

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

HDE [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is HDE [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.


Life before going into care

2. I was born and brought up in Dunfermline by my mum [REDACTED] and dad [REDACTED]. I have two siblings [REDACTED], who is a year younger than me and [REDACTED], who is about four years younger. The first school I attended was Cowdenbeath Primary.
3. My mother suffered from alcohol addiction and my father was a miner. When I was around five years old my father had a mining accident and sustained a severe leg injury. Between this and mums issues the marriage did not last and they divorced. Mum moved away and at that time we stayed with my father.
4. The social services, David Miller, became involved and came to the decision that dad was not fit to bring up three young children. It was decided that we would be placed into care. Rather than allowing my youngest sister, [REDACTED], going into care, my aunt [REDACTED] stepped in and adopted her. That left [REDACTED] and myself being sent to Greenbank Children's Home, Leven. There were never any discussions with us about what we wanted.

Greenbank Children's Home, Leven

5. I don't have many memories of my time in Greenbank, as I was so young. Secondary Institu

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



6. After a few months and while I was still five years old it was decided we might be better being placed with a foster family.

Foster Care, Family, St Andrews

7. I think it was later in the year when and I were moved to St Andrews and onto the farm occupied by Mr and Mrs . They were a really nice couple and we were well cared for there. They did not have any children of their own.
8. When we had been there a few months I managed to sit on the tractor in the barn and got the engine started. I can remember there being a large shovel on the front of the tractor. I am not sure how but I managed to get it into drive and it shot forward and crashed into the barn door.
9. It was for this reason that the 's decided I was too much to handle and that we should be moved on. Again David Miller was involved and he picked us up from the s and transported us to the Leslie Children's Home near Glenrothes.

Children's Home, Leslie

10. I was only at Leslie Children's Home for a couple of years. I don't have many memories of my time there. When I was there I went to school at Glenwood Junior. This was the

first time I also met Aunt [HDI] before she had gone to St Margaret's Children's Home. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

[Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

11.

12.

13. I don't know the reasons for me transferring to St Margaret's.

St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie

14. I would have been eight years old when I was moved and ended up staying until I was about twelve. When we arrived I saw the building was set off the road. There was an entrance gate with a long driveway to the building itself. I could see there were large gardens with swings and see-saw for playing on. To the rear of the house was the beach.

Routine at St Margaret's Children's Home. Elie

First day

15. I did not like being there on the first day as it was a different atmosphere and nothing like living on the farm. Once I settled, and apart from the abuse, I liked being there.

16. The home was run by the local authority but it was managed by David Murphy. He was assisted by [HDI]. I knew her as she worked at the children's home

in Leslie, Fife, where my previous placement had been. When we were at St Margaret's we had to call them uncle and aunt respectively. There was also a cook and a cleaner but we did not have much interaction with them.

17. Aunt ^{HDI} [REDACTED] was for the most times really nice. She came across as quite motherly and good with us all. She was also a generous woman. She entered different competitions and any prizes she won she gave to the children in the home.
18. I think there would have been about fourteen or fifteen children in the home, a mix of boys and girls. I think I was one of the youngest children there and the oldest was around fourteen years old. There was always a changeover of children. Some were being placed into foster families, some were moved with age and some of them returned home. During our time in the home [REDACTED] was able to move back in with my mum, who was then living in Dundee.
19. I can remember some of the children from my time there. There were three from the same family, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There was also [REDACTED] and a girl called [REDACTED]. I tried later to find some of the people I knew through Facebook.
20. I shared my dormitory with another three boys. The girls slept in a different dormitory in the building. The dormitories were a mix of beds and bunk beds. We had to keep the room tidy and if it was not to Uncle Dave's satisfaction he would punish us, by taking away some of our privileges.

Mornings and bedtime

21. Uncle Dave and Aunt ^{HDI} [REDACTED] would wake us up in the morning. We would then get washed and dressed and into the dining room for breakfast. They might help us getting dressed if for example we were having trouble tying our ties or fastening our shoe laces. That took me some time to be able to do that.
22. We went to bed between 7:30 pm and 8:00 pm. As I got older that would have been a bit later. Sometime later I would also be moved to a better room.

