

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FCW

Support person present: No

1. My name is FCW. My date of birth is 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I have no memory of life before going into care. I have no memory of my mum and have no images of her. I obtained a copy of my birth certificate a few years ago to help me get a job. It records my mother's name as and gives my name as FCW. My father's name is not recorded. I assume my father's name was, but I cannot be sure. I do not know if I have any brothers or sisters.

Greenock Children's Home

3. My earliest memory of being in a children's home was the place in Greenock. I remember it was across the road from a swimming pool. I was placed there when I was a baby.

4. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Darvil, Youth Detention Centre, near Biggar

5. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I think I was aged six or seven when I was there. [Sec
 [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]
 [Secondary Institutions - to be published later] I think I was
 here for six months or so. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]
 [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

Springbells Children's Home, Annan

6. [Secondary Institutions - to be published later]

Merkland Children's Home, Moffatt

7. I was placed at Merkland over two different periods of time. The first time was for five years, when I was aged seven to twelve years old. It was [REDACTED] by Mr [RGE], or Mr [RGE] as we called him. There was a big front staircase leading up to the dorms and the shower block. On the ground floor there was a kitchen and a dining room as well as a laundry room. There was another, higher floor at the top of the house where the older boys slept. There were different dormitories for different ages. There were also about eight to ten girls placed at Merkland too. Their rooms were on the ground floor. There were about thirty boys in total. The dorm rooms held about eight boys to a room.
8. We went to Sunday school, it was compulsory. We had to wear a kilt all day and we had to be on our best behaviour. There was a church service in the morning, followed by Sunday school and then another church service.

9. We had chores to do, such as folding clothes into piles for everyone. We also worked in the garden at Merkland and in the big grounds at Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfries. We did digging, pulling weeds, weed killing and hedge cutting and grass cutting. There were some favourites in the home who got better treatment. I learned not to show weakness. I had some pals in the home.

Routine at Merkland

First day

10. I don't know how I was taken to Merkland. I was given a fag on my first day. Mrs **MXV** gave me a bath and clean clothes to wear. I was introduced to Mr **RGE** as the person **SNR**.

Mornings and bedtime

11. We got up in the mornings for a wash, we were made to do that. Then we got dressed and you had to do your jobs, these were domestic chores like dusting and hoovering. After breakfast we had more jobs, like washing the dishes or cleaning and polishing shoes.

12. My aim was to get to sleep at the top of the house when I got a bit older. Bedtime was 8pm and it might have been earlier when we were younger. The lights went out and there was no noise after 8pm. A staff member would be outside of the door listening out for any noise. You'd get battered if you did make a noise.

Mealtimes / Food

13. Breakfast was porridge and toast and a cup of tea. I had lunch at school during the week, we had tea at Merkland and the food wasn't great. For tea, I remember having to eat tripe and carrots and turnips. I couldn't eat turnips and I was forced to eat the them. Mrs **MXV** would sit at the top of the table and she would stand over you if

you wouldn't eat the food. She was a tyrant. Sometimes she would batter you for not eating or tip the food over your head if you didn't eat it.

Washing / bathing

14. Every second night there was a bath. There would be two boys bathing at the same time, and a staff member sitting between the two making sure you washed properly. This could be male or female. You did what you were told to do to stay out of trouble.

Clothing / uniform

15. I was given clothes on my first day. I had clothes for school too and changed into old clothes when I came back from school. There was a woman who worked in the laundry called Mrs Scott and she was nice. She'd take splinters out of your hand with such delicacy. You'd take your clothes to the laundry room for washing or to have your name tag sewn in it. You'd steal someone else's clothes and rip their name tag out if any of yours went missing.

School

16. I went to Moffatt Academy from primary school onwards. We stayed at school for lunch and went back to the home at 4pm. The school was about one mile away through the woods. I used to walk with my pal, [REDACTED]. He was in and out of the home because of domestic problems with his parents. I'm still in touch with him. There was nothing to do after school. There were no toys at the home.
17. When I left Moffatt Academy I couldn't read or write. I joined the army when I left and learned to read and write there. I did nothing at school. I got the belt for nothing. The teachers used to make you read out in front of the class and I couldn't do it. I started to freak out to prevent them giving me the belt.
18. When I was in the army in Belfast I met a guy who went to Moffatt Academy. He told me about a teacher at the school called [REDACTED], an English teacher who

carried a belt over his shoulder so he could easily take it out to use. I saw this teacher myself in Moffatt one day and asked him how he slept at night after what he had done and he never educated us.

