADY SMITH: Yes, I see that. I do know that she has been  
2 redacted from documentation. Perhaps people could  
3 check, doublecheck with us about HSA [REDACTED], that may  
4 or may not be protected.

5 Thank you very much. Until tomorrow morning then.  
6 Thank you.

7 (12.20 pm)

8 (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am the following day)

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