

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PVX

Support person present: No.

1. My name is PVX however I'm known professionally as PVX. My date of birth is 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background / Qualifications

2. I studied arts at Glasgow University and went straight into childcare after I graduated. I had no social work qualifications when I started.
3. I worked at St Mary's Kenmure Secure Unit from 1980 until 1987. I started as a residential care officer and carried out that role until 1983 when I became a team leader. I left the secure unit because I found it so desperate for the children in there. Heroin was rife and the entire population of the unit was badly affected by addiction. There were no services or treatment for them, so it was a fairly hopeless situation.
4. In September 1987, I moved to Neil Street Children's Home in Greenock as SNR SNR Secondary Institutions - to be published later I was looking for something with more order and structure so I applied for the job SNR at Bellshill Children's Home. I moved there in July 1988.
5. In October 1991, I left Bellshill to go to Strathclyde University where I undertook a two year Diploma course in social work.

Bellshill Children's Home

6. Bellshill Children's Home doesn't exist anymore. It was at 1 Scott Place, Bellshill in Lanarkshire. It was in the middle of a housing estate off North Road, which leads out of Bellshill towards Coatbridge. It was right in the middle of the community.
7. I worked in the secure unit and had some hugely positive experiences of working with children, forming positive relationships, giving them confidence, giving them a plan and making progress in all sorts of areas of their lives.
8. When I arrived at Bellshill, I was expecting a similar approach to having planned care for the children, which was bespoke to them and about providing them with a good quality of life.
9. I understood there were children who were growing up in care. I was conversant with Strathclyde Regional Council policy documents, which set out expectations and positive language on the rights of children.
10. In those days, I was motivated personally by wanting to understand the rights and wrongs of residential care. There had been a series of scandals like the Kincora Inquiry in Northern Ireland where systemic and organised abuse had taken place over decades to children in Kincora. We had abuses in Leicestershire, Staffordshire and an accumulation of these revelations about institutional settings where children were being terribly abused.
11. I wanted to make sense of what I had experienced in the secure unit. We had formed positive relationships with the children but when they left all their problems came back. They ended up homeless or in custody, harming someone else or being harmed themselves. I was trying to understand a better way of working.
12. I had rose tinted specs about Strathclyde Regional Council being a progressive authority that had a social strategy for the eighties and a council that was trying to do

something to combat inequality and poverty. I thought we could create something better than what was there.

13. The reality was so different in that it was a system in the throes of massive change that no one acknowledged or was prepared for. The change was that these homes were built for little children. Some of them were prepared for babies and had nurseries in them.
14. Bellshill was a twenty three bedded children's home but by the time I arrived there, it was full of teenagers. These homes had become something they were not designed to be.
15. I started at Bellshill Children's Home on 4 July 1988. I still had aspirations and thought I could make Bellshill Children's Home better.
16. When I went there, I saw a running conflict between staff and the children. That was a daily occurrence.
17. The real heart of the problem was encapsulated the moment I arrived at Bellshill. There were two sixteen year old boys, RFM and another kid, sitting outside the main entrance door drinking Buckfast. This was at 10 o'clock in the morning and it was quite intimidating to have to walk past them. I asked staff if they were residents and was told that they were but that staff had no authority to do anything about them because they were outside the home.
18. On my first weekend there, two young thirteen year old boys from the home, who, in hindsight, were getting bullied in the home and in the local community, turned on all the taps in the upstairs sinks and baths, blocked the drains and tried to flood the place. Why was a small boy from Springburn doing that to the place he was living in? What was he trying to say?

19. When I got to know the home better and understand what was going on, one of the absolute fundamentals was that when a child reached the age of sixteen, they migrated into a unit that was known as the 'Preparation for Independent Living Unit'.
20. In that unit, they were supposed to look after themselves, cook and clean for themselves and had an allowance to spend on food. None of these older children had any hope for the future. They invariably left the home after being told their supervision placement had been terminated. RFM [REDACTED] was put out [REDACTED]. He was from Coatbridge and went from the home to a youth homeless refuge in Airdrie.
21. What I saw was a home that was completely out of control with a staff group ill-equipped for dealing with it and an external management who, although a huge stress for them, had no plan.
22. There were some longstanding members of staff and some of them were kind and caring towards the children. There were also some staff who had an incredibly negative attitude towards them.
23. I remember two elderly female staff members, Maggie and MVN [REDACTED]. They had a set of stock sayings they used. If they said or did something punitive and the kids didn't like it, they would say, "Well, we're not here to be liked" or, "If you liked us, we wouldn't be doing our jobs right". That was their mindset. These were people who themselves had had tough lives and had no insight into their role in the home. Nobody believed it could be any different.
24. I would describe the culture as chaotic, which was symbolised and expressed in the state of the building. In hindsight, when you have someone like Edward Stanton running the place, a person who was later convicted of child abuse and sent to prison, it is no wonder the place was utterly chaotic. For predatory minded people, chaos is what they need because it gives them cover.

25. I tried to come up with a plan that was going to make things better and make it safer. I had some main areas that I wanted to focus on. One was to give the older kids a stake in the place. Give them belief that things could be okay. I wanted to take away the punitive bits of the 'Preparation for Independent Living' and keep the nice bits. We could still look after them but they would be incentivised to do things like go to school or college or get a job and make a fuss of them if they got a standard grade.
26. The second thing I needed were staff that I trusted and there were precious few of them. Claire McClusky became SNR [REDACTED]. She was actually doing her Certificate in Social Services (CSS) qualification. She was great with the kids but also saw the need to change things.
27. SNR [REDACTED] Kevin Murphy, was reliable and I trusted him in that he wouldn't tell me a lie. There were some well-meaning staff and some staff I just didn't trust at all. If I was off for two days, I would come back to discover all sorts of bad things that had happened. There would be accusations against the children, which was a smokescreen for whatever was going on in there.
28. So that was my plan, to have staff that I trusted and some sort of alliance with the older children based on some sense that we valued them and there was a future for them. That ended up working better for a group of teenage girls than it did for the boys. It was hard to get the boys to engage but some of the girls did, such as PJP [REDACTED], RBL [REDACTED], PRI [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We also set about making the place nice. I managed to get the district manager to use other budgets from around the district for us. We spent lots of money and decorated the place.
29. One of the reasons for it being so miserable in the home was to do with what we would now call exploitation. Some of the kids were getting targeted by gang members who lived external to the home but in the immediate vicinity. They would get the kids to commit crime for them for which they would give them things. There were some very intimidating characters involved and the children would never make a complaint to the police, no matter what had happened.

30. I tried to do something about that. I went into the community and challenged these individuals whilst staff watched from the home windows. When they threatened me, I was then able to make a complaint to the police. I did that a few times and then the police were able to investigate and gather evidence. I gave evidence in court a few times. I think this gave us a bit of breathing space and I felt there was more of a sense of safety in the place.
31. As 1989 went on, I did feel we were getting somewhere until there was a fire in the home in the Autumn of 1989. I was called out in the middle of the night and the fire service were there. I don't know if it was malicious or not but it came on top of some interplay that had been happening with people in the locality.

My role at Bellshill Children's Home

32. In 1988, in social work terms, Strathclyde Regional Council was administered in twelve districts. At that time, the district officer for childcare in the Motherwell and Clydesdale district, Bernadette Docherty, approached me for the Bellshill Children's Home job. I actually applied for the job then withdrew. I was unconvinced it was going to be an improvement for me in terms of being able to do something positive with my career.
33. After I had withdrawn from the role, Bernadette Docherty telephoned me at home and persuaded me to reapply. She told me about all the fantastic plans they had to improve the environment and to improve the staff in there.
34. I decided to reapply and was interviewed for the role. The interview panel comprised of Bryce Anderson, who was the district manager in childcare, Sid Graham, who was a deputy director of social work in Strathclyde and I think Bernadette was there.
35. It was a straight forward interview and I remember two of the questions they asked me. Bryce Anderson said that I had been at Neil Street Children's Home and was now applying to Bellshill Children's Home as **SNR** but that I was scarcely a credible

candidate. The other question was how long I intended staying? It was quite an aggressive style of interview.

36. I was working for Strathclyde at the time and would have been provided with references by my previous district officer, Tony Richardson, although I have no idea whether they spoke to him or not.
37. My line manager was Janice Ballantyne, who was the assistant district officer. Janice was based at the Civic Centre in Motherwell. She and I met regularly and we always had an agenda. It was reasonably positive and I started to come up with a plan to improve things at Bellshill. I was seeking support, as in improved budget and a better quality of staff and they were amenable to supporting me.
38. When I arrived on 4 July 1988 and approached the building, I was quite confused because the sight of it was so stark and unbelievably squalid. More than half of the windows were boarded up. When in the home, I saw that the windows to the back of the home were also boarded up. There was a corridor of bedrooms downstairs through which you could see through successive bedrooms because the walls had been smashed and not repaired.
39. I had been told to arrive at 10am, however when I got there, there was no one around except some children milling about. I couldn't find any staff. I walked round the building and eventually found a group of staff in the kitchen along with the OIC, who was Edward Stanton. They were all having this lavish feed, which had been put on for staff and consisted of fried pork belly, fruit scones and cakes.
40. Stanton eventually took me round to his office where he said some things about the running of the home. He also told me that he would be away for the rest of the day and wouldn't be in the following day as he was going to Motherwell's Civic Centre, which was the district's headquarters. He said that it was, "Wrist slapping time" and that he was going for a disciplinary.