Trips / Holidays/Leisure time

19. The first time I was at Merkland, There was a woodland alongside the home, at weekends we played there, training to be soldiers. This was a big part of my leisure time.
20. There were no holidays or day trips at Merkland. I remember when I was at school that half of my class went to Spain, but the Merkland boys were not able to go anywhere.

Birthdays and Christmas

21. At Christmas time we had to perform to please MXV-RGE and the staff. We had to cuddle them or touch them and other staff too. There were some sexual reasons and some just for comfort. One gave massages that was not for sexual reasons. You'd get a present if you pleased them. If there was a meal, it was a regimental past-time. There was no joy involved. If you did get a present it would be smashed up by the older boys. I don't celebrate Christmas since my time at Merkland.
22. There was no celebration of birthdays. My birthday was just when they told me it was and I didn't want any attention on myself. There was no cake or present. We were just numbers in the system to them and forgotten about.

Visits / Inspections

23. There were no inspections by social workers to check our welfare. We only saw a social worker if we did something unacceptable. We didn't trust social workers. They also took us back to the home if we ran away.

Healthcare

24. I saw a few doctors when I was at Merkland. The staff from the home would take you to see the doctor. I might have got injections with the other boys from the doctor. I was skelped by the doctor and I don't know why. I was also slapped on the legs by Dr [REDACTED]. The same happened at the dentist, probably because I didn't behave. The dentist was terrible. I've taken some of my own teeth out.

Running away

25. I would often run away from Merkland and break into empty houses to stay in. I'd learned how to watch houses to be sure they were empty and shop-lift food. I learned this when I was at Merkland.

Bedwetting

26. I wet the bed until I was fourteen years old. There was a routine. When you woke up and the bed was wet, you would be humiliated and sent to the showers in the morning. The staff and the other boys would be shouting at you 'you pissed the bed'. They'd make you shower and they became less aggressive to me after I reached puberty.

Abuse at Merkland Children's Home

27. Mrs ^{MXV}[REDACTED] was forever playing with us and fondling us. She'd give out the under pants to the boys and she'd check constantly that they fitted properly. She used to

dress us up in girls clothes and make us wear them all day. She'd take photographs. Sometimes, it was a competition for the Moffatt gala day in summer. We'd have to wear them all day long when we weren't at school. I think it was known as 'petticoat punishment' when guardians dressed their youngsters like this.

28. I remember one guy, called **MXW**, who battered two of us black and blue. He was attacking another boy, **[REDACTED]** and I dived in to help. **[REDACTED]** was getting a hiding for not doing what he was told.
29. You would get beatings for the least wee thing, for not toeing the line for example. The older boys would beat you up if you didn't do your jobs. You did what they told you to do. Another boy jumped in to fights for me sometimes. We went for walks quite a lot, if you didn't keep up you'd get skelped by the carers. I worked out that if you walked in front of the people who got skelped it wouldn't happen to you. You'd do your best to keep a low profile and to avoid being skelped. There was a guy who worked in the home **[REDACTED]** who made us parade naked for hours for no reason. We just did what we were told to do. He would also wash us in the bath for no reason and wouldn't let us wash ourselves.
30. What Merkland staff considered to be discipline would be considered abuse by most other people. I remember being locked in a cupboard for hours with other boys with no clothes on. It happened quite a lot to us. Whoever was the carer in charge at the time had the power. When Mr **RGE** gave out the punishment it was over and done with quickly. He'd use the strap. He'd tell us to get down, bend over, pants off and he'd get the strap out to use on our bare back side. Other staff dragged out the punishment over hours and you wouldn't know what was coming, and when.
31. Mrs **MXV** would fondle us constantly, all of the boys and I was no different. It was better than being beaten up. You'd have to provide oral sex so you wouldn't get beaten up, and that was it done. **Secondary Institutions - to be published later**
Secondary Institutions - to be published later I can't distinguish between them and whether it was staff, other boys or women. You'd have to touch the older boys where they wanted you to, it was either that or get a kicking.

32. I have a memory of a staff member with a big kitchen knife in the dorm room and screaming at us. I think we were making a noise after lights out. He was ██████ called PXT ██████ and that's how I remember his name.

Reporting of abuse at Merkland

33. I tried reporting the abuse many times, when I was a wee boy, to the social workers who stood in for staff at Merkland. Nothing ever seemed to come out of those conversations. As soon as they left it was back to the same old routine.

