

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

RBP

Support person present: yes

1. My name is RBP. My date of birth is 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I left school at the age of fifteen without any qualifications. I later sat and passed O'Grades in English and biology.
3. My first job when I left school was as an apprentice butcher but this only lasted nine months as the shop I was working in closed. I then went to Motherwell College where I completed a course in 'caring for people' which led on to a pre-nursing course. In 1981, through the job centre, I got a job as a temporary care officer/houseparent post with Strathclyde Regional Council. I worked in various care homes for the elderly, all in South Lanarkshire.
4. I was then asked to work at the Assessment Centre in Blantyre called Calder House for a while. I then moved from there to work at Flemington House Children's Home in Uddingston, Wooddean Children's Home in Blantyre, Strathaven Children's Home, and Leaburn Children's Home in Hamilton. At Leaburn I worked in the capacity as a houseparent. I was then seconded back to Flemington House as a houseparent in a permanent post. From Flemington House I was seconded to Bellshill Children's Home in 1984.

5. I left Bellshill Children's Home in 1993 when I was asked to work at the David Anderson Centre as a care officer for a year rather than return to the children's home. After that year I went to Carlisle Children's Home but was only there for a fortnight because I was offered and took up the post of senior support worker for Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health based in their residential unit in Comely Bank, Hamilton. I then worked for the Richmond Fellowship Scotland as a volunteer services officer. Initially this was just for Glasgow but then it extended to the whole of the West of Scotland. This contract was for one year but was extended to two. The services I set up were subsequently passed to the individual residential units, so I kind of did myself out of a job. After that, I set up my own antiques business. By that time, my health was deteriorating badly and I retired. This would have been 8 years ago in 2017.

Bellshill Children's Home, Bellshill

6. Bellshill Children's Home was at 1 Scott Place, just off Hattonrigg Road in Bellshill. It was slap bang in the middle of a social housing estate. It was a big building with 23 beds for children.
7. My first impressions of Bellshill were strange because I hit the floor running. I had done a backshift at Flemington House, then the next day I was straight into a backshift at Bellshill. That first day, when I walked up the road and turned into the carpark, I was blown away by the number of boarded up windows. There were very few intact windows left. The building looked derelict.
8. When I walked in the front door, the first thing I saw was a young boy, about seven years of age, scrubbing the front stairs. I asked him what he was doing. He told me it was a punishment because he swore at a member of staff. I promptly took the brush from him and told him not to swear at staff and told him to go.
9. There were three units at Bellshill. Group 3 was the unit on the bottom floor. Group 2 was on the top floor and Group 1 was the Independent Living Unit. I was working with Group 2.

10. When I started at Bellshill, it was bedlam, and it wasn't funny. At dinner time I would go down to the kitchen and get a tray with all the children's meals in big containers, then go back upstairs. I thought this was really dangerous, not just for the member of staff but for the children, should trip and fall. It could have been a disaster but that was the system that was in place.
11. At mealtimes, the kids were jumping about and some were feeding each other. Staff members were just standing about eating off a plate. I told the staff they should sit down with the kids and have their meal. They said they needed to supervise the children. I told them to sit down and tell the kids they don't need to feed each other and get them to calm down. I told them to lead by example.
12. I used humour quite a lot in how I worked with the kids. I always found laughter was a great calmer. It defused a lot of the situations that went on at the dinner table. One time, a boy had been served chops, and he said he didn't like chops. I told him that they weren't just chops, they were Rambo chops, and if he ate them, he would get big muscles. After he ate them, I gently squeezed his arms and told him his muscles had grown. That was just an example of how I got the kids onside.
13. Sometimes, the kids asked me what I did before I came to Bellshill. I told them I was a stuntman on the TV. They thought it was funny and it was good to see them laugh and interact with each other. That was 'the kind of 'kidology' I used.
14. When I first walked through the group, the sitting room was a disaster. There was very little left of the furnishings. There were broken chairs, the windows were broken and the TV was upside down. There was no action being taken by the staff to do anything about it. They would just react to situations that were going on and not try and stop the young people from behaving badly. There seemed to be a lot of anger that had built up over a period of time.
15. I told the staff that we needed to stop it. We needed to get into the sitting room and sit down and use the chairs. Let's watch the TV and get games out and play them with the children. I told them they shouldn't shout at the children. I am a very quietly spoken

person and I don't need to shout. If I do need to raise my voice, people will take notice. I tried to get the staff to challenge the children to stop what they were doing if they were misbehaving. I wanted them to try to find out why they were behaving that way and explain to them the possible consequences of their actions. This could have been that they would hurt themselves or others.

16. The staff took a quantum leap, basically from reacting to things that had happened, to actually acting at the time. The key worker system that was in operation, seemed to be that staff were holding each other accountable for the behaviour of the children they were keyworker to. They didn't seem to understand that the keyworker title was an administrative name only and it was more for nominating someone to represent the children at hearings and compiling reports for childcare reviews.
17. At shift changeovers, the staff finishing might tell you about something that happened. I would ask them what they had done about it and often they would say they were waiting to pass it on to the keyworker to deal with. This wasn't acceptable anymore. If kids are behaving in a certain manner and they weren't happy with it, then it must be dealt with there and then, because it will continue and possibly escalate. If it escalated it wouldn't be the member of staff who suffered, it would be the child.
18. Quite often at childcare reviews and children's panels, staff would write in the reports how bad the child had been. I tried to change that so that the reports didn't concentrate on bad behaviour or negative things. I wanted them to include and concentrate on positive aspects of the child. I wanted it to be the case that we were seen to be on the child's side and speaking up for them.
19. In my opinion, from what I saw, it wasn't the children who were the problem at Bellshill. They were fine. The problems were created by a small number of delinquent staff who fed into the behaviour of the children in the home. The children got the brunt of that.
20. The police came into the building on a regular basis to deal with things. When it first happened to me, I told the police that I didn't need them there, and I asked them to leave. We were quite capable of dealing with things ourselves. I didn't want the police

in the building at any time. It upsets the local community to see the police constantly there. I didn't even want them dropping in for a cup of coffee. My view was that we would call them in when we really needed them. The police would then know that if they were called in, it would be something serious.