41. I had discussed Bellshill with Bernadette Docherty, the district officer and she had told me they were making constructive use of discipline to dismiss unsuitable people from the workforce, so I thought he was implying that someone else was being disciplined, not him.
42. When I came in on the Tuesday, Stanton wasn't there. I was off the Wednesday and Thursday because of the shift rota. When I arrived on the Friday, I was met by Kevin Murphy, who was SNR [REDACTED]. He sat me down in the office and said, "SNR [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED]." He told me that Edward Stanton had been demoted and removed from his post because of his management of the home and was taking up a post in Blantyre.
43. [REDACTED], I [REDACTED] the position of SNR [REDACTED]. I hadn't even been told this by a senior manager but by someone who had been told to pass it onto me.
44. The following years and my experiences at Bellshill were completely formative for me and for everything I've done since then. There was still a huge taboo about sexual abuse and the idea of staff ever being accused of this was problematic. We weren't protecting children well. It was a hostile world that the children were being thrown into.
45. I undertook no training during my time working at Bellshill Children's Home. Up until I began my social work course in 1991, I had no related qualifications.
46. I later found out that Edward Stanton had not been keeping his cash register correctly and was seen as incompetent. There was no curiosity or thought as to what was going on behind this. Why was the place so chaotic? Why was every window smashed? Why were children continually running away?
47. I may have received a letter about taking on the SNR [REDACTED] post. Around a year later they got round to advertising SNR [REDACTED] post. I applied and was interviewed for the position but can't really remember much about that interview process.

Structure and recruitment of Staff

48. Bellshill Children's Home was a twenty three bedded building divided into three living units. These units were all within one building but distinctly separate to each other. The staffing structure was SNR SNR, Claire McClusky and SNR, Kevin Murphy. Claire was a senior house parent when I arrived but was promoted to SNR. Kevin was SNR when I arrived and remained there throughout my time SNR.
49. We needed three staff for each role because we ran a three shift system. We had three senior house parents, one for each house unit. We also had three shifts of residential workers. At night-time, we ran a two shift system with two senior care staff and four other care staff covering the three units. The night staff were permanent nightshift workers.
50. When I arrived at Bellshill, it was chronically understaffed. We always had vacancies and a lot of the positions were filled by temporary members of staff. There was an ever changing cast of characters. People would just arrive and say, "I'm a temp." I wasn't involved in procuring temporary staff.
51. Most of the staff recruitment was done by my manager, Janice Ballantyne. Janice oversaw recruitment for other children's homes as well. I can't really remember the process for recruitment and I'm not sure if Janice was in charge of that or not. At the time, I thought Janice was a qualified social worker but looking back now, I doubt that she was.
52. I remember a temporary staff member called Graham turning up and being told he would be good because he had been in the army. That was the first I had seen or heard of him.
53. I really don't have a good memory of the recruitment process. It wasn't a robust system of due diligence but more of being thankful we had someone for that night's shift. Quite often, if we couldn't find cover for that night, I was there. I ended up doing crazy hours

because staff didn't turn up or they would show up for their first night and then say they weren't coming back. It was a revolving door and we were just glad to get someone to cover.

54. We had permanent staff and temporary staff but I don't recall ever having voluntary staff.
55. I was involved in the recruitment process for more senior roles although I wouldn't have initiated the recruitment, that would have been Janice. The process would have started by advertising the post and receiving applications. There would have been shortlisting and then invites to interview. I'm not sure about the process for obtaining references, I was never part of that. For more senior posts, such as SNR [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] SNR [REDACTED] and senior house parents, the Senior Deputy Director of Strathclyde Council Social Work Department, Ian Gilmour, took part in the interviews.
56. There was never anyone applying with qualifications related to childcare. They mainly came from industry. During the eighties in Lanarkshire, everything seemed to be shutting down. I remember Bernadette Docherty saying to me that I needed to get myself qualified however that didn't happen for a number of years.
57. In terms of disciplining staff, I would have been able to present evidence of misconduct in order to initiate a disciplinary. It wouldn't have been taken forward by me but I could have initiated it. I did have to do that and was involved in removing staff from the home. If someone was a temporary staff member and it was patently obvious they were not suited then I could terminate their contract without having to go through a more formal process.

Training

58. We did have the support of a female psychologist and she put on some training for us. She would try and give us a very basic understanding of child development and relationships between child presentation and their experiences and history of trauma.

59. In my effort to improve the place, I was looking for support from people who were not in residential care. There were two psychologists based at the Kirknowe Day Support Unit in Wishaw who offered us support. Sandy Anderson ran the place. Gus Macintosh ran a centre called the Intermediate Treatment Centre in Viewpark. Sandy and Gus were the managers and not the psychologists. These were staff development opportunities. I was an unqualified person trying to create a training framework, which wasn't exactly a strong foundation for creating a professional framework.
60. SVQ (Scottish Vocational Qualifications) level 3 in childcare was starting to be offered to staff. That was a very basic training level that staff were encouraged to undertake. It was woefully inadequate to the level the staff needed to be at but it was a start. I am fairly sure there was no requirement for staff to have that qualification. Even after the SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) was created in 2001, there was a very gradual roll out of requirements for training for various categories of care staff.
61. Residential care staff were quite far down the line. I think it may have been twenty years after the time I was at Bellshill before there was any requirement for residential care staff to have a qualification.

Supervision / appraisal / evaluation

62. There was no system of appraisal or performance review. These things didn't exist anywhere, top to bottom. It wasn't part of the culture in local Government at the time.
63. I did supervise SNR [REDACTED] and SNR [REDACTED]. I may also have supervised the senior houseparents but the time available to us was very limited. We had a three shift system and there was only one hour per week where we crossed over. I did have scheduled meetings with SNR [REDACTED] and SNR [REDACTED]. We also met together to discuss things about the running of the home.

Policy

64. There were a lot of Strathclyde Regional Council Standard Operating Procedures. These procedures applied to Bellshill Children's Home and were included in folders on shelves at the headquarters. I don't know if staff would have been aware of any of these procedures and I don't remember specifically talking to staff about them. My engagement with staff was to try and set expectations about how they should manage the children. That was not something you could take for granted and I'm not sure the standard operating procedures would have conveyed the message I was wanting them to hear.
65. There was never a policy on expecting staff to be qualified. The level of education amongst the staff was really poor in post industrial Lanarkshire. A lot of the staff who had worked in the steel works or in the steel works canteen or similar, ended up in these types of jobs. No one saw a problem with that because they were only looking after children. However, they were looking after children with all sorts of complex needs and there was precious little external support to the home. I was educated at least and had a framework for understanding these things.
66. I don't know what complaint procedure was in place in the late eighties, early nineties. I'm sure there was some form of complaint procedure in the regional council but how visible it was to me or to anyone else, I don't know. Usually the framework or procedure within which a complaint was conducted, would have been the disciplinary procedures. There were fact finding investigations into allegations, which could have been anything from stealing the petty cash to assaulting children.
67. I was never involved in drafting policy whilst working at Bellshill.
68. I later became a [REDACTED] for residential childcare in Glasgow and was responsible for writing a whole set of procedures and codes of conduct for residential care staff. These codes of conduct became the codes of conduct for the SSSC when it was set up in 2001. I remember working with directors in social work in Scotland, Bernadette Docherty was one by that time. Bernadette and I were both coloured by

our experiences of the extraordinary deficit in understanding amongst residential staff and managers of what was and wasn't okay, what their responsibilities were, the blurring of boundaries and the lack of professionalism.

69. The code of conduct I drew up was the proceduralising of basic professional expectations such as, you don't sell things to children, you don't take them to the pub with you and you don't take them to your home.

Strategic Planning

70. I was not involved in any strategic planning whilst at Bellshill, however there was a ground swell of understanding of how urgent the need was for systemic change. It is extraordinary, and I can't imagine it happening these days, that people would form an organisation to campaign against their own employer, but that was what we did
71. Along with other people active in social work at that time, we formed a campaigning organisation called the 'Scottish Association for Youth Care and Justice' explicitly to improve the quality of care for children in care in Scotland because of the appalling state of it. The then director of social work, Fred Edwards, was visible in forums discussing how fantastic the plans were in Strathclyde. There was something that emerged, which was that they initiated a programme of redesign of the residential care system.
72. When I went to Bellshill, it hadn't started, but it started to unfold maybe in the early nineties. It involved reducing the size of the units and improvements to the staffing ratios. There was more of a pathway for qualifications, certainly for senior staff. So it did start to change. It wasn't just at Bellshill, everyone could see that every twenty three bedded unit across the region was in a state of chaos. They were designed for something different and were inadequate for what they were being used for.

Children

73. There were two main routes for children to be placed in residential homes and they overlapped. One was under a provision in the Social Work (Scotland) Act, which was known as a voluntary placement where parents agreed that their child should come into care. The other route was through a decision by a Children's Panel to make a compulsory supervision order under Section 441B. Those were the two main routes, however what would typically happen was there would be a voluntary admission, then there would be a Children's Hearing, which would lead to a supervision order.
74. Some admissions occurred during the night and under a child protection order. It was called a place of safety order before the Children (Scotland) Act came in. The order would have been issued by a Justice of the Peace following an incident that placed a child at risk and the out-of-hours social work services or standby staff would intervene and remove a child from the dangerous situation. On arriving at work in the morning, I could find children who had been admitted overnight. Social work managed that in accordance with the legal requirements of the time. There were specific time limits in place for a child protection order to be brought before a Children's Hearing. Voluntary care was much more open ended.
75. RIC (Reception into Care) procedures specified dates for reviewing a child's care and care planning. That ran in parallel with annual reviews at Children's Hearings. That would have been adhered to at Bellshill.
76. There were twenty three children in Bellshill, divided across three house units. This meant we had eight, eight and seven children in each unit.