Foster care – EYO-EYN ██████ Lockerbie

34. The worst experience was being in foster care with EYO-EYN ██████ at their house at ██████, Lockerbie. I was taken there in a car by a social worker when I was aged twelve years, after five years at Merkland. No-one prepared me for the move, and I was just given a load of new clothes, a jacket and trousers. I stayed with the EYO-EYN ██████ for about nine months.
35. There were five or six other lads there, but I never got to know any of them as I ran away so often, and for days at a time. There was a mix of ages and there were younger boys than me, maybe aged five or six. One was called ██████. The oldest boy had a job somewhere. I ran away a good half dozen times over the nine months. I would break into empty houses in Lockerbie, Annan and Moffatt to stay there and eat their food. I would dig tunnels outside the foster home and make dens so I had somewhere to hide when I ran away. I would steal food. I'd get caught by the police for shop lifting or breaking into houses or vagrancy. I didn't want to go back to the foster home. I'd do things to get caught by the police so they'd pick me up and not take me back to EYO-EYN ██████. I was afraid they'd take me to an approved school, I'd already been in one and didn't want to go back.

36. There was also three girls living at [EYO-EYN]. They had a three-bedroomed council house. There was one bedroom for the boys and one for the girls. The boys had share single beds.
37. We were beaten up at [EYO-EYN]. [EYO-EYN] smacked me on my bare arse. I don't know why. Sometimes, I was hit with a hair brush by Mr [EYO] because his wife had told him what to do. You learn to try to prevent them beating you up or abusing you. I would do mad things. I remember people standing, laughing at me and I'd fly at them or put my hand through glass. It stopped the situation.
38. When I was first there, Mrs [EYN] took me into Lockerbie to the shops to buy socks and underwear and long trousers. I didn't get on with [EYO-EYN] and was always an outsider. I ran away because of what was happening, and because I hated him.
39. There was one really hard girl, called [REDACTED], she was abused by Mr [EYO]. I saw her putting a condom on his penis when I was about twelve years old, I saw them in the living room. The door was open. I think she was about thirteen to fifteen years old. She was under sixteen years of age. [REDACTED] also went to Merkland the second time I was there.
40. The food was ok if I liked it. If I was too fussy it was a problem. We ate in the kitchen together. The boys ate together. [EYO-EYN] ate in front of their TV.
41. The routine was much the same at [EYO-EYN] house. We'd get up for school and I was up and out as quick as I could. It was about twenty miles to the school in Lockerbie. It was my first year at high school. We took the school bus and stayed at school for lunch. The school was a joke and I came out with nothing. We then went back to [EYO-EYN] after school. I gave up on school lunches as we had to queue to get dinner tickets at the start of each week, and I wanted to avoid the queue for tickets on Monday. It meant that you received free school dinners and there was a stigma. I fed myself by being a shop lifter and I was good at it.

42. At weekends the boys had to help Mr EYO with his mobile shop. Two or three of us went with him to sit in the van for the day. There was nothing structured about our weekend activities
43. The defining moment for me in Lockerbie was when I couldn't handle being battered anymore. I was suicidal. There was constant aggression and no cuddles, no love and no guidance. I couldn't handle doing things for them, I had to give them oral sex. All my memories of this are rolled into one image of a hairy, stinking man. It was forty years ago. I just wanted to be somewhere else. I was sent back to Merkland because I ran away so often. I was regarded as a juvenile delinquent.

Merkland Children's Home – second time

44. I went back to Merkland when I was about thirteen years of age for another two or three years. A new guy had come in called Peter Harley. JDW worked there too. Also, there was Mr and Mrs RGD-SPO I can't remember who was SNR, and if one of the men was SNR.
45. The regime had changed and there were some new staff. Harley would prance us about naked. I wasn't putting up with any more abuse as I was a teenager. The older boys would still beat you up. I was moving up the house towards the attic bedrooms where the older boys slept.
46. The routine was much the same. We were in bed for 8pm. I went to Moffatt Academy again. The teachers were bullies and no-one tried to help me with school work. I got nothing from the education system and no academic skills.
47. After school I used to walk up every hill around Moffatt and I've walked them many times. We used to go to Scouts, but I couldn't get any badges as it needed a financial contribution from the home and I assumed they didn't have the money to pay it. I was in the Scouts for two or three years.