21. Initially, the attitude of the staff and their relationship with the children was quite clinical. There was a punishment book whereby staff would fine children from their pocket money for bad behaviour. I pointed out to the staff that once those children had all their pocket money taken from them, they had nothing to lose. It was illegal anyway, to remove their pocket money, because it was the children's property.

22. Because the inner furnishings were in such a bad condition, we pushed the district council and the clerk of the works to come down and have a look and see for themselves the state of things, like the furniture and the windows. We were really keen to get more money in our budget. I think, by then, there were so many broken windows the clerk of the works had given up.

23. We did our best to get the children on board and give them a sense of responsibility. We explained that they were losing out because of the broken windows in respect that it was protecting them from the rain and the cold. We tried to give them options so they could choose. We got new furniture, including a new TV and curtains, but the children were involved in choosing it all. We got catalogues and sat down with the children at group meetings and tried to give them ownership.

My time at Bellshill

24. I started in Bellshill Children's Home in 1983. I joined as a houseparent initially, then I became an acting senior houseparent in Group 2, acting senior houseparent on nightshift then fulltime senior houseparent. I think I became senior houseparent around 1989. In this post I worked initially in Group 2 then moved over to Group 1.

25. Initially, I was seconded to Bellshill, so I didn't have to go through an application or interview process. When a full-time post came up, I had a formal interview. It was a legality that it had to take place. At my very first care post I had to provide referees. When I got a full time post at Flemington House I had to provide referees. When I got the full time houseparent post, and the senior houseparent post, on both occasions I had to provide referees. I am not aware of any police checks ever being carried out on me.
26. When I was a houseparent my first senior in Group 2 was Heather Hall. She was the Group manager. My ^{SNR} [REDACTED] was Kevin Murphy.
27. Supervision should have been monthly where the member of staff sat down with the senior or one of the management team for a supervision session. These meetings would be recorded, signed by both and stored in a locked cabinet within the children's home. Although these meetings should have taken place monthly it was more sporadic, probably every two or three months. It was made difficult because of the setup of the units and the shift patterns. Sometimes, it just didn't happen. Both members of staff would go into the meeting with an agenda to discuss. Within the meeting, goals would be discussed and whether the previous goals had been met.
28. Training was quite sporadic. A sheet came round monthly from Strathclyde Regional Council where you could apply for various training events. I went on a few during my time at Bellshill, covering a wide variety of subjects. There was no training given for specific roles when I took up different positions. There was no probationary period when you took up a new role. I considered my time when I was doing acting senior in Group 2 and on the nightshift as being my on-the-job training and probation. I had gained a lot of experience in my time working in the care setting with different people.

Structure and recruitment of staff

29. At Bellshill, there was an officer in charge, then there was the deputy officer in charge and then third in charge. There were then three senior houseparents for each of the

groups. Within each group were four houseparents as well as a few part time staff who worked a backshift. On the nightshift were two senior houseparents with two basic grade members of staff. There were various domestic staff including three cleaners and laundry staff. There were three different shift rotas. When I became senior houseparent my ^{SNR} [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] Kevin Murphy [REDACTED] ^{PVX} [REDACTED].

30. [REDACTED], Ed Stanton was the officer in charge, [REDACTED] ^{PVX} [REDACTED]. Ed Stanton stayed in the flat attached to the children's home. His leadership style was non-existent. He was supposed to work alongside my shift, but it just didn't happen. I think he avoided me because I asked difficult questions. I was very proactive within the staff team. I was also proactive in dealing with and representing the young people I worked with. I think he found this quite difficult, plus I had my suspicions about him as well.

31. When I was still at Bellshill, I became aware Ed Stanton was under police investigation for child sex abuse in Liverpool. When that kicked off, he was moved to Wooddean Children's Home in Blantyre as a houseparent. This was completely inappropriate. I remember saying this to Janice Bannatyne who was the Assistant District Officer (ADO) of childcare. I was furious about this because I had worked at Wooddean. This was around the end of the 1980s/early 1990s. I was more or less told that it was none of my business and it was above my paygrade.

32. When he first came into Bellshill [REDACTED] Ed Stanton, ^{PVX} [REDACTED] was charismatic and basically threw money at everything. He was more proactive about getting the young people out of the building doing activities. The home had a minibus and he was always telling us to take the kids out swimming, ice skating, football, or anything to get them out the building. In a way I agreed with him. He was also supportive in maintaining the level of furnishings within the house and promoting the children being involved in the selection of furniture and decorations.

33. Bellshill was just a stepping stone for ^{PVX} [REDACTED]. His main goal was to get access to a diploma in social work. Strathclyde Regional Council were supporting him in attaining this. His next interest was in getting a leased car which he did. His third interest was

football. In relation to his leadership style, he liked throwing a lot of words about like 'transparency' and 'inclusion' but most of the time, in my opinion, he was as transparent as mud.

34. When I applied for, and got, the senior post at Bellshill I was interviewed by PVX and Bernadette Docherty. After the interview I saw PVX and thanked him for giving me the post. He told me that I shouldn't thank him because he didn't want me to get the job. He told me the only reason I got it was because I wore a suit.
35. I had probably been in the senior post for around a year when I had put a label in the daily occurrence book for Group 1 but I had spelled 'independent' wrongly. He made a standing joke in front of other members of staff that I was the only senior who couldn't spell 'independent'. I was really embarrassed by this. My spelling wasn't great and I had been going through tests with my GP for dyslexia, which showed I was borderline dyslexic. PVX made no effort to try and establish if there was any underlying reason for my poor spelling and instead chose to ridicule me.
36. 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.
37. 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.

38. 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.
39. 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.
40. 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.
41. 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.

42. 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 camp's 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.
43. 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.