Medical

77. Children would usually undergo a medical before arriving at Bellshill. They would all have their own GP. What was poorly understood at that time, was the additional health needs of children in care. This was only addressed properly in the 1990's when dedicated mental health and primary care teams were set up in Glasgow and

elsewhere. These were specifically for the health needs of looked after children. These were looked after children who were moving from house to house, children's home to children's home and their health needs could easily be lost within that.

78. There was a huge variation on how long a child would stay at Bellshill. Some were only there for a few weeks, which would be the duration of their place of safety order. There were children who lived there for years. In those days, and it's still the case today, some children grow up in care and never achieve a permanent placement either with their birth family or with an adoptive family. They spend their entire childhood not knowing where they will be spending their next Christmas.
79. Bellshill was generally full or over capacity with both male and female residents. I remember there being a sibling group of three young children when I started there. Apart from those children, I can't remember any resident child being under the age of twelve. The preponderance of it would be fourteen to eighteen year olds.
80. The staffing assumption would be two members of staff in each of the house units during the day and evenings. In addition, there would be a senior houseparent on along with me or one of SNR [REDACTED]. That would equate to eight or nine staff members in the home at anyone time. In practice, because of sickness and the recruitment issues we had, there were often only four members of staff on duty.

Sleeping arrangements

81. Girls and boys were not segregated in the units although each child had their own bedroom. When I first arrived, the place was littered with broken furniture. That improved when I introduced a policy of removing anything that was broken. Beds or other furnishings weren't to be left or repaired the following week, they were to be removed and new items purchased. We also allowed the children to choose their own furniture, which led to them starting to look after things better.

Bathing facilities

82. There were one or two shared bathrooms for each of the house units. Boys and girls were free to take a bath as and when they wished. They could lock the bathroom door and have privacy whilst bathing. I don't remember there being any showering facilities. There were toilets, which were separate to the bathrooms.
83. These children's homes were built all over Strathclyde. They had a standard set up with shared bathroom facilities for each of the house units.

Food

84. When I arrived at Bellshill, there was an old fashioned but perfectly adequate menu for the children. It was similar to a school dinner menu with soup, a main course and a pudding.
85. Life was so chaotic that mealtimes were stressful. Children would throw food about and staff would shout at them. The house units all had their own kitchens however there was a central kitchen where food was made in bulk. In the house units, there was also food in the cupboards, which were locked. I remember asking why the cupboards were locked and being told the children would eat the food if they were left unlocked, which presumably was why the food was there.
86. The food that was being offered and what was being experienced by the children may well have been two different things. When I arrived at Bellshill, the staff were fed the best food and they made sure they never ate with the children, which is disgraceful.
87. I wanted to see staff and children sitting down and eating together at the table, which is something I did for the entire time I was there. I wanted to create a sense that mealtimes were good times with good food. It was hard to disentangle the emotional poverty of the environment and what it was like to eat there.

88. We had a good cook when I first arrived however she was so aligned with Edward Stanton that she left after he did. We had another couple of cooks who were terrible and they were dismissed.
89. I couldn't say what the staff's attitude was towards the children's eating habits. Some would have been kind and others not. I focussed my attention on the older teenagers who were preparing for their independence. There was an overly punitive attitude towards them, given that they were expected to buy and cook their own food from the allowance they were given. They were sixteen year olds with all sorts of issues and they would often just spend their money on drink and drugs. If they did, the punitive attitude of staff was to have them live off bread and milk for the rest of the week, the thinking being that it was the only way they were going to learn. I put a stop to that but it was what happened prior to me being there.

Schooling

90. We managed to get most of the children to go to school and some to do exams, which hadn't been happening before. When I first arrived, during school time, the house was full of children.
91. The staff profoundly disagreed with much of what I started to do. I would take our minibus and drop the kids off at school, which many thought I shouldn't have been doing.
92. The default was that children would attend their own school. We did have primary aged children from the local area but most of the children were at secondary school. Some children were at social work run day care education or other kinds of special education provision. In practice, many of the children had attendance problems and some had been excluded from school.

Leisure

93. There were books and games within the sitting rooms but children didn't use these rooms. The rooms were vast with standard issue furniture, sofas that weren't comfortable to sit on, floors that were rock hard with carpets that could withstand an oil spill. They were so unhomely. We actually turned one of the bedrooms into a living room. We found that children would pile into a room that was a bit too small for them. A few would lie on the floor and four would squeeze onto the couch. They found this more comfortable and cosy.
94. The design of the place was not child friendly. The whole environment, even with the investment we put into it, was profoundly unsuitable.

Trips / holidays

95. When I started at Bellshill, there were no trips, although some of the staff had tried to arrange trips to the local swimming pool and cinema. Some wanted to set up a football team and plan things so the children had something to look forward to. Other staff didn't see that as their responsibility. I'd come from a secure unit where we kept children content and emotionally healthy by introducing safe routines with challenging and interesting things for them to take part in and achieve in.
96. I put a lot of effort into this. Along with some of the children, I learned to windsurf. I organised canoeing but it was all a huge personal effort. There were staff who were used to counting babies socks who were now having to deal with unruly teenagers who they hated the sight of. The idea that they now had responsibility of thinking how they were going to spend the evening with these kids was not how they saw their role. These people didn't have the motivation nor the interest in getting the children to spend more time with them.
97. If the children were going out during the evening, we wanted to know where they were going, who they were going with and a reasonable time they would be coming back.

With the benefit of hindsight, these children were so distressed, they were going out and taking drink and drugs, which was their way of getting through their life.

98. There had been holidays to places like Haggerston Castle. The children were only there for three days at a time because the council couldn't afford the staff overtime. These were Butlin type places with caravans and where the children could go into the leisure centre. I tried to do something a bit different. I organised holidays where we would take a group of them camping in France for two weeks. I first did that in 1990 when I was able to get the funds because Glasgow was the European City of Culture and there was money floating about.
99. The holiday had mixed results. The girls took to it well and really enjoyed it. The boys couldn't cope with it and to be honest, some of the staff couldn't cope with it either.
100. There may have been trips where the children went camping with members of staff. My attitude would have been that doing something with them was better than doing nothing. But thinking back now and to the staff members involved, I'm not sure whether I should have trusted them to take children away. This would have been small groups, two staff with two children.
101. Strathclyde had outdoor centres where children could go canoeing. I can't really remember but I would be surprised if we didn't do things like that.
102. There were occasions where a staff member would be out of the home with an individual child. That could be taking them to school, to a Children's Panel, a doctor's appointment or home to see their parents. I would think there were probably times where staff members would take a child for lunch or dinner. Perhaps for a child's birthday. I can't remember there being any sense that a member of staff should not be alone with a child, although that wouldn't be my view now.
103. I don't remember any rules against a staff member taking a child to his or her home. I would never have done that and would have regarded it as a boundary issue. I believe

I would have challenged that but I didn't have a set of rules back then. We had staff that would have thought nothing of taking the children home to meet their own children.

104. When I wrote a code of conduct, seven or eight years later (1998 - 1999), I was responsible for establishing a set of policies and guidance for how we manage residential childcare. The general context was to get us out of running these institutions and have a much greater emphasis on foster care and on early years support. To the extent we had residential institutions, they were much smaller, more homely, with a better trained workforce and with more safeguards in place. They made the professional boundaries that were required to be adhered to more explicit and I included the issue of taking children to staff members homes.
105. I think there was a consensus that emerged across the system that we needed to do more about regulating social work and residential childcare, which led to the Scottish Executive setting up the SSSC. Up until that point, none of the social services were regulated and when they were, childcare was last to get the focus.
106. I don't think children should have been in institutions like Bellshill in the first place. The fact that you have to create an elaborate system of protections against abuse, is testament to how inadequate it is as a system.
107. Where it has gone so seriously wrong that a child's birth parents can't keep them safe, the child should be with another family where we don't have to have rules as to whether or not they can go out on their own with a child because it's a context of love, care and commitment. That's what children need.

External monitoring / visitors

108. Regional councillors came to visit us. These were the elected members who were ultimately responsible for the children and their care. These days, we would say they were 'corporate parents'. They would visit and I would show them round and say the place was a disgrace and that we needed investment. They would say things like,

"They don't deserve any better." One person who said that was Charles Heberton. He was a senior councillor and a very politically influential figure and that was his attitude.

109. There was a distinct duality about peoples attitude to children in care. There were phrases used in policy discourse at the time, such as, 'troubled and troublesome' and, 'rights and responsibilities'. These were weasel phrases, which actually meant it was the children's fault. Children lived in Bellshill Children's Home when it was unbelievably squalid. It was a corporate disgrace that it had been allowed to happen.
110. The gatekeeper for any contact with psychiatrists or psychologists would have been social workers. Residential care staff may have advocated for that access but the person who was the case holder was the social worker.
111. Some social workers made themselves more available than others and you could see they were more involved and interested in their children. Some children had names for social workers, like Santa Claus, implying they only saw them once a year.