Mealtimes/Food

23. We all ate our meals together in the dining room. The boys sat at separate tables from the girls. Uncle Dave supervised the boys and Aunt HDI [REDACTED] the girls. If you misbehaved you would be made to stay in your room and would have to miss the next meal.
24. The food at St Margaret's was generally good and there was enough to eat. Aside from any other issue if you did not like anything you did without until the next meal time.
25. If you did not like any of the food or did not finish what you were fed, they would force feed you. I hated sprouts. That and any other food I did not like then Uncle Dave would pinch my nose, thereby making me open my mouth. He would force my head back and then push the food into my mouth. He did this to any of the other boys that was having problems with their food. I did see Aunt HDI [REDACTED] do that sometimes to the girls. On most days there would be someone being made to eat their food this way.

Washing/bathing

26. There were separate bath rooms for boys and girls. We had plenty of sinks for us to get washed and there was a bath available. Uncle Dave would supervise the boys and Aunt HDI [REDACTED] supervised the girls, just to make sure we were washing properly. I think we could have a bath three or four days a week.

Bed Wetting

27. I did have a problem with bed wetting. Uncle Dave would get me up two or three times during the evening or night. It started with him trying to help me stop wetting the bed.
28. If I wet the bed I had to stay in my room while the others went for breakfast. While they sat downstairs eating I would have a bath. The others would often laugh at me when I wet the bed. The staff would not intervene to stop the kids.

Clothing/uniform

29. If we were in the home we just wore day clothes. When we were at school we wore our uniforms. Uncle Dave or Aunt ^{HDI} might have been given a budget by the social work. If so we were taken into town and got some new clothes, otherwise we wore hand me downs.

Leisure time

30. With the home backing onto the beach it made it easy access for some of the boating facilities. There was a rowing boat, sailing yacht and small motor boat. Once we were taught properly we were allowed to use the rowing boat, most without staff being in the boat. Obviously for the small yacht and small motor boats there were always staff with us when we were allowed out on them.
31. There was also the games room on the ground floor where we would play sometimes. Also on that floor was another room where we could watch some television. When we got home from school in the afternoon, so long as we behaved, we were allowed to play in the games room, play football outdoors or watch the television. If we had been bad we were to stay in our room.

Trips and holidays

32. We went to other children's homes for a holiday, but I am not sure where they were. I can say they were happy times as I was away from Uncle Dave. There were other times we would go to Burntililand and I can remember being there on two or three occasions.

School

33. All the children went to a primary school in St Andrews. I think I eventually moved onto the high school while I was in this home. There was a school bus that picked us up

from the front gates in the morning and dropped us off after school in the afternoon. We also had lunch at the school. I remember that I liked going to the school.

Healthcare

34. I was taken to the local GP for my inoculations and for my bed wetting issue. I was able to also go to the dentist but I can only remember that he had to use gas as I was scared of needles.
35. When I was staying at St Margaret's Children's Home I was sent to a psychiatric hospital for my bed wetting issues and mental health issues. The hospital was in Cupar, and was quite a big hospital. In the hospital there were other people with mental health issues and some who were handicapped. I can't remember the name of the psychiatrist. I did not tell him anything about the abuse from Uncle Dave as I did not think he would believe me and if he did he might tell Uncle Dave and I would be punished again.

Birthdays and Christmas

36. When it came to my birthday I would be given presents and there would be a small party. The cook would make a cake and we would share it. At Christmas we were given presents Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Visits/Inspections

37. Mr Miller, my social worker, visited me at the home about once a fortnight. Sometimes he would take me out in his car. Other times it was in a room in the home. When we were in the room it was just him and I, there was no staff present.

Sibling

38. [REDACTED] was with me at St Margaret's and apart from when we were in the separate dormitories I saw her every day.

Family contact

39. My dad did visit me some times when I was at St Margaret's

Personal possessions

40. I did not have any personal possessions when I was there. There were toys and books and if we were given anything like that as presents we had to share it with the others. I did not need a lot while I was there and just played with some of the toys.

Running away

41. I did run away when I stayed at St Margaret's. I was usually caught by the police and brought back to the home. One of the times I was away I was with [REDACTED]. We sometimes tried to get on a bus but the conductor would catch us and put us off the bus. When we were back at the home we would be taken to the office where Uncle Dave would use the strap on us as a punishment.