Recruitment

44. I was never involved in the recruitment of staff at Bellshill. I have no knowledge of the recruitment policy because I was never involved in that side of things.
45. There were no volunteers working at Bellshill. There were part-time members of staff who came in and covered sickness or absence. They were part of a pool of staff. They were like bank staff and would have gone through the full application and interview process.
46. SNR, on the shift above me, when I was a senior houseparent was Kevin Murphy. PVX took over the leadership of my shift but often wasn't there. I was left to run the shift as a senior and was responsible for the houseparents in the three units. They all had to report to me. PVX generally worked Monday to Friday

9:00am to 5:00pm which didn't suit the shift pattern. This meant in the evenings when I was backshift, after 5:00pm, and at weekends I was [REDACTED] in charge.

Training

47. I wasn't involved in the actual training of staff apart from through supervision. I also shared my experience and knowledge to others on the job. I did however refer staff for training events outwith the children's home.
48. Most of the training I received was through the course of my employment. None of these ended with a formal qualification and were just really 'on the job' training.

Supervision/ appraisal/ evaluation

49. When I became a senior, I managed and supervised the houseparents attached to the unit. There were usually four houseparents and two part-time staff. They would be appraised on a monthly basis. They would come to the meeting with me with an agenda and we would discuss both of our agendas. We would set goals which would be revisited at the next supervision session and go through the notes I had written at the previous meeting. If they agreed to my previous notes, we would both sign them and they would be stored in a locked cabinet in the children's home. We would then look to see if they had reached their goals or if things had got better or worse since the previous session.

Policy and Strategic planning

50. I had no involvement in, or responsibility, for policy in relation to the care, including residential care, of children. Likewise, I had no involvement in, or responsibility for, strategic planning in relation to the institution.

Children

51. The care of the children was governed by the Social Work (Scotland) Act for children who were in a place of safety, or on supervision orders from the children's hearings system or in voluntary care under Section 16. These children were there of their own volition, but again it was arranged through the children's hearing system. This meant they could be discharged back to their family quite easily. I am not aware of any child being placed there by a court, it was always through the children's hearings system.
52. Before any child was taken into care, the social work department were obliged to complete an RIC1 document. This would be completed by a social worker, or a standby social worker and this would come with a child when presented at a children's home. This wasn't just for Bellshill. This was the policy of Strathclyde Regional Council across the board. Part of this process involved a physical examination and would include a diagram showing the position of any bruises or marks. If it was deemed necessary for the child to have medical treatment, after their admission, the RIC1 would go with the child to the GP/consultant at hospital, for them to update the form with their assessment and the treatment administered.
53. The RIC1 would also include a brief summary of the background to the case and why the child was coming into care. This information would be used to update staff on the child's circumstances and whether the parents were allowed access to the child.
54. Children were at Bellshill for varied lengths of time, but most children were in care for a lengthy period of time. The children were split up into three separate groups. Each group had 8 children. Group 3 was for the youngest children aged from 5 up to 13/14. Group 2 were for children aged 14 up to 16. Group 1 was for children aged 16 up to 18. The main objective was to get children back home as quickly as possible especially from Group 3. This was achieved through working with the family and the social workers. Group 2 was mostly the longer stay children who had been in the care setting for a lengthy period. Group 1 was also known as the Independent Living Unit and for children getting ready to leave care. Although it was for children up to 18 there were occasions when some children stayed longer.

55. The home held a maximum of 23 children and were both boys and girls. The ratio of boys to girls varied all the time. To support these children there were 3 managers, 6 senior staff, 12 day staff split into three shifts of 4. There were 2 basic grade nightshift staff and 3 to 4 part-time staff working backshifts and weekends. On a working shift there would always be 1 member of staff and 1 part-time staff working on the floor. On my shift there was generally 3 members of staff, one in each unit, and myself as a senior.
56. The food was all cooked onsite for Groups 1 and 2. There were 2 cooks. Initially the children had no say in the menu, but myself and others pushed for the children to get involved in menu selection. If children didn't like specific food, then there was no alternative given. They had to either like it or lump it. Initially when I started, children were getting re-presented their lunch at dinner time if they had refused to eat it at lunchtime. This was something I pushed to have stopped.
57. There were bedrooms in each unit. There were two rooms which had two beds. We used these to try and keep siblings together. There were also four single bedrooms. None of the rooms were ensuite. For each group there was one bathroom/toilet with a wash hand basin and one bathroom with a shower. Group 1 was different because two rooms were converted into bedsits where there was a kitchen and a sleeping area. Group 1 had three rooms which were like studio flats. It was the only group that had locks on their doors to give the children some privacy. Myself and others had a really hard time trying to push for the installation of locks on these doors.

Leisure time

58. Initially there was nothing for the children to entertain themselves with in their leisure time. There were practically no board games and any that were there had bits missing or were broken. Because of that, their time would be spent getting up to mischief and winding up the staff. It wasn't helped by the fact that the staff weren't engaging with the children. It was bedlam.

59. We managed to get some new board games and we tried to get the children to understand that the games belonged to them. We tried to introduce some ownership and responsibility. We got a new television to replace the one that had been thrown through a window and was lying outside. The children helped us select new televisions for each unit. We made it clear that if anything got broken, the person responsible would pay for it, and that included the windows and the furniture. It was all about giving them ownership so they would look after things.
60. The home had a minibus, but it was very seldom used initially. Finances weren't available for a lot of things, like doing all the activities or taking children out. Latterly, we had many group outings, because finances were in place by then through the management team pushing it with the finance department. We went swimming to the local swimming baths, took kids ice-skating to the Magnum Centre or to the cinema. When it was a child's birthday, or if they were leaving, their key worker would take them out for a meal.
61. Every year there were holidays. Each group had a holiday budget and all eight children in the group would go on holiday for a week or two weeks. As well as France, we went to Butlins, Pontins, and Haven resorts. Sometimes we rented a holiday flat in Ayr, Skegness, Prestatyn, basically all over the country. Previous holidays had been a disaster because there were a lot of problems with children's behaviour including smashing windows of a caravan. The holidays had to be planned in a constructive way to try and stop bad behaviour.
62. Children would sometimes be taken to a staff member's house. It was something I thought was quite questionable, as far as I was concerned, but it was allowed. There was one member of staff who worked in Group 2, Graham Low, who took a boy home for the weekend. They had formed a good relationship and it was agreed with his social worker that the boy could spend time at home with Graham and his family. It was also agreed that one of the cooks, Erica Conn, could take one of the girls home to stay overnight with Erica. It wasn't uncommon for a child to go to a member of staff's house but if they did it would have to be agreed. It was very common for a child to be taken

out by their key worker. It wasn't unusual for it to be on a one-to-one basis, but it might also be two children to one member of staff.