Reviewing care

112. There were procedures in place for reviewing children's care. A review meeting would usually take place every six months. We used a meeting room in the home. The child would arrive first along with their parent if attending. Their key worker, who would be a member of staff, would also attend. I would then follow them in. Their social worker would be next and around fifteen minutes before the meeting was due to start, the area manager would arrive. We would quickly go through the business and then the area manager would leave. It was a review but nothing really happened or changed during it.
113. In terms of children leaving the home, I did manage to get some change in that we made it possible for them to stay longer. Children who had faced some of the adversities these children had faced, needed more time. Once they did leave the home, it was down to their social worker to manage them.

114. These children were being asked to go and live independently, although there were some supported accommodation options. Some children would return to their families. When I went there at first, there was a recurring pattern of children being removed from the home and placed in temporary accommodation by their social worker.
115. Some children got their own tenancy. That was why I later set up a serviced based in flats where the young people could live but we would be there to look after them and no one was going to put them out.

Family contact

116. Family contact depended on the individual child, their care plan and circumstances. If contact was part of their plan and could be informal contact, then we would facilitate that. When Edward Stanton left his flat, we used it for family contact. If family contact was formal, then social workers would have to arrange and facilitate that.

Chores / work

117. Chores would have related to the older children and was more about looking after themselves within the preparation for independent living unit. We had cooks and cleaners, so the children weren't expected to wash floors or do their own laundry or anything like that.

Living arrangements

118. When I arrived at Bellshill, the only person living on the grounds was Edward Stanton. He continued to live there for a period of time after he was removed from Bellshill. The flat he lived in was attached to the end of the main building. There was external access to the flat but also access to the children's home from within the flat.
119. I don't know if Stanton entered the home directly from his flat during the time I was **SNR** or if children visited him there during that time. Within the report from 'Operation Sunflower', which was the joint police and social work investigation into Edward

Stanton, it states that children were visiting Stanton's flat. I don't know if that was after the time he worked at Bellshill or not. I'm not sure whether we could have locked the access between his flat and the children's home. I don't remember any discussion about that at the time.

120. All other staff lived locally. There had originally been staff sleeping quarters within each house unit but these had merged into children's accommodation by the time I started there. Any nightshift staff were paid to be awake during the night, so there wasn't a requirement for staff sleeping accommodation.

Discipline and punishment

121. Staff routinely docked children's pocket money. I stopped that because I didn't believe the issues within the home were to do with not having a strong enough sanctions policy. It was much more to do with children feeling safe and cared for. What was actually needed was for positive behaviour to be rewarded.
122. The reason the windows were all broken when I arrived at Bellshill was because the children kept breaking them. The response to them breaking the windows was to say, "That's your pocket money docked." There was a large group of kids, according to that system, who would not be receiving pocket money for years. It was just futile.
123. There was a constant tension, philosophically speaking, between educated professional people about the balance between care and control. People were confused about that and found it difficult to accept that children don't respond to punishment. They respond to reinforcement of positive behaviour. When you have large groups of children who have been traumatised in their past and have behavioural difficulties, they are acting out their distress. Sanctions are one of the lower order issues that you need to think about.
124. We did have serious behavioural issues and children did smash up the home. We would try to deal with it by getting all the children together in a meeting and talk about it. We would try and come to an agreement collectively to ensure it didn't happen again

and tried to make everyone feel safe. I stopped the debates about what punishments staff could issue.

125. There was no withdrawing home leave or family contact. In children's homes, family contact was governed through the care management process and residential care workers couldn't interfere with an arrangement agreed as part of a care plan, which was overseen by social workers.
126. We never used segregation as a punishment nor did we involve the older children in any discipline or punishment towards the younger ones.
127. Every sanction used at Bellshill was governed by regional policy. The report, which set out the sanction policy, was called, 'Room to Grow'. It was a fairly woolly report and was indecisive in what it said about punishment. I remember it said we couldn't use canes. I don't know if the staff were aware of this regional policy or how the policy was relayed to them. There was no physical punishment, that would have been a criminal offence.
128. I don't know if there was a logbook to record any punishment or sanction given to a child. I certainly didn't promote sanctions and resisted it when staff wanted to impose them. I felt they were meaningless. Preventing a child from playing football or from going to the swimming pool was completely self-defeating. They would go out anyway and possibly have access to drink or drugs. You have to think through the consequences of using these measures, the well-being of the child and the atmosphere that prevailed as a consequence of the measures.
129. We had to try and create a sense of calm and ease. These children had so little in their lives. If you tried to reach into some privilege, you're just impoverishing their lives even more. The way to get a contented bedtime was to take the children out and give them a fulfilling activity.
130. I know that many of my colleagues had more harsh and punitive personal views. At that time, it had only been six or seven years since teachers had stopped beating

children in class and a majority of parents thought teachers should be allowed to beat children. It was a contested area and language was contested around it. I know that my attitude to it was to try and create an atmosphere that promoted and rewarded positive behaviour, that created feedback loops of positivity. I could see no positive case for having an elaborate system of punishments and sanctions.

131. I tried to start by asking the children where they were and where they were going? What were the important relationships in their lives? Did they have any aspirations and if so, could we take steps towards them? Could we reward them for taking these steps and could we give positive feedback and praise?

Restraint

132. I don't think restraint was a feature of life at Bellshill. Although it was often chaotic, at times, things were calm. Distressed children regulated themselves by walking out of the home. Restraint was a feature of life in the secure unit when I worked there, but I can't remember restraint ever being used at Bellshill. There was no training for restraint, that came much later in 1995 or there about.

Concerns about the institution

133. There was no system of inspection in place when I was at Bellshill. I'm not aware of any body that was responsible for scrutiny at that time. There was an advocacy organisation responsible for children in care called, 'Who Cares? Scotland'. I encouraged their presence and availability to our children. Any issues they raised tended to be personal representations on behalf of children. Things like, children complaining that they hadn't had any new clothes for a while.
134. I did try to get young people in the home to participate as advocates but 'Who Cares' wasn't a combative advocate organisation at that time.

Trusted adult/confidante

135. The children did have key workers at Bellshill. The unit senior would decide which staff member would be paired with the child. That worked well but key workers were still only there for a fraction of the child's time there.
136. Some key workers took the role seriously and put time and effort into it. To others, it was just part of the duties assigned to them and they did what was required and filled out the necessary reports.
137. 'Who Cares Scotland' would be a trusted outside organisation that the children could go to. They had a couple of representatives who often came into the home so the children were aware of them. There was also an expectation that their social worker was a person they could go to separate from the unit staff. How that felt to the children in reality, I don't know.

Abuse

138. The New Year over 1988 into 1989 was a difficult time in the home. Children had been given their pocket money and had gone out and bought lots of alcohol and there ended up being a disturbance in the home.
139. I thought we needed to come up with a plan to make Christmas and New Year 1989 into 1990 better and more homely for the children, with no alcohol. Hogmanay that year was on a Sunday which meant, given the licensing laws at the time, they couldn't buy alcohol on a Sunday. They were supposed to be getting their pocket money on the Saturday however I decided they wouldn't get it until New Years Day.
140. We organised a party to take place in the house over Hogmanay. We had steak pie and had lots of Scottish themed things going on along with a disco. Myself and a number of staff members stayed in the home all night.

141. Around 3 am on New Years Day, it became apparent that PJP, one of the girls in the independent living unit, had locked herself in her room and wouldn't come out. When she eventually did come out, she had been drinking alcohol in her room. She was very drunk and walked out the home to go up to her family home in Muirhill.
142. It was perplexing to me because PJP was the star girl in the home and this wasn't like her. Around an hour after she left, I received a phone call from her mother asking me to collect PJP from the family home. I knew PJP was in care because of conflict between her and her father.
143. I went up there and actually had to pull PJP's father off her. PJP then ran away and I eventually collected her from Coatbridge Police Station later that day. When I got her back to the home, she wouldn't speak, come out her room or go to school. That lasted for three weeks.
144. PJP eventually asked to speak to me and disclosed that she had been sexually assaulted by Edward Docherty, who was a temporary staff member at the time. PJP said that she had told Docherty she would disclose what he was doing to her if he didn't buy her alcohol. That was why she had had access to alcohol over the New Year period.
145. Young people in the preparation for independent living unit were given a cash allowance to spend on their groceries. What Docherty was doing was buying PJP her groceries on his own credit card so he could keep her cash. He was bribing her by buying her extra groceries and she had made him buy her alcohol that night. It was all part of PJP trying to take control of what was a dreadful situation.
146. I informed PJP's social worker. The district officer for childcare, Bernadette Docherty and the principal officer for childcare in the district also became involved. They said they would deal with PJP. Bernadette Docherty later told me that they had decided it would be more distressing for PJP to have to go to the police with this so they dissuaded her from doing so. She said PJP did not want to go to the police and they did not feel they should force her.