Discipline

42. Punishments usually meant loss of privileges such as not being allowed out on the bicycles, not allowed out on any of the boats and being confined to our rooms. If you were confined to your room you were not allowed to play with the other children. Another punishment could be a reduction or a loss of your pocket money.
43. You were the subject of punishments if perhaps you were arguing with some of the other children. If that was the case they did not take into consideration who started, they just sent both of you to your respective rooms. Other occasions you would be punished if you were somewhere you should not be, like being on the beach without permission.

Abuse at St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie

44. When Uncle Dave was getting me up at night it was to help me to stop wetting the bed. But this changed and he started standing directly behind me. He was rubbing himself against my buttocks. This progressed to him reaching round and touching my penis. As I had lowered my pyjama trousers to go to the toilet he began rubbing his penis against my bare buttocks. This went on most nights. He told me that I had to keep it a secret. I am not sure if he did this to others while I was there.
45. Uncle Dave started buying me presents. He would give me sweets and he gave me a toy version of the ship "Golden Hind". These were rewards for me not telling anyone what he was doing to me.
46. When I was seeing Mr Miller, my social worker, I reported to him what Uncle Dave was doing to me at night. One day when I got off the bus I was told to see Uncle Dave in his office. He closed the door and pulled out a strap from his desk. He told me I was being punished as I had told Mr Miller about what was happening. He told me to lower my trousers and pants and then he hit me three or four times on the legs and bare buttocks with the strap. The strap was similar to that used in schools. That became a regular method of punishment by Uncle Dave. I was aware that other boys were also being given the strap by Uncle Dave, as like when I cried, I could hear them crying when he hit them.
47. As a result of this he also removed my privileges. I was not allowed out to play, not allowed to use the boats and my pocket money was stopped. If that was not working he would also lock me in a cold room and tell me I was not getting out of there until the next meal time.

Reporting of abuse at St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie

48. My next visits from Mr Miller involved him saying that Uncle Dave had denied doing anything to me. Mr Miller would ask me why I was making up lies about Uncle Dave. He never believed a word I said and was taking Uncle Dave's side.
49. Because of the abuse I began stealing from shops. Sometimes I was caught by the shopkeeper and he would tell the Headmaster at the school. It turned out the Headmaster would then report it back to Uncle Dave.
50. I was also playing up in school. I was stealing and doing anything to get myself into trouble.
51. Again when I was being visited by Mr Miller I was telling him about being given the strap. Rather than trying to find out why I was doing the bad things his only response was that I should not be stealing sweets. The use of the strap continued and I can only presume Mr Miller had agreed that this was to be allowed by Uncle Dave.
52. I also told Aunt ^{HDI} [REDACTED] but her response was that there was nothing she could do and that I should just learn to behave myself.

Leaving St Margaret's Children's Home, Elie

53. As I was constantly getting into trouble, a decision was made that I was leaving St Margaret's and being sent to Oakbank Residential Home in Aberdeen. It was just me that went there as [REDACTED] was back with mum.

Oakbank Residential Care, Aberdeen

54. I don't remember how I got to Oakbank. Mr Miller had been replaced as my key worker with staff from the home.

Routine

55. Life at Oakbank was quite strict. The boys in the home were around the same age as me. I stayed in a dormitory, but I am not sure how many others were in there. I can say it was a bigger dormitory than I stayed in at St Margaret's.
56. Most of the staff at Oakbank were male with the exception of the Headmistress. We did not see her much as she spent most of her time in her office.
57. There was a bell to wake us up in the morning. We then got washed and dressed. After that we headed to the dining room for breakfast. I can remember the food was quite good and there were choices available.
58. Apart from attending school lessons we were also taught basic cooking, ironing and generally how to look after yourself.

Clothes

59. We had to wear a uniform of sorts when we stayed there. It was a grey coloured uniform similar to what the RAF wore.

School

60. School was inside the building and English, Arithmetic and PT were the main subjects. The teachers in the school were quite strict, they were not staff but came in for the lessons. There were never any physical punishments. If things were not done properly it was usually lines.

Leisure

61. When we had leisure time we could play football, cards, table tennis. Sometimes we played football against some of the other schools in the area. I would spend any pocket money on sweets and sometimes buying vinyl records.

Work

62. We did carry out some chores at Oakbank. One of the things they had was a small pet shop there. I helped look after the animals and we had chickens, mice, rats, peacocks and a goat. I would clean out that area and make sure they were all fed. Initially staff showed me what to do but as I got more experienced I was left alone.