Schooling

63. Children received their schooling in mainstream schools outside Bellshill, usually in their home area. This was quite an issue for the children's home because they all went to various schools in different areas. Some children went to, and stayed in, residential schools through the week then came back to Bellshill for the weekend. There was also an issue with the children not going to school which we had to try and address. Sometimes kids would get taken to the front gate of their school but there was nothing to stop them leaving straight away. As far as we were concerned, once they went through the school gate, they were the responsibility of the school. If the children made their way back to the children's home, we would take them back and deliver them to the headteacher.

Healthcare

64. Children were generally registered with the GP at the local health centre. Any illness or health matter would be dealt with by them. Where children had been prescribed medication, staff in Groups 2 and 3 would handle the medication and give it to the children. We were allowed to give them it but definitely couldn't physically force them to take it. None of the staff were trained to deal with medication. This wasn't just an issue associated with children's care, it related to all residential care establishments whether it be elderly or mental care.
65. When I started at Bellshill, some children were administered drugs to manage and control their behaviour. It was a decision made between the social worker and the GP. The social work department basically had taken over the parental rights from the parents. Parents or those with parental control did not need to consent unless the child was on a supervision order. If so, it would come up at a review, and the parent would have a say in the matter. One of the drugs used was Largactil. As far as I am concerned it should never have been given to any child. It dulled their behaviour, but

it dulled everything else. It wasn't given to help the children sleep, it was given to manage their behaviour. It was a horrendous drug. This was something I, along with others, challenged and stopped.

Chores

66. Children were given chores to do as a punishment for bad behaviour. It was something I had never come across in any of my previous children's homes I had worked in. As far as I was concerned it was draconian and I wanted to make sure it stopped and didn't happen again. The sort of chores given were things like scrubbing the stairs or the floor, washing the windows, or anything that they could think of that was unpleasant for a child.

67. There were three cleaners, who generally kept the building tidy. It was the responsibility of the young people and the staff working with them to keep the bedrooms clean and tidy, not the cleaners. I saw it as that young person's personal space and it was up to them to maintain their rooms. The staff were encouraged to positively reinforce this with the young person. To encourage this, the children were involved in the selection of curtains, bedcovers, carpet, paint, and décor for the rooms. That way it gave them ownership and responsibility. There was a better chance of them looking after things. When I first started the bedrooms were decimated. Wardrobes and beds were lying in bits and things had been smashed. In some rooms the mattresses were on the floor.

Visitors

68. Some children and young people had visitors, but a lot depended on their status. If they were there on a place of safety order, a parent could come but the visit would generally be supervised by one of the staff. If the child was there voluntarily or supervised, the parents could visit anytime and could also take their child out. The children, who the social work department had parental rights for, very rarely got visits from their parents. The families were just too fractured.

69. Professionals, whether they be child psychologists or psychiatrists came in, but with this brought the issue of security. This was apparent from my early days at Bellshill. Too often people were walking about the building without any identification. One social worker complained that I ejected them from the building, and their area manager phoned me to complain. I explained that I had found them inside the building and when asked was told their identification was in their car. I asked them to go to the car and wear it. That was the end of the matter. We subsequently re-enforced a system where the details of visitors were recorded. Apart from anything, we would need to know who was in the building in the event of a fire.
70. Social workers did visit the children, but it was so rare that even the children called them Santa Claus. The social workers would get to speak with the children privately. The social worker would provide a report of what was talked about, and it would be kept in the children's personal file.

Reviews

71. Bellshill was a social work department resource and the field workers from the area team would work with us in Bellshill. We would come together at any childcare review along with the school who may be involved too and any other professional organisation who had a relevant input into the child's care. The parents, where applicable, would be there too.
72. Not long after the home's trip to France where RJJ broke his arm and there was the incident with RJS getting drunk, RBL went to a children's panel. She wanted her status to be changed from 'under supervision' to a section 16 voluntary order. I was told by Annette Blair, who was the member of staff who went with RBL, that the reporter had told the panel about the trip to France and relayed how it had resulted in terrible behaviour by the children, giving detail which was untrue and obvious 'Chinese whispers'. RBL's request was refused by the panel.

73. When I heard this, I phoned the reporters office centre to find out who the children's reporter was who had said these things. I subsequently spoke to the reporter, Gordon Sloan and told him he had been out of order what he had said to the panel, and that I was going to complain about him. I put my complaint in writing and my complaint was upheld. Gordon Sloan subsequently moved to work in Orkney. We subsequently arranged for another children's panel for RBL [REDACTED] and it was agreed that her supervision status could change to voluntary.

Discharge

74. There was a process for the discharge of children, but this depended on the case. There was always the hope that the child would be discharged to their parents as quickly as possible, with appropriate support. Sometimes this support would be provided by staff at Bellshill. This could mean a member of staff visiting them at home once or twice a week. This was quite rare, but it did happen, sometimes. Group 1 was different.
75. When I first started, children would get discharged from Bellshill as soon as they turned sixteen. They would get a binbag to put all their stuff in, then they would get taken to the nearest bed and breakfast and dumped there. When I went into Group 1 as a senior, I decided that this practice would stop and never happen again. The social work department have an obligation to represent these children. It is up to the social work department to get together with the housing department and find suitable accommodation for these children who are leaving care at that age.
76. One of the issues was young girls falling pregnant. If this happened, they were taken away to somewhere else where they could have their child. I believed this was completely wrong. This was a children's home and staff were suitably qualified to support a girl having a baby and teach them how to look after that child until such time as appropriate accommodation could be found where they could live in the community. I decided this wasn't going to happen again.