147. I felt bad about that decision but I was so far down the food chain in terms of professional social work decision making, I didn't think I had any other option at the time. I would have been entering a whistleblowing space. I'm sure I would have expressed my views on their decision to Bernadette but it would have had no weight with her.
148. I was desperately trying to keep PJP together. I didn't feel we could divulge her disclosure to the rest of the staff other than Claire McClusky, SNR and Helen a senior houseparent. I focussed on trying to provide her with as much support as I could and Claire spent a lot of time with her. My thinking was so rudimentary when I look back, I thought Claire was a positive female role model and someone from the community who PJP could relate to.
149. I'm not sure if any external professionals became involved with PJP after this. There was a support unit at Wishaw but I don't remember the name of the unit. I think they may have had some involvement with her however I don't think PJP was particularly impressed by them.
150. One of the distressing things about it was her behaviour and presentation changed. There was always a war party amongst the staff who wanted her removed from the home. I just didn't trust the staff enough to tell them what had happened. I'm not even sure that they would have been accepting that there had been abuse involved.
151. Edward Docherty was on a temporary contract and I think he was off sick at the time PJP disclosed to me. He didn't come back into the home until his temporary contract expired. He then came in to have it renewed however Heather told him it was not being renewed and that he had to leave. That happened when I was off work. To my knowledge, the senior management did not speak to Docherty about the disclosure PJP had made against him.
152. What I also consider abusive from my time at Bellshill was seeing the children being put out of the home when they reached a certain age. That was a contravention of

their children's rights and their human rights. It was an obligation under law to make the welfare of children paramount.

153. There was a practice, which was to take a child to a children's hearing just short of their sixteenth birthday. Their supervision order would be terminated, which would remove any legal obligation for them beyond their sixteenth birthday.
154. They would then be treated as an adult. Police would save up offence referrals until the supervision requirement was terminated, then send the referrals onto the Procurator Fiscal. Someone once said that up to the age of sixteen, Scotland looked very civilised compared to the rest of the world, but post sixteen, we locked up so many children. We compared with Turkey in that respect, which had a military dictatorship. It really was a cliff edge for children. That was systemic throughout the whole system, not just in Bellshill.
155. I would consider the squalor of the conditions to be abusive, the inadequacy of the staff, lack of qualifications, lack of safeguards meant that none of us, me included, couldn't be sure these children were safe. That in itself is inexcusable.
156. I believe children could have been abused within Bellshill without me being aware of it. That is the nature of abuse. Abuse of power where people have no voice. It's hidden and people exploit their power and intimidate children who don't think they will be believed and will be punished for saying it. Abusers are very sophisticated in the way they behave in order to cover their tracks.
157. With the benefit of hindsight, I am absolutely clear that police should have been informed of PJP's disclosure about Edward Docherty and that a joint investigative interview should have been held. I knew nothing of these sorts of things at that time.
158. This was the attitude in Strathclyde Regional Council childcare and it persisted for many years. When I became a [REDACTED] for Glasgow City Council in 1996, having been marked by these experiences, I remember talking about how our child protection procedure had to cover abuse within childcare settings.

159. There was very strong pushback from people at that time who believed this wasn't child abuse that should be covered by our procedures, which were about familial abuse. Their argument was that we didn't have a procedure for someone being attacked in the street, which was wrong. No one would make such an argument nowadays.
160. There was a definition of abuse written within Strathclyde Regional Procedures but there was no framework of training for staff generally in child protection or child abuse procedures. The only people who would have received that training were social workers. There was no interagency framework or anything like that.

Reporting of complaints / concerns

161. PJP's disclosure to me was the only disclosure or complaint I received at Bellshill. After PJP's disclosure, I rethought a lot of things. It shattered my confidence about what was going on in the home and I started to look at patterns of behaviour between staff and children, but there were no other disclosures. I don't remember any other staff member coming to me with a complaint or disclosure made by a child.

Child Protection

162. In terms of child protection, there was a small blue book in Strathclyde Regional Council but nothing in it about secondary settings, which Bellshill Children's Home was classed as at that time.
163. I never spoke to staff about what to do if a child made a disclosure to them. No one spoke to me about that either. The small blue book, as I remember it, didn't mention residential childcare. It was called 'child abuse procedures' and was the first book on early child protection. Residential care child abuse was not covered in the book because people did not see that as familial abuse.

164. I don't think there was anyone in the social work department of the regional council who could have pointed to a procedure about what to do if a child made a disclosure about a member of staff abusing them.
165. Disclosures of sexual abuse were covered in the blue book but there was confusion in that it was framed as how to deal with 'allegations' of sexual abuse, which was a much more loaded word than 'disclosure' suggesting it may have been made up. If an allegation had been made to a member of staff, I believe they would have known to report it. I'm sure senior managers would have talked about that in respect of disciplinary procedures but I don't know if that message would have necessarily been conveyed to staff. There was no framework, policy or procedure that explicitly addressed it as far as I can remember. I don't know if there was anything in the book about reporting such matters to the police.

Record Keeping

166. There was a daily log where any significant preceding comings and goings were recorded. Who went out, who came in, who had their visit, any significant incidents or police involvement. Any of these things would be recorded.
167. There would be a handover of staff in the morning, then again at 2.30pm, then again at 10pm and entries in the log books would be discussed.
168. We also had access to the children's social background reports, which were provided at Children Hearings. We would also have access to the decisions of the Hearings. Six monthly review reports were the responsibility of the social worker to maintain and keep.

Allegations of abuse

169. I was the subject of an allegation of abuse. A boy from Bellshill Children's Home made an allegation against me a few years back. It was completely fabricated and false and there was no corroboration whatsoever. I was interviewed by police and that was the

end of the matter. The boy alleged that I had taken him to a sauna and masturbated over him. His allegation was riddled with falsehoods. He spoke about going to my family home and meeting my wife. I wasn't married at the time. He said I lived in the West End of Glasgow, a place I had never lived.

170. It was incredibly upsetting and shocked me as I didn't think people made false allegations like that. When I was at Bellshill, I thought he was a nice young lad but as an adult he said this about me. What did that mean about what had gone on in his life? I felt there was a potential for something like that to have happened to him. Elements of his story in his police statement suggested to me that he had been in a place like that. I certainly haven't. It just seemed to be something he was conversant with. I have no idea what direction his life has gone in or the state of his mental health. His name is R.J.L.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

171. I was never involved in any investigation into allegations of abuse whilst at Bellshill. That would have happen elsewhere and I would have had no part in that.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

172. I was never involved in any civil claims made against Bellshill.

Police investigations / criminal proceedings

173. The allegation that R.J.L. made against me was investigated by the police but went nowhere.
174. The allegation of child abuse against Edward Docherty was investigated by police after the girls reported it as adults. Docherty ended up being convicted in court.
175. In the mid 1990's, it transpired that Edward Stanton, the former OIC at Bellshill, had been regularly visiting friends in a residential school in the North West of England.

After numerous disclosures were made by the children in the North West of England Home, Stanton was identified as having been abusing children there along with a ring of other people. That led to a joint investigation between police and social work into his time in Scotland, which was named 'Operation Sunflower'. This uncovered that he had abused children in Bellshill. I was interviewed by the investigating team as I had worked at Bellshill whilst he was there.

176. A former staff member at Bellshill, **RBP**, was convicted of sexual assaults on boys within Bellshill.
177. Another former staff member at Bellshill, John Blair, stood trial for the rape of **RBM**, a former resident at Bellshill but he was acquitted.
178. I know about these things because I am in contact with **PJP** from time to time and she told me about them.

Other staff working at Bellshill Children's Home

RFG

179. **RFG** came to work at Bellshill during my time there. He came as a temporary member of staff but may have become a permanent member of staff. I was uneasy about **RFG**. I didn't know much about him but his presentation was odd. He was always on the verge of petulance and was a fussy and prickly character.
180. He was capable of good relationships with the children, I just wasn't sure what his mind set was. He was one of the members of staff I didn't trust. I can't remember if he was still there when I left.
181. I remember him getting very uptight about things. He was prone to getting into power struggles with the children and trying to assert himself as being correct. He was always on the edge of escalating something.

182. I don't remember him disciplining children or seeing or hearing about him abusing children.

Edward Stanton

183. When I met Edwards Stanton on my first day, he was unprepossessing and didn't inspire confidence in any way. I never got time to adjust myself to it because he wasn't there after my first day. I never saw him interact with any of the children during that one day I was with him.

John Blair

184. John Blair arrived as a temporary member of staff during my time at Bellshill although I think he became a permanent member of staff. I remember he had an enormous appetite for overtime and was nicknamed, 'doubler' because he was always working double shifts. I think he was dismissed from the service sometime after I left. I believe this was due to him having a relationship with a former resident.
185. I always felt uneasy about him working double shifts but it meant I didn't have to do it and that I could go home and see my family. He seemed a simple fellow with no boundaries and he had a transactional relationship with the children. There didn't seem to be much friction around him, which in the absence of anything else, was something I was grateful for.
186. I always had boundary concerns about him. He was from the local area and his children were at school with some of the children from the home. He seemed to have rivalries that were nothing to do with his job in the home. I didn't ever see or hear of him disciplining or abusing children at Bellshill. The children seemed to be comfortable enough with him.

Edward Docherty

187. It's difficult to speak about what I thought about Edward Docherty at the time because it's so coloured by what I now know about him. Whilst giving evidence for the prosecution at his trial, the defence agent cross-examined me. They produced a ten year old yellowed piece of paper that had my handwriting on it. It was a reference I had written for him to do his SVQ.
188. The defence lawyer read out a paragraph from the reference that said innocuously positive things about him. As he read it out, I actually remembered writing the reference and that it had been tricky to write because there had been times where Docherty had been verbally aggressive towards social workers. There had also been an incident at the department of finance over in Hamilton where he had been abusive towards staff.
189. I asked the defence lawyer to read the paragraph after the one he had read out where I described elements of his behaviour that I had had to address. So I know I had those concerns about him because I wrote them down at the time. What I also know, is I didn't do more than that and he went on to abuse PJP and be predatory towards other girls.
190. He didn't present as aggressive on a day-to-day basis and had adopted quite a calm persona although evidence in court showed he had used sexual violence toward these girls.
191. He was an older man, a former steel worker and was a fish out of water working in childcare. I feel I should have had reason to suspect Edward Docherty was up to no good.
- RBP
192. RBP was working at Bellshill when I arrived and was there when I left. He was a strange character and I never really understood why he was working in childcare. I

don't think he understood the professional nature of what it was he was supposed to be doing. He was an isolated individual outwith his job.