48. There was physical abuse. Everybody slapped you. I worked out how not to get slapped about anymore. I stood up to them. I became aggressive and an angry young man, it was perfect training for the army. I wasn't putting up with it any more. When the police returned me back to Merkland after I ran away, sometimes with other boys, I knew I'd get a doing. The staff would grab you out of the police car and pull you out.
49. When social workers came into the home to cover for staff who were sick or on holiday, it was less bad than normal. Looking back, I'd change 95% of what happened to me. I want better for myself. There was no care and no love and no education. They were just in it to fill their bellies and pay their mortgages, and not there for the people. I did speak to a social worker called Ann Robertson the second time I was in Merkland. She'd brought in two boys who'd escaped a domestic situation at home. I did chat to her the one time and she was really nice. I met her a few other times. There was also a Mrs Marriott who stood in for staff. We used to call her Mrs Chariot. We knew they'd be nicer to us than the usual staff and we'd have a better time.

Leaving Merkland

50. I was at Merkland until I was sixteen years old. That was it when I turned sixteen, I was out. Dumfries and Galloway Council stuck me in a half-way place in Dumfries, called the Hope Place. I was by myself. There was no preparation for that day. It was just on the day that I was taken from Merkland into Dumfries, and put in the half-way house.

Life after being in care

51. In the half-way house in Dumfries there was no staff, just a maintenance person who gave you a room and a key. There might have been a social worker. It was run by the council. I wanted to join the army, but couldn't read or write and failed the test. I did an apprenticeship for eighteen months as a butcher in Dumfries. I joined the TA and was in it for a year and a half. It was very physical. There were annual camps and weekends away. I was the best recruit. The Kings Own Scottish Borderers asked me if I wanted to join the battalion and I had to take the army's night classes to start to learn to read and write. Major Walker recommended to the battalion that they took me on. I had to learn quickly. I joined the army at 17 or 18 years of age.
52. Being in care helped me to survive being in the army. I was put in the barracks at Penicuik. I continued to learn to read and write. It was okay in the army. I had duties and there were chores, rules and regimental duties. I got sick of people shouting at me. The time I spent in the TA counted towards my army service and it meant my army service was for nine years, but I was in the regular army for only seven years. I was aged 26 or 27 when I left the army.
53. I'd been stationed in Edinburgh, Fort George in Scotland, USA, Brazil and Belize and Berlin. I ended up in barracks in Colchester and that was where I was when I left. I hung around Colchester for a while. I was homeless. I fell into drugs. If you didn't do them or drink, you didn't fit in. I started using heroin before I left the army. From Colchester I went to Portobello in London and Vauxhall and hung around there for a while. I was in London for about one year.
54. Then I met a guy who was starting up a business in Scotland. He was a climber and was planning a business doing rock scaling. The business was at Kyle of Lochalsh. I moved up there to rock scale for him. It's abseiling the rock faces alongside the road to cover them with netting and mesh. I was there for five years. I was using other drugs too. I was on eight tablets of diconal each day. Then my source of

drugs died from cancer and I was left withdrawing. I went back onto heroin. I ran away from the situation and came to Dumfries.

55. I got a job with Scottish Power putting in powerlines. I went on a construction course to put up poles. I was a raging drug addict, but they kept me on and gave me a job putting up construction poles. I was in the job for one year. I was in my mid-30s. I was on a slippery slope for a few years. In 1996 I decided to come off drugs, but I was doing unexpected things and not behaving rationally. I'd take to the hills with my bag and be away for weeks. I walked the West Highland Way several times. I couldn't sleep because of drug withdrawal, and I was doing my best to get fatigued.
56. In 1996 I had a social worker called Margaret Bruce and she was the best one I ever had. I was allocated to her because of the drugs I was using. I got in trouble with the police for possession and received probation, and met Margaret. She told me she was ashamed of me and how I looked. The social worker told me to get off the drugs, but I wasn't strong enough then. I was feeble then and I'm much stronger now.
57. In 1996 I took to the hills and lived there. I was just in bed-sit land in Dumfries. I had to get away from Dumfries to get away from the source of drugs. I ran away to a village called Lochmaben. I signed up for a college course on environmental conservation. I was sleeping under giant trees. They were talking to me. I started seeing trees in a different way then. I gave guided walks. I got a SVQ level 2 qualification from Barley College. I stayed in a static caravan, and then moved to one nearer to the college. I worked for the Woodland Trust and the Wildlife Trust, but as I don't have a degree I was being held back.
58. I got a CSCS card and did construction work on a site at South Gyle in Edinburgh. I slept in my car as I was homeless. I worked there for about eighteen months and the job ended about eight months ago when I was made redundant. I've been planting trees since then, and removing trees from places where they shouldn't be. I concentrate on planting native trees and I remove the plants that shouldn't be here, like Japanese Knotwood, Rhododendrons and Giant Hogweed. I'm paid just enough

to fill my belly and I stay [REDACTED] in Dumfries. I have benefits to pay the rent and pay off my loans.