77. This was typical of the challenges I faced, but this is where the staff took a quantum leap to learn to work in a different way.

Living arrangements

78. Initially, when I started in Bellshill, I was living in a council house in Stonehouse. I don't drive a car and never have so getting back and forward was a nightmare. I relied on public transport and that involved getting two buses which could take up to two hours. Sometimes on the shift pattern, you would do a backshift then the next day a dayshift. A backshift finished at 10:30pm and the buses had stopped running by then. When this fell on my shift pattern, I tended to sleep overnight in the empty officer in charge's flat. This was in a locked area where I could get my head down. Ed Stanton used to live in this flat but by then he had left. PVX [REDACTED]. There was another room that wasn't used for childcare at the other end of the building, where staff could stay overnight. In 1990 I bought a flat in Bellshill to be closer to my work.
79. Kevin Murphy and PVX [REDACTED] stayed in Glasgow. Almost all the staff stayed outwith the children's home but lived in the local area.
80. Any member of staff could walk through any of the units without being challenged. Initially anyone could walk in off the street and through the units because the front door was unlocked and the office nearby didn't have a view of the front door. One time, there was someone standing inside the front door. After I had walked past a couple of times I challenged him. He told me he had just come in off the street for shelter from the rain. I threatened him with the police and he left. Eventually we knocked a hole in the wall and put a window in so the office staff could see who was coming in.

Nightshift cover

81. There were two members of staff on waken nightshift. One would be a senior and the other a basic grade houseparent. There were two teams and they worked permanent nightshift, on a four day week, four days on and four days off. It wasn't an easy shift

because when they started it would be bedlam with the backshift trying to get all the children into their beds. There was always resistance from the kids to go to bed, and they would be running about. I encouraged activities and for the nightshift to be involved in that. This might be a video night where the children were allowed to bring their quilts through, and we all sat round in a huddle and watched a video. This was good to get the kids to settle down. By the time they had watched a video the children were tired and wanted to go to their bed so there was no mucking about. It took a while for the nightshift to get on board with this because they were set in their ways of getting the children into their beds for 10:00pm.

Discipline and punishment

82. There was no formal policy or code of conduct in relation to discipline. From what I witnessed, often, the punishments given were spiteful on the part of the adult member of staff.
83. Discipline, I don't think, is an acceptable word. It was all about reinforcing the positives and discouraging bad behaviour. Children should be asked why they are behaving badly to try and find out why they were behaving that way, or why they were speaking in a certain way. It was to try and hold them accountable for their actions so they could learn to understand that they didn't need to behave or speak like that to get what they wanted.
84. The punishment book was put in the bin on day one when I started, although other staff would take it back out the bin. The punishment for not eating food where it was re-presented at the child's next meal was stopped. Children being given manual cleaning jobs to do as punishment was also stopped. Pocket money had been getting taken away from children for bad behaviour, usually for swearing. This was stopped because, apart from anything else, it was illegal to do so. Each child had their own page in this punishment book where things were recorded. It would detail how much pocket money they had, along with any deductions for bad behaviour.

85. After the punishment book was binned, any punishments were usually recorded in the logbook for the unit, a red ledger, where the daily occurrences were entered. It might also have been recorded in the child's personal file. Previously any money taken from the children would be held by the council. I discussed this with PVX [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and we agreed that any money retained from the children in Group 2 was put in a savings book for that child, so they could get it later. It was their money, and they had a right to it. PVX [REDACTED] agreed to this.
86. The amount of pocket money children got varied depending on their age. Children in Group 2 got between £3 and £4. Children in Group 1 got £6 or £7. Every swearword lost them 50 pence. This meant that some children very quickly lost most, if not all their money. When this happened, the children had nothing to lose so had no incentive to behave and they went mental. The staff were left with no other form of discipline. That's when we impressed on staff this form of punishment wasn't working. We told the staff that we needed to turn things on its head.
87. Corporal punishment didn't happen at any time when I was at Bellshill. This had already been addressed through the different childcare acts at the turn of the century. I never saw any physical punishment being given at Bellshill. I would never have allowed it.
88. The staff who had been at Bellshill for a long period of time took a quantum leap and put a whole lot of trust in myself and Heather Hall and a few other staff who genuinely wanted change in how young people were treated. There were some older staff however who were set in their ways and more resistant to change. They weren't prepared to open their minds to new ways of working.
89. The older children were never responsible for disciplining the younger children. I encouraged other children to take responsibility for the behaviour of other children. Often, if a child spoke back to me, other children would step in, defend me, and remind the child who they were speaking to. I didn't talk down to the children, so they knew not to talk that way to me. I didn't impose this on any of the children, it just happened.

90. Children were never segregated as such when an incident kicked off. What might have happened is the child may be given a 'time-out.' This was something I encouraged when I went to Bellshill. They would be taken to their room, and staff would remain with them at all times. The staff would speak to them to try and find out why the incident happened or why they were behaving like they were. It was to try and establish what was behind it all.
91. There was one boy, RES ██████████, who I worked very closely with, and had a very good relationship with. RES ██████████ could hardly speak and his language was very garbled. He wasn't just frightened to come out his room, he was frightened to come out from under his bed. One time Kevin Murphy came upstairs and looked in his room and all he could see were two pairs of feet sticking out from under the bed. He obviously realised this was me trying to communicate with RES ██████████. I taught RES ██████████ to speak by singing, using songs to sound out words and got him to slow down, listen, and learn.
92. I wouldn't say I ever disciplined any of the children at Bellshill. I hate the word disciplined. I certainly stopped them from behaving badly. I would speak to them, tell them to take a breath and step back. I would encourage them to have a look at what they were doing and ask why they were behaving that way. I was never a disciplinarian.