193. I remember he took a group of children on an outing to a show at the Scottish Exhibition Centre. He returned to the home having bought himself an African Green Parrot for £450, which was a small fortune back then. As far as I could see, he had only bought the parrot to show off to the children and give them something to talk about.
194. He was another one of the staff who was always there. He wouldn't go home, which was a worry for me. The children always seemed to be okay around him. I never saw or heard of him disciplining or abusing any children at Bellshill.

MVN

195. I think somewhere in MVN there was a vestige of a nice person trying to get out but it never got there. She was a houseparent but was always so sour. She thought that if the children liked her she wasn't doing her job right. She didn't think she was there to be liked. I wouldn't say she was well-liked by the children, although some of them did have a grudging respect for her because she was always the same.
196. My only concern was just her general attitude, not that there was anything else going on. She complained about the children often but I didn't see or hear of her disciplining or abusing any of them.

PWR

197. PWR was a nightshift senior and she was a 'chancer'. In addition to working nightshift at the home, she ran a day nursery. She was always off sick and there was a clear conflict of interest there. She was a very confident person who would take command of any situation when she was there. I don't remember anyone ever complaining about her. I think she was skilful enough to navigate her way through things. I didn't see or hear of her disciplining or abusing the children.

KTJ

198. KTJ was a social worker for [REDACTED], who was a resident at Bellshill. KTJ ran external groups for children in care. I remember one time he completely lost his composure. [REDACTED] had given him the runaround during one of his groups. KTJ came down to the children's home demanding that I punish him for it. I told him that he had to manage his groups and that he couldn't expect me to punish [REDACTED] for something he had done during one of his groups. He was so furious with me. That incident was quite shocking because I expected social workers to be more sophisticated than that. He was otherwise well regarded as a social worker and the children seemed to like him.
199. I didn't see much of KTJ and I didn't see nor hear of him disciplining or abusing children.

Extract from Part D Response (N.L.C.001.0012.0117 - Page 133)

200. The following is an extract concerning Bellshill Children's Home which has been read over to me as follows; *"It appears from the review of individual case records and documents relating to the establishment that there were clear issues around the later 1980's and early 1990's in relation to inappropriate boundaries between certain members of staff and young people. This includes suggestions that at least one staff member took young people to his home and some staff members took young people out/ met them in a social context. It is alleged that alcohol was available at certain times. There were a range of allegations and counter allegations between staff members and apparent tensions amongst them. This included allegations of inappropriate relationships between staff and certain young people. None of the allegations were ever substantiated. The staff members concerned with the allegations and counter allegations were RBP [REDACTED], RFG [REDACTED], PVX [REDACTED] and John Blair."*
201. I don't know about any staff member taking children home. In relation to allegations and counter allegations, I did hear that RBP [REDACTED] and RFG [REDACTED] had a falling out, although that may have happened after I left as it wasn't something that came to my

door. RFG and RBP were quite close but if something happened where RFG felt he had been slighted, there would have been a complete rupture of their relationship.

202. I was never aware of any allegations against me about having inappropriate relationships with any of the children and I deny having any such relationships with any child.

Interview with John Blair

203. The following paragraphs are an extract from an interview with John Blair, which has been read to me as follows;
204. *"Interview with John Blair, care staff, on 09.09.94. We explained to John Blair that we had been asked to talk to him to offer an opportunity for him to raise any concerns he had in connection with the actions of staff past or present in Bellshill Children's Home. This was viewed against the back drop of former residents visiting the home recently and alleging or implying improper conduct on the part of some staff members. We also went on to say that we were aware that John Blair had voiced concerns in the past and had indicated that he was still unhappy about the situation. In light of this it was therefore important to look at the substance of it and check if in fact there was anything new which had not been known previously or acted upon."*
205. *"It was stressed that this information surrounding these issues were damaging to residents, their families and staff and that while substantiated concerns could be acted upon it was important to prevent gratuitous rumour."*
206. *"John Blair was happy to speak about these subjects and spoke at length over a wide ranging number of issues. These included specific points which he had previously raised with Heather Hall regarding several staff members, namely, (a) PVX SNR had physically assaulted PJP (former resident). (b) PVX "lumbered" or had an inappropriate relationship with PJP"*

207. *"Some time after some of Edward Docherty's conduct became known, John Blair stated he asked PVX why the girls had not gone to court and charges pursued. John Blair said that PVX replied that "they" (implying district SWD) did not want the girls in court. John Blair assumed this suggested the existence of a cover up."*
208. *"Also, with hindsight, he thought it possible that the apparent power PJP seemed to possess within the home was linked to PVX and RBP being vulnerable, through their actions, to pressures. To support this he cited incidents where PJP would be given money or items after other young people had been refused the same thing by either RBP or PVX."*
209. I had no inappropriate relationship with PJP at anytime. PJP was the best of the girls and I had a very positive relationship with her. To read what John Blair has said about me is grossly insulting, defamatory and really disturbing.
210. Much later in my life, I worked for a national organisation. I received a telephone call at the office from PJP. She said that she felt that she had to call me. She said that I had changed her life, that I had believed in her and had made her believe that she could do good things in her life. She has kept in touch with me since.
211. She picked up what John Blair said about her and is outraged about it. She said it was grossly insulting to her and defamatory. To me, it speaks to the resentment these people had to PJP. She was already better educated than most of the people who were supposed to be looking after her.
212. I remember speaking to PJP's guidance teacher, Mr McBride. PJP was in her fifth year at the time and he said that she had been a fantastic pupil however had declined. This had to do with what had been going on at her home. When she came into the children's home, things had improved for her. Mr McBride said that prior to her decline he had her down for achieving five 'A's in her Highers. I went back to the home and said we had to do everything to get PJP back into school and sitting her Highers. She definitely had the brains, intellect and the discipline for it.

213. PJP has told me that when she gave evidence in court against Edward Docherty, she had wanted to emphasise how positive her time in the home had been. RBL was a similar girl to PJP who once worked in an office close to where I worked. She contacted me and said very similar things about having felt believed in and having been given a chance.

214. It outrages me that PJP and I can be traduced that way. I do feel proud that my time at Bellshill is not all negative. PJP is now married with a child and a grand child. She is a company director and lives in a big house. She has made a huge success of her life. I've also met her husband.

PRI

215. PRI has provided a statement to the Inquiry. In her statement towards the end of paragraph 32, she says, *"I was bullied by some of the other kids. Most of the other kids were long stay. If I did something that the others found annoying, they would just set about me."*

216. In paragraph 33 of her statement, she says, *"By the time I went back in, Eddie Stanton ..., PVX RFG used to see them hitting me. He reported it to PVX PVX all the time and he just said, "Kids will be kids." He didn't do anything about it. I knew nothing would happen even though staff were writing it down in log books."*

217. I was aware PRI was being bullied but it wasn't just her peers. Out in the street, at school, everywhere, she got herself into the same sort of relationships. I don't think RFG was that significant in her life. There was a good senior house parent called, Catheline Irvine, who was in charge of PRI's unit. I felt that Catheline was more than capable of managing it. Everything was dramatic with PRI and she would bring people from the local community into the home.

218. I remember her bringing in a boy who had been in care but was now a young adult in the local community. She brought him into the home to beat up a boy within the home. She then tried to stop me from going into the games room to stop it happening. She

was a handful. Given what I know about RFG [REDACTED], he would be telling her that he was doing his best for her. He was a needy person and so was PRI [REDACTED]

219. Life wasn't easy for PRI [REDACTED] and there was a constant concern for her. There was always a potential for bullying and violence in the home but certain children were more vulnerable to it than others, PRI [REDACTED] was one of those. We were always looking to create safety and would think about what PRI [REDACTED] was doing, whether a staff member was taking her out. There wasn't a simple resolution to it. These children lived together and we had to find a way of keeping them safe and show them how to respect each other. That wasn't easy with PRI [REDACTED] as she was always getting into disputes and had people falling out with her.
220. In paragraph 61 of PRI [REDACTED]'s statement, she says, *"When I got back to the home I was crying my eyes out. PVX [REDACTED] and Claire McCluskey were working in the office but they didn't come out to ask what was wrong."*
221. I don't recall that incident at all. I do know PRI [REDACTED] was one of the girls assaulted by Edward Docherty and who had subsequently gone to the police about him. The first I knew about this was when I met PRI [REDACTED] and RBL [REDACTED] in the witness room during Edward Docherty's trial.
222. In paragraph 66, PRI [REDACTED] says, *"RBP [REDACTED] was another member of staff. He was forty two. He was very thin and looked like a drug addict. He had lost his front teeth. He used to take us to pubs and nightclubs with another three members of staff, John Blair, PVX [REDACTED] and ... I was thirteen the first time. I looked older because I was taller and heavily built. They would take PJP [REDACTED] ... and I to the Hattonrigg Hotel and Valenti's Italian Restaurant. He would buy us meals and wine to get us drunk. I became dependent on alcohol."*
223. She continues in paragraph 67, and says, *"If it was a nice day, they would take us out in the minibus and we would stop off at pubs. There was no one regulating what we were buying so we would buy alcohol and drink it in the van."*