Healthcare

63. As I was feeling better in myself I was not having to go to any psychiatric hospitals. I did not have any other reason to see a doctor or dentist.

Bed wetting

64. When I first arrived there I did suffer from bed wetting but as I settled it stopped. This could have been because I was away from the abuse by David Murphy, but also it may have been that I just grew out of it. I was much happier at Oakbank.

Visits

65. No one from the family made any visits to see me at Oakbank as it was too far for them to travel with dad's disability.

Running away

66. I did run away when I was at Oakbank. By them making us wear the uniform it was easier for people to identify where we were from. I did run away with a boy [REDACTED]. We got on a train to Edinburgh and then a train back to Kirkcaldy. As we got off that train the police were waiting for us. Mr Miller arrived and he took us back to Oakbank. Before we got in his car he made us take our shoes off to stop us running off again. When I got back the punishment was my privileges were removed.

Leaving Oakbank Residential Care

67. When I was sixteen I knew that my time at Oakbank was coming to an end. I was placed into a bedsit in Leith Walk, Edinburgh. It was the social work department that got me a place there, but I can't remember the woman's name. When I stayed there I had some meals cooked for me. The landlord and his wife helped look after me and showed me some sewing and cooking skills.

Life after being in care

68. I started working when I was in the bedsit. I was working as a carpet salesman during the day and worked as a waiter in a restaurant at night. I managed to put some money away as savings.
69. During the holidays I decided it was time for me to move and I had about £100 saved up. I moved down to Hockley, Essex. I later moved to Southend on Sea. I chose Essex because my grandad lived there. I had a job and was getting around twenty five pounds a week wages. I had five pounds for bedsit and about five pounds on shopping. At that time I felt like I was living like a king. I spent a lot of my holidays with grandad.
70. I went back to Scotland in 1978 for a short time. I was back in Glenrothes but the people I knew had all left, married or were working. I did not stay long before I headed back to England.
71. The police came to see me about ten years ago, maybe longer. It would have been just before [REDACTED] went to court. A card had been left at my home in Felixstowe and I went to the police station to see them. A male and a female officer had arrived from Scotland and spoke to me. At that time I was already having issues with alcohol and did not want anything to do with Murphy. When the police came it was the first time I had told anyone, except Mr Miller, about what Dave Murphy had done to me. It was because they came to me, that I opened up, otherwise I might never have done that.

I think he got fifteen years for abusing me and about forty one other boys and girls, but I did not give evidence at court.

Impact

72. As I grew up and into my adult life if anyone asked what my childhood was like, I would just tell them I had no childhood and that I was brought up in a children's home.
73. I did get married to [REDACTED] when I was about twenty two and had three children from my marriage. It broke down as a result of my drinking problems. I had told her and my children about being in care but never disclosed to them about any of the abuse. I still have contact with my daughters, my sister [REDACTED] and their families in Scotland.
74. My father died when he was forty two after suffering a heart attack. Mum passed away about three years ago. If my parents ever came up in conversation I would tell them I had a relationship with my dad but nothing with my mum.
75. I have had treatment at psychiatric hospitals in England. One of them was St Clements in Ipswich, but that is closed now. Although I still need counselling I don't need to be kept in for that.
76. My problems with all the abuse was that I always turned to drink to try and drown the memories. Lately I have been in touch with Turning Point and they helped me with my drinking problems and they are still helping me. I wanted to try being a mentor to help people who had been in a similar situation as me. Unfortunately Covid has put a stop to that at this time.
77. As an alcoholic I was always getting into trouble with the police and I lost a lot of respect I had for them. I think it may also have been because I believe that Murphy was an ex-police officer. Now that I am getting help and things are getting better I have built up a little respect for what they do.

Records

- 78. I have applied for some of my records while I was in care. They were supposed to be with Anglia Care Trust, but I am still waiting on them. I might look for help to get my records.

Lessons to be Learned

- 79. I think there needs to be proper checks carried out on people looking after children in care. There could not have been proper checks carried out on David Murphy. Social Workers are not getting involved in more serious cases until it is too late. Maybe if they listened earlier to what children were telling them, then they could put a stop to things a lot earlier.

Other information

- 80. Where I am now [REDACTED], one of the key workers here, is helping to look after me. She is helping me with the process of giving a statement to the Inquiry.
- 81. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed..... HDE [REDACTED]

Dated..... 16 April 2021