Restraint

93. Restraint was very seldomly used at Bellshill. I would have had no qualms in using a restraint if a child was going to harm themselves, or from hurting others. I would always try to use the minimum amount of force necessary to protect them, myself, and others. I can only think of two occasions in my whole career, when I have had to step in and help restrain someone. One was when a boy, RFM ██████████, was hanging himself. I held him up while he was ██████████ and had to restrain him on the bed until he calmed down. The other occasion was when a boy, RHF ██████████, took a dislike to me and his behaviour was out of order and was going to get physical. I saw he was carrying

something which I thought was a knife and had to react. I dropped him to the floor and isolated him in another room until he calmed down.

94. Before I arrived at Bellshill, children may have been put in their bedroom and made to sit looking at the four walls. After I arrived, I made sure if they were put into their room a staff member would stay with them. The child would be made aware how long they were going to stay in their room with the staff member. They wouldn't be put in the room alone and the door locked.
95. Children who had been prescribed medication to calm them down if they kicked off, would be pinned down and the liquid medication forced into their mouth. Largactil was the drug used and it acted very quickly. It was a horrible drug. This regularly happened to RES [REDACTED]. I only saw this happening once and I decided it shouldn't happen again. If the drug was administered the parents were probably advised.
96. In relation to whether there was a policy in relation to restraint, I would have to say the policy was that there would be no restraints unless in extreme circumstances. This didn't change in the time I was at Bellshill. I would say that initially I did see excessive restraints being used at Bellshill. I did see a child being held down and on another occasion a child was restrained against a wall. It was a very difficult position to be in, in respect that I didn't want to undermine the staff members, and if I had to step in, I would try and do it tactfully. I would have no qualms in stepping in if I thought the staff member was being excessive. They would be encouraged to take a 'time-out' and get some fresh air. I cannot remember who the child was.
97. Where this happened, I would have recorded the incident in the daily occurrence book and reported it to the senior member of staff on shift.

Concerns about the institution

98. Apart from when the Edward Stanton situation arose, I am not aware of Bellshill ever being the subject of concern, within the home itself, or to any external body or agency,

or any other person, because of the way children were treated. I think there were some internal underlying concerns about every residential children's home I worked in. For me it was all about changing practice.

Reporting of complaints/concerns

99. If any child at Bellshill, or another person on their behalf, wished to make a complaint or report a concern, there was a set complaints procedure. There was a form that should be completed and the child would be supported in the completion of this form by myself or another member of staff. Some children were more than capable of filling in the form themselves, but we were there to support any child who couldn't.

100. Complaints were received on a regular basis. The favourite turn of phrase when you were confronting bad behaviour of children was that they were going to tell the social work, and that they were going to say that you hurt them or shouted at them, or that you touched them. This was prevalent in most children's homes I have worked in, not just Bellshill. These things being said became like water off a duck's back to staff.

101. I received, fairly frequently, complaints against members of staff. I did my best to sit down with the child and support them in putting what had happened down on paper. I think children were more willing to complain after I started because I encouraged children to speak up if they felt they were unhappy because of something that was said or done to them. I would tell them they had a right to complain. All written complaints were recorded. A meeting would be called with the child, the member of staff and myself. The member of staff could explain why the complained about course of action was taken. Usually, the staff member would give a perfectly reasonable explanation.

102. I have always listened to and represented the children and young people. If any child came to me and said they were being abused or something they weren't happy about was happening to them, then it wouldn't stop with me. I would deal with it and report

it. There is no way I would dismiss what they had said. If the child said something felt wrong, then it should be fully investigated to establish if it was wrong.

103. If the child's complaint was upheld, then the consequences were that the member of staff was to apologise on the basis that mistakes happened. I am not aware of any complaint being escalated any higher. The management within Bellshill would be advised in writing of any complaint received, and the final outcome, either by myself or another senior.

Trusted adult/confidante

104. Generally, children would speak about any worries they had to any member of staff they trusted. In the latter stages of my time at Bellshill, an advocacy group was set up. This was external to the children's home. The advocacy group would appoint one of their staff to assist the child in making a complaint to make sure that the children's voice was heard.
105. Some children might make their complaints to their social worker. When that happened, the social worker would come to the unit and have a meeting with the person complained about and a senior manager. Any complaint made by a child to a social worker would be fully investigated.

Abuse

106. I am not aware of anything written down to say what the definition of abuse was in relation to the treatment of children. There was a book of policies and procedures issued by Strathclyde Regional Council in relation to children in care. This book was huge and it was 'gobbledegook'. Only lawyers would be able to understand it. It was a well-known fact, in any of the children homes I worked at, including Bellshill, that any bad behaviour by staff towards children wasn't acceptable. There was nothing to define what bad behaviour or abuse was.

107. A lot of the behaviour that staff were exhibiting towards children when I first went to Bellshill would probably be classed as being abuse nowadays. At that time, I saw it as people being reactive to behaviour they were being presented with. I don't think they were coping with it and weren't understanding what they were saying in front of the children. There was no intended malice by the member of staff towards the children.
108. In one case in particular, I made it perfectly obvious and I called it out when I saw it. This was in relation to RES [REDACTED]. He was being treated badly by some of the members of staff because they didn't like him. I stated this openly at a case conference. I wanted this recorded and I don't regret having said it. I wouldn't retract it because I meant every word. It was wrong how he was treated just because he was difficult. It was difficult to understand what he was saying because he couldn't speak properly. He was hard work and swore constantly. I don't dispute that he was difficult to work with. All the behaviour RES [REDACTED] presented at that time, would probably nowadays be considered to be autistic behaviour.
109. When I was in Group 1, I remember there was one time when PJP [REDACTED], RBL [REDACTED] and PRI [REDACTED] claimed that Edward Doherty had abused them. It came to light to me on a backshift when PJP [REDACTED] was in her bedsit and was very subdued. She was lying across three chairs. I had a great relationship with PJP [REDACTED] who was a lovely, smart, switched on girl. On this evening, she wouldn't have eye contact with me or engage at all. I went downstairs and told PVX [REDACTED] and Clare Flannery, SNR [REDACTED] at the time, that something was seriously wrong in the unit because of the way PJP [REDACTED] was behaving.
110. I spoke to PJP [REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] and PRI [REDACTED]. It was unclear to me exactly what PJP [REDACTED] had told Clare, but PVX [REDACTED] had said it didn't merit telling the police. I felt I was being shut out.