59. I needed a passport in the army to travel to the USA, and as I didn't know my date of birth or have a birth certificate, my sergeant picked a date of birth for me of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1959 and this date is shown on my driving licence. It was also written in my passport. When I got my birth certificate, my date of birth was written as [REDACTED] 1959 and it was pure coincidence that the sergeant guessed a date so close to my real date of birth.
60. There is man based in Dumfries called Mark Frankland who wrote a book about the problem with heroin misuse in Dumfries. He wrote about army veterans too. He has supported me and helped me out with food parcels.

Impact

61. The education I had was not great. No one encouraged me to achieve. It's who I am today because of being in care. I create different things to do to keep busy. I have the responsibility to take care of my dogs and for the tree nursery. It distances my mind from the past. I used to use drugs to do that to get me away from it. Now I try to think of more practical ways of dealing with things.
62. I've seen a doctor only once in the last twenty years and he arranged for me to get help from Rob McColm who is a psychological therapist with the NHS. Since the social worker Margaret Bruce got me off drugs in 1996, I've not had any help. We help each other in the veterans community.
63. I had work lined up in Dumfries removing non-native trees and it would pay a squad of four guys to do the work. I thought I had funding for the business from Poppy Scotland for the guys to get their chainsaw certificates, but the funding was pulled at the last minute.

64. I meet up with Rob McColm when he wants to meet me. I'm not sure why I was referred to him. He gave me an understanding of why I do certain things and why I've learned how to survive certain things. I use lavender as a scent to sooth myself with. It's amazing, It can get rid of headaches and is good for all sorts of things. You have to believe in it. Thankfully I don't drink alcohol and I can't communicate with people who are drunk.

Reporting of Abuse

65. I've been to the police to report the abuse numerous times in the last twenty years. I've been to the local police station in Dumfries, and they just send me to social services. Nothing comes of it. I organised a meeting between my old social worker and my new one, so I wouldn't have to go through the same story with the new one.
66. I did some tree planting for a retired psychologist who lives locally, I told him some of my history and he went to the police about it. I then saw the police myself and nothing has come from it. That was about a year ago. They wrote down what I said, these two young female policewomen. They wanted more information from me and I couldn't open up to them. The last time I went to the police was about two or three weeks ago. They took a statement from me again and thanked me for it. I was recommended to go there by Rob McColm. I was hoping he would have told them some of my history so I didn't have to go through the same story again. He hadn't though. They were only interested in the foster placement with EYO-EYN.
67. Someone else that Rob helps was in the same foster home. He went into the army as well. He made a complaint to the authorities and my name was given to the police. The guy gave my name to Rob, and then Rob spoke to me. I know the guy through the veterans charity. I take some of the veterans or their sons out tree planting. I've had a squad of boys helping me and they respect me for it.

Records

68. It was a challenge obtaining my birth certificate as I didn't know my mum's name. I needed it in order to apply for jobs. I asked for the birth certificate at Dumfries and Galloway council offices. I didn't ask them for anything more about my background. I have asked the council about my records, but then decided I don't want to see them as the records are composed by them. My mum's name was on the certificate and she was called [REDACTED], but my name is given as [FCW] [REDACTED]. I don't know why she wasn't able to take care of me. I have no idea what she looked like and have no image of her in my head.
69. I never had a family unit and have no relatives to rely on in life. When I was a kid I was taken on trips to Edinburgh Zoo and I used to try and join in with the families and tag along behind them. I can remember waiting in the inspectors office to be collected and taken back.

Lessons to be Learned

70. I'm glad that the Inquiry has heard my story, and I've waited a long time for the opportunity to tell my story. I've not thought much further forward. Children who have been in care are still leaving school without being able to read or write. You can't prevent it happening to other children in the future.

Other information

71. Because of what has happened to me I haven't got a partner, I haven't got a career and I can't have a sexual relationship. I don't go near the things I'm not good at, and I can't get intimately close to women. Maybe the psychological impact was more then than now.

72. 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.

FCW
[Redacted Signature]

Signed.....

Dated..... 7/6/18