224. That's totally shocking and I would never have done that. I can believe RFG and RBP would do it and her description of RBP is accurate. RFG and RBP were the kind of people I had to be with through work but I would never have been in their company socially. I would never have taken children to a pub or a nightclub. It would have been beyond any conceptualisation that I would have done such a thing.
225. It's horrendous what PRI is describing. I really don't know why she is saying these things about me. I don't know what her life has been like, what she remembers and what she doesn't remember.
226. In paragraph 75 and 76, PRI says, "I was aware that PJP and RBL RBL were being abused. They were talking openly about the abuse. I think the staff knew it was going on. We were in France and PJP had an argument in front of everyone about it. She was demanding money from PVX and threatening to tell people what was going on. RFG wanted to know what was wrong with her but she wouldn't tell him."
227. "When we got home from France, the police were contacted. I think it might have been PJP who phoned them. The police came to the home. They took a statement from me. I told them about Eddie and RBP. The police told us that there wasn't enough evidence. Eddie was suspended from the home because he hadn't filled in his job application properly."
228. PJP made a disclosure to me about Edward Docherty in the January and we were in France, late July, early August that same year. PJP was okay for most of the time in France. I do remember one evening she did want to talk about it. She was emotional and very angry.
229. I didn't know anything about her phoning the police afterwards although I knew about the decision not to contact the police after her disclosure to me about Edward Docherty. There was no heated argument in France. I do remember a night where she

started knocking chairs over because she was distressed and angry but she didn't demand money off me.

230. Some of the staff and residents thought PJP was the favourite. She passed four Highers and received a financial reward per Higher. She also had part-time jobs and was an exemplary young woman and others in the home resented it.
231. In paragraph 111, PRI says, *"I also want people who were involved in my care to be held accountable. It didn't need to go on for so long. I think the social workers, Kate McCallum and Fred Edwards should be held accountable. I think that PVX is still employed in social care and I don't understand why because I told the police about him too. They could have whistleblown at any time."*
232. I totally understand why PRI would say this but it didn't feel like that to me at the time. There wasn't a route for whistleblowing. I don't think it was that unusual for these sorts of allegations to be dealt with in that way. If you look at it by the standards of today, it's not acceptable.
233. Eventually the girls did have the courage and bravery to go to the police as adults and seek justice. I know they had a torrid time in the court room but they followed it through. At that time, I felt the decision had been so wrong and I have reflected in my own part in it and think I could have been stronger.
234. I just didn't know enough back then. My social work course was a huge developmental leap for me about what I was doing and why I was doing it. I was later informed by those experiences I had with the children in Bellshill.

RBP

235. RBP has provided a statement to the Inquiry. Within paragraph 36, 37, 38,39, 40,41, 42 and 43 he says the following; *"Some of PVX's risk assessments and his decision making, when involved in activities, were highly questionable. I would go as far as to say they were highly dangerous. An example of this was when he*

organised a trip to France and I was asked to go, along with a couple of other staff members and a number of children. When we were on the ferry at Dover waiting to go, he approached me and told me that he was glad that he got away with not telling Strathclyde Regional Council that we were going on a trip out of the country. I thought this was ridiculous.

236. When we got to France and settled in the camp, PVX went into town and organised for two boys, RJL and RJS, to get motorbikes. I spoke to PVX about it and told him I thought it was a really bad idea. I tried to explain that we were in a foreign country, the roads and the driving rules were different. He just responded saying that it was his decision and it was happening. Consequently, one of the bikes was stolen and about two hours later RJL was involved in a collision with a car. He ended up in hospital with a broken arm.
237. Another incident on the same holiday was when the group were eating out. We ate at a lot of different restaurants. Alcohol was an issue with the kids. In France it was perfectly legal for children their age to have a glass of wine with their dinner, so we let it happen and I didn't have a problem with that. I actually thought it was a good thing to encourage the children to have a social drink with their meal, as long as it was managed appropriately. I discussed it with PVX and he knew my feelings about alcohol.
238. When we were going out for our evening meal, one member of staff would always remain in the camp for security reasons. I took my turn, one particular night, when everyone else went out for dinner. About half past midnight they all came back, and they were all steaming drunk apart from Heather Hall who had sensibly not got involved. The issue wasn't just the fact that the children were drunk and the other members of staff had been drinking, the main issue was the fact that one child, RJS, RJS wasn't with them. When I queried where he was, I was told that he had started 'acting out' through drink, had got into an argument with PVX and had punched and broke the wingmirror of the bus. PVX had decided to lock him in the minibus and leave him there overnight. The minibus was parked about three kilometres away.

239. RJS was a prolific car thief and one of my concerns was that if he woke up he would probably manage to hot wire it and drive off. It was a disaster waiting to happen because it was parked in a harbour. I decided to walk down in the pouring rain in the middle of a bad thunderstorm. When I got there, RJS was sleeping so I had to just hunker down and wait until morning. This put me in a really awkward and unsafe position because I was alone with RJS
240. In the morning, I woke him up and we went back up to the camp. I was furious and incandescent with rage. I met PVX and he took me aside, just outside the camp because he would have known that I was fuming. I let loose on him and he promised that it wouldn't happen again. To be fair nothing like that happened again. These are just two examples of his lack of insight and bad decision making."
241. The following year, PVX was arranging another trip back to France and he asked me to go with the group. I found out that three boys, RJS, RJV and RJL were going so I told PVX that I wouldn't go because of the likelihood of trouble with these three together. The trip went ahead and one evening the three boys got drunk, tried to get into the camps swimming pool. When they were refused they assaulted a member of staff. They were brought back home to Bellshill early by RFG. When PVX came back, the first thing he said to me was along the lines of don't tell me you said so.
242. Another example of PVX's poor management and disregard for the welfare of the young people was the time when there was a one day strike by staff. PVX spoke to me the day before the strike and told me that he expected me to leave the building on the day of the industrial action because I had been staying there overnight. He was a union rep and wanted me to take part in the picket line. I asked him who would be looking after the children and he said that the police would be called in. I told him that there was no way I was abandoning the children and I refused to abandon the building to the police. I worked a dayshift. PVX was very angry with me and that my decision would come back to bite me. I took that as a threat.

243. In paragraph 36, his comments are ridiculous. There was scrupulous preparation and full authorisation for the trip.
244. In paragraph 37 he says the kids were on motorbikes. They were actually on push bikes. RYL did have an injury to his wrist after falling off his bike. He was seen by a medical professional and had a bandage applied to his wrist.
245. In paragraph 38 RBP says that the staff allowed the kids alcohol. This is not true. We did allow them to have some non alcoholic cider.
246. In paragraph 39 he says that I locked a child in a minibus. This is fantasy. The boy he says was locked in the minibus was a 16 year old boy who would have managed to get out of there in a minute. When I think about it, I did have concerns about RJS and RBP. I never really liked the interaction between RBP and the boys. RBP was quite physical with them as in touchy feely. He talks about staff being drunk. I didn't drink alcohol at all during the trip. I did allow staff some time off where they could leave the campsite and stay elsewhere for a night. I don't remember any of them ever coming back to the campsite drunk. I was first up in the morning and last to go to bed in the evening so I would have been aware if staff had returned drunk.
247. In paragraph 40, RBP says he went and spent the night in the minibus with RJS before returning in the morning. I am unaware of this and believe it to be untrue.
248. In paragraph 41, RBP says that he returned to the camp and was furious with me. This is fictional and did not happen.
249. In paragraph 42, he says I asked him to go on a subsequent trip to France. I certainly never asked him to go. He mentions boys being returned early from the trip. There was one boy sent home by me after I suspected he had been drinking alcohol. He was escorted home by RFG who I suspected had bought the alcohol for him.
250. In paragraph 43, he talks about strikes and a picket line. I was SNR of the home and not a union rep. I would never have asked anyone to joint a picket line. There

were also agreements in place with management for life and limb cover for the children's home. I remember we were chronically understaff so the minimum amount of staff on would have been what we were used to anyway. What he is saying is untrue.

251. In paragraphs 110,111,112 and 113 of his statement, [RBP], says the following; *"I spoke to [PJP] again and she told me that Eddie had done something to her. She wouldn't go into any detail. Clare Flannery agreed to take [PJP] out of the children's home and they were out of the unit for a week so Clare could talk to her to try and find out what had happened. When Clare came back, she told us what Eddie Doherty had done and how it had also affected [RBL] and [PRI]. It was unclear to me exactly what [PJP] had told Clare, but Clare had said it didn't merit telling the police. I felt I was being shut out.*
252. *This incident wasn't reported to the police at that time. I told [PVX] it should be reported but his decision was that if it went to court, Eddie Doherty would cite all the logbooks and all the details of her case. He said they would take all this information and paint [PJP] as a terrible person in court, and it wouldn't turn out well for her. He didn't want that to happen. He said it would make the girls out to be promiscuous. He wanted the girls to be spoken to and discouraged from reporting anything. He wanted it kept 'in house.'*
253. *This is where I feel I let the girls down because I did what [PVX] said and I encouraged them not to get the police involved. At the time I thought what [PVX] said was right and I was doing the right thing. Now I regret it."*
254. In paragraph 110, he says that I said that [PJP]'s disclosure did not merit informing the police. That is completely untrue. I didn't even know he was aware of the disclosure as I didn't trust staff to tell them about it.
255. In paragraph 111, he says that he told me that it should be reported to the police and that I had decided not to. This is untrue that decision wasn't mine to make. I have no memory of ever having discussed this matter with him.