111. 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.'
112. 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.
113. It was four years after the incident with PJP that the girls reported it to the police and that led to Eddie Doherty being convicted.
114. It is quite possible that a child could have been ill-treated or abused, and it would not have come to light at the time it was occurring at Bellshill.

Child protection arrangements

115. Guidance and instruction for staff, including managerial staff, on how children in their care in Bellshill should be treated, cared for, and protected against abuse, ill treatment, or inappropriate behaviour towards them came from the district, down to the manager and then down through the ranks. There was no written instruction. Most of it was verbal. I would imagine there was some paperwork, like policies and things like that, somewhere. As far as I am concerned it came from PVX to me, then from me down to the staff.
116. I am not aware of any guidance and instruction on how to handle and respond to reports of abuse or ill treatment of children by staff, other adults or other children. For me, I thought it was a case of dealing with any report with a degree of common sense. If I received a complaint of abuse I would tell my line manager.

117. Once I had reported something to PVX or Clare Flannery, when I asked for any update into the complaint I was more or less told I didn't need to know what was happening. They said it was above my paygrade.

External monitoring

118. Before I left Bellshill, Her Majesty's Inspectors came in and talked to the children and staff. Sometimes the children were on their own without staff present. It was fairly ad hoc. They would then draw up a report on the running of Bellshill. Unfortunately, they called on a particularly busy Friday backshift and were there the whole shift. They came to me about 9:00pm when it was really busy especially as it was party night. Kids got their pocket money on a Friday night and some would get paid or receive their benefits. There was a fair amount of indulgence in alcohol so often it was quite a fraught, busy time and the place was 'going like a fair'.
119. I was in charge of the whole building and was under a lot of pressure. An inspector asked me something about a child's care plan. I knew the answer, but I couldn't get it out because of everything that was going on. I just said that I didn't know and couldn't deal with it there and then as I was busy. There were only two members of staff on duty and I needed to be out there helping them. I know this wouldn't have looked good and I gave a very poor account of myself. This would have been highlighted in the inspection report. I felt I was ambushed by the inspectors. I never saw that inspection report and I never got any feedback from the inspectors or the management of Bellshill. I expected to be challenged about why I said I didn't know, but it didn't happen.
120. This was the only external inspection that I was aware of.

Record-keeping

121. As well as the individual care file for each child there was also a general logbook for the unit where daily occurrences would be recorded and was used to brief the oncoming shift. There was also a book held in the office.

122. There were three formalities. It would be recorded in the daily occurrence book, an incident report would be completed and recorded in the child's individual file. These would all be kept in a locked filing cabinet within each unit's office. All confidential documents were held in these cabinets. This was always the case when I was at Bellshill. When the logbooks were full, they should have been archived within the children's home and then transported to the Mitchell Library in Glasgow. I don't know if this happened.
123. At my court case, I asked my legal team to find the documents relevant to my case. I was told that all the records had been destroyed. This was totally contradicted by the reports I have been shown during this Inquiry from North Lanarkshire Council.

Allegations of abuse

124. An allegation was made through a social worker that I threatened RFO [REDACTED] one of the residents. This is discussed further on in this statement in relation to documentation provided by North Lanarkshire Council.
125. Other allegations were raised against me, but they weren't by children. One was by John Blair who claimed that PJP [REDACTED] was in a relationship with me. This was because of John Blair's [REDACTED] seeing PJP [REDACTED] at school with a photograph of me saying I was her boyfriend. I explain this further on in relation to documentation provided by the police.
126. Within a few months John Blair made another set of allegations against me. He said he had walked into one of the living rooms and saw me having sex with PJP [REDACTED]. This was a lot of rubbish and was blatant lies. PVX [REDACTED] dealt with this. He told John he was very naughty and should stop telling lies. Again, I told PVX [REDACTED] that I shouldn't be working there with John Blair on my shift. RFG [REDACTED] worked in my unit but not on my shift. RFG [REDACTED] just supported John in everything he was saying. PVX [REDACTED] told me just to ignore John Blair and not to even speak to him. This went on for three years. I became extremely ill as a result and went off sick for a year and a half. I went back but went

off sick again for another year. I was mentally ill with depression and anxiety. This was in 1992.

127. I wasn't given any support apart from by Bernadette Docherty, the district officer for childcare. When I was off sick that was when Eddie Doherty was being investigated and Bernadette became aware of my situation with John Blair and RFG. She referred me to a psychologist, Miriam Jackson, and I had some sessions with her to try and manage what had happened to me. I am still quite confused and disorientated about that particular time in my life, so I am not sure about exact dates.

Investigations into abuse – personal involvement

128. I became aware of the incidents with Eddie Doherty and Ed Stanton being investigated by the police. I was never involved in any investigation on behalf of the institution into allegations of abuse, or ill-treatment of, or any inappropriate behaviour by staff or others towards children.

Reports of abuse and civil claims

129. I was never involved in the handling of reports or civil claims to Bellshill by former residents concerning historical abuse.

Police investigations/ criminal proceedings

130. When I was at Bellshill around 1993/1994, I was aware of the ongoing police operation called Operation Sunflower which originated in the Merseyside area and related to Edward Stanton. I only discovered a few months ago, Ed Stanton was convicted to fifteen years imprisonment for abuse in Bellshill, Wooddean and Flemington House. I think he had previously been given ten years imprisonment down south. I didn't have to give evidence at Ed Stanton's trial.

131. I was cited as a witness in the court case against Edward Doherty but was initially excused because of my ill-health. Eddie Doherty's lawyer then cited me to give evidence in his defence. I gave evidence but I was treated as a hostile witness. I didn't say anything in his defence.