256. In paragraphs 148 and 149 of his statement he says, "PVX [REDACTED] joined and Edward Stanton. He was in his late 40's then. His behaviour overall and interaction with the kids was good. His decision making and risk assessment was off the scale. I have already given some examples of this. He believed that he was untouchable. If you challenged him about anything he was all huff and bluster. Sometimes he was irrational.
257. The only time I saw him discipling or abusing someone was when he kicked PJP [REDACTED] PJP [REDACTED] in the backside. This happened on the trip to France and PJP [REDACTED] was challenging him, which she did quite often. PVX [REDACTED] lost the place with her. RFG [REDACTED] took PJP [REDACTED] away and I took PVX [REDACTED] away from the group to calm him down. I told him he was stupid to do that. He went back and apologised to PJP [REDACTED]. He then took her away in the minibus on their own, which was a bad decision in my eyes, and I told him that. He should have taken Heather Hall or Jess, another female member of staff, with him."
258. In paragraph 149, he says that I kicked PJP [REDACTED] on the backside. PJP [REDACTED] was seventeen at that time and this is not true. I have mentioned earlier in my statement that PJP [REDACTED] did get upset and knock chairs over one night in the campsite but she quickly calmed herself down. I would never have taken PJP [REDACTED] away on her own. That would just never happen.
259. In paragraph 168, RBP [REDACTED] says, "The welfare officer from Strathclyde Region got involved. He took the matter up with the district and it was then that Bernadette Docherty said I was totally and utterly vindicated of all the allegations made against me. A civil case was started against Strathclyde Regional Council because they neglected my wellbeing. It was settled out of court, and I was awarded £2000 compensation from Strathclyde Regional Council and given a gagging order. I gave the money to charity because I considered it to be dirty money, and I didn't want it. It was never about the money for me. It was always about the young people. I finally left Bellshill in 1993."
260. I am unaware of any of the matters he raises in paragraph 168.

261. In paragraph 178 he says, *'RBL [REDACTED] came to visit me at my house in Bellshill with a 'Get well soon card' when I was off sick. PVX [REDACTED] had given her my address. I let her into my house and we chatted for a while. When she left, she got a taxi back up the road.'*
262. I had no idea where *RBP [REDACTED]* lived and wouldn't have given her his address if she had asked for it.
263. In paragraphs 201, 202, 203 and 204 of his statement he says, *"In the next section titled Page 4 Paragraph 5 John Blair says, 'She asked if an RBP [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] worked with me and I said they did and she said PJP [REDACTED] was going about the school with a photo of RBP [REDACTED] saying that that was her boyfriend and that PJP [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] "by the balls". I reported that and all hell was let loose'.*
264. *There are half-truths in this paragraph. PJP [REDACTED] did have a photograph of me, and I am speculating but believe she did show it to people and say I was her boyfriend. John Blair's was at school with PJP [REDACTED]. When she got home after school she told John Blair about the photograph. I am led to believe he then gave his a full account of PJP [REDACTED]'s background, including her family background before she came into care and the reasons she was in care.*
265. *John Blair's went to school the next day and the details about PJP [REDACTED] went viral around the school. This was utterly inappropriate and a wholesale breach of confidentiality to say the least, to the extent of being victimisation. PJP [REDACTED]'s name was dragged through the mud. She was a vulnerable young girl who deserved better. There was no inappropriate relationship between PJP [REDACTED] and me. We had a good working relationship, and we enjoyed each other's company. We had debates and at times she challenged me, but I have no hesitation in saying I have the utmost regard for her. She never once said anything inappropriate about me, as far as I am concerned.*

266. I spoke to PVX about it because I thought this incident should be investigated by the police, because PJP was only fifteen. What had been said about me was a crime apart from being conduct unbecoming and a breach of trust in my position of privilege. I know I should have been suspended while this investigation went on. PVX just told me that it would be dealt with 'in-house' and that he would take over John Blair's supervision and he would be given extra supervision. I let it go at that although I wasn't happy."
267. I have no knowledge of any of the matters raised by RBP in paragraphs 201, 202, 203 and 204. If any of that had happened, I suspect it was after my time there.
268. In paragraphs 214 and 215 of his statement he says, PVX has given a statement to the police, dated 19/12/94 which was made available to the Inquiry. I have been read an extract of his statement, where PVX says, 'Another member of staff that I had concerns about was RBP in relation to RES. He was very close to this vulnerable boy. RBP also used to stay in the home a great deal of the time and I used to have to tell him to go home. He used to take the side of the kids and tell them things about the staff which would later come out and this was wrong. He was like one of the kids at times and was often off sick. Kids would go to his home I heard later, particularly girls, and I tried to put a stop to that'.
269. If PVX had concerns about my relationship with RES, why did he not deal with it? I was never questioned about my relationship with him, and why was it not formally investigated? He was of a children's home so if he had any concerns about a member of staff's behaviour he should have dealt with it. He didn't deal with it because there was no issue in regard to the relationship I had with RES. I had a close relationship with RES because I didn't have any other option. It was my job. RES had a close relationship with me because none of the other staff liked him."
270. I had concerns and worries about a lot of the interactions and relationships within the home across multiple members of staff. For example, there was a revolving door of temporary staff. Whilst I had my concerns, there was nothing concrete that I could take any further. If I had taken my concerns to a general manager, I would have been told

to go away. I did have concerns about RBP's relationship with RES but I had no disclosure or evidence of wrongdoing.

271. In paragraph 242, he says, "Leading up to my trial we got see the full statement of RJL which he had given to the police. RJL specifically named PVX as being the person who had done a number of things to him at the baths. He said he was in a cubicle with PVX and PVX had touched him inappropriately. This charge, which named me as being responsible, was subsequently withdrawn from the charge sheet. I can't understand why PVX was named yet I was charged with the offence. I never took anyone to the baths because I can't even swim. There were a lot of anomalies like this throughout the trial."
272. This concerns the allegation against me that I spoke about earlier in my statement. The allegation was false and was riddled with inconsistencies. I have no knowledge of what happened at RBP trial

Leaving Bellshill Children's Home

273. In 1991, I left Bellshill and went to the University of Strathclyde where I did my social work diploma. I graduated in 1993. I returned to childcare but not to Bellshill Children's Home. I went to Glenavon Children's Home in Strathaven.
274. After Strathaven, I set up the new unit in flats in Glasgow. The idea was based on my experience of seeing these children being thrown out of Bellshill at the age of seventeen. The concept was that young teenagers moving on from residential care would live in these flats into their mid twenties, if they wanted. It wasn't about supervision, it was about care and support.
275. In 1995, I was appointed [REDACTED] within Strathclyde Regional Council. My duties were to reshape residential childcare, which I started to do in 1996.

276. Strathclyde Regional Council was abolished at the end of March 1996 and the new unitary authorities came into being at the start of April. I became a [REDACTED] within a new local authority and was responsible for residential childcare within the council. I was also responsible for closing some big institutions. My advice was to invest in foster care and family based support.
277. In 1998, I became [REDACTED] for strategy, which involved the overall children's services and planning process for the local authority.
278. In 2001, I became [REDACTED] for youth offending. I led the multi-agency effort to deal with young people involved in offending behaviour. I did that until 2004, when I became [REDACTED] children's services in a local authority. I was in charge of children's services and criminal justice services.
279. In 2005, I became [REDACTED] children's services covering social work and health in the local authority. I carried out that role from 2005 until 2010.
280. In 2010, I left the local authority and went to work for a national charity as a head of service. I carried out that role for the following ten years focusing mainly on prevention services.
281. In 2020, I became a [REDACTED] for development. I oversee business development.

Helping the Inquiry

282. The structure of the staffing at the children's home brought me to remember something I studied called the echelon theory. If you are in an institution and in a certain category, no matter how senior or eminent you become in that category, you are always junior to the next category, no matter how junior they are. So, I was paid less than the most junior social worker, even although I was ^{SNR} [REDACTED] of a home with twenty three kids and thirty five staff.

283. There's currently the "Promise" Bill going through Parliament. It will change the Children's Hearing system to improve decision making for children. When children in Scotland come into the social care system, the system of decision making with children introduces drift and delay. This means that far too many children don't get a decision made about them and end up in care much longer than they should be.
284. What we need to do is overhaul our decision making process for children so they get decisions about permanent care made in a timely way and in a way that is right and of a high quality. Residential care for children should really be a last resort. Children should go to family based care.
285. Even foster care should only be there until children get to a permanent destination. Research shows that the time taken to make decisions for children in England compared with Scotland is much faster. Children in Scotland are typically drifting years before a decision is made about whether they should go back to their parents or go to adoptive placements. After two years, they're not going back to their parents. There is this continued yoyo back and forward from Hearings that won't make decisions.
286. Foster carers don't see themselves as permanent carers and therefore don't have that sense of commitment to children. There is a need for commitment that is crucial for children's wellbeing.
287. Residential care needs to be embedded in a system that puts children first from the very start. Babies and infants are where we get it wrong and it's caring for teenagers in children's homes where the failure is acted out.

Other information

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

Signed..... 

Dated..... *20th January 2026*