Convicted abusers

132. I am aware that Edward Stanton and Edward Doherty were convicted for abuse at Bellshill.

Other staff working at Bellshill

Edward Stanton

133. Edward Stanton was the officer in charge at Bellshill. He was in his 50s. I don't really know how he was recruited for this post. I had heard that he told them he had a whole lot of qualifications, but it was later found out to be lies. He said he had lots of experience working at homes in England, but it turned out he was a milkman. I can't really comment on how he interacted with the children because he wasn't there a lot of the time. Sometimes he worked shifts if it suited him.
134. A lot of the staff were questioning Edward Stanton's behaviour. I had particular concerns about his relationship with three children from the same family, the [REDACTED]. They were all children who were living within Bellshill Children's Home, and he would take them back to his flat. I expressed my concern to him about doing this.
135. Sometimes Ed Stanton would come through to the unit, when he was off duty, and sit in the living room with a boy on his knee. Staff were telling him that he shouldn't be doing that as it could be misread and he was asking for trouble. I don't know what childcare training he would have received when he was at Bellshill. He should have been supervised and monitored by a district officer or their deputy.

136. When I was at Bellshill, I was aware that allegations had been made about Edward Stanton from when he worked in Liverpool. The police investigation was called Operation Sunflower and although it was based in Merseyside it also involved Scotland. By then I had my own concerns about him and people were commenting about his conduct. The police came and interviewed me and asked if I had any concerns about his behaviour. I asked if I could get back to them about that because I wanted to be clear and accurate because of the legal implications.
137. I met them at the police station at Hamilton and spoke to the officers who were heading the enquiry. I was interviewed under caution, on tape, and I told them about my concerns about Edward Stanton's relationship with the [REDACTED] family. I never heard any more about it. I also told them all about the allegations made against myself by John Blair and RFG [REDACTED]. I felt they should be aware from the very beginning. I have always been very open and transparent about the allegations made against me by John Blair and RFG [REDACTED].
138. I never saw Edward Stanton disciplining a child. I never saw him abuse, and never heard that he had abused a child, until I heard about Operation Sunflower when he was moved away.

Edward Doherty

139. Eddie Doherty joined Bellshill initially as a temporary houseparent on the bank staff to cover sickness and worked on another unit. He was then moved to Group 1, still as a temporary houseparent where I became his senior. He would have been in his late forties. I am not aware of him getting any specific training for the post when he joined.
140. Eddie Doherty was diabolical with the children. He was very sexualised in his behaviour and wasn't a nice person. His behaviour towards the children was wrong. He was very sexualised in his language and behaviour. He was a misogynist and several times I had to challenge his behaviour.

141. One time I happened to go down to Group 2 and he was throwing bananas at the kids in the dining room and was calling them monkeys. I got him by the collar and took him aside and tried to speak sense to him. I told him it was abusive, and he was enflaming things and shouldn't behave like that. He just came back with the fact he had a CQSW qualification and that he knew about all these things. I took this up with PVX [REDACTED].
142. One of the incidents I was aware of was when he made comment about sticking a pool ball up a girl's hole. There was another incident in the minibus when there were a group of boys and girls going to Largs. Eddie Doherty said something to the boys about taking it to the PF. I didn't know what he meant when he said PF. One of the boys asked him and he said it stood for Pish Flaps. I just felt as if the bottom of the minibus had opened up. I told him to stop and that I would talk to him later. The boys thought it was hilarious, but the girls were really upset and were going bananas. I couldn't deal with it there and then but when we got to Largs I told John Blair, who had been driving, to take the children to the park, while I spoke to Eddie.
143. I addressed Eddie's language and behaviour with him. I told him it was unacceptable. I didn't think I could deal with this myself so I told him that I would be reporting it when we got back to Bellshill. Eddie just swore at me and told me that he had been to college and got a CQSW qualification. I later told Kevin Murphy and completed an incident report. Kevin took it to PVX [REDACTED] who just said that Eddie Doherty was bonkers but that he would deal with it.
144. When his behaviour was brought to my attention, I dealt with it and spoke to him and told him he was wrong. I warned him twice, then I told Kevin Murphy. After that I took it to PVX [REDACTED]. I told him that Eddie's behaviour was out of order and he wasn't listening to me. I told PVX [REDACTED] he needed to do something about it. At the end of the day, he was sacked. Not because of his behaviour, but because he hadn't declared his offences on his application for the job. As far as I was concerned, he should have been sacked for his behaviour and the way he was talking to the children.
145. Eddie ended up getting seriously assaulted in Bellshill by one of the older boys, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] when I was still there. Eddie had been nightshift and had been having a go at a

couple of girls from Group 3. [REDACTED], who was a huge boy, stepped in and challenged him, then set about him. [REDACTED] ended up going to court and was sent to the jail, but the case came up after he had left care. I don't think he should have been sent to prison because Eddie pushed and pushed until [REDACTED] gave him what he wanted. Eddie coerced him into it. I wasn't there but [REDACTED] was on my unit, and I supported and represented him throughout. I didn't go to court for this.

John Blair

146. John Blair joined as a temporary houseparent in the late 1980s through to the 1990s. I worked with him. He would have been in his early 40s then. I was a houseparent when he joined, then became the acting senior houseparent, then senior houseparent. He was mainly used as a driver to take the kids out because he was trained to drive the minibus. He worked lots of overtime, but I can't criticise him because I did too. He was okay with the children and right up to the end of my time there I had no concerns about how he interacted with them. His main problem was me. He accused me of lots of things.
147. He married a girl after she left care and they had children together. It made me suspect that he had been accusing me of lots of things just to cover up what he had been doing. I never saw him disciplining or abusing a child. I never heard anyone saying that he had abused a child.

PVX [REDACTED]

148. PVX [REDACTED] joined as SNR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Edward Stanton. He was in his late 40s 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.
149. The only time I saw him disciplining 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 lost the place with her. RFG took PJP away and I took PVX away from the group to calm him down. I told him he was stupid to do that. He went back and apologised to PJP. 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.

RFG

150. RFG was at Bellshill from the late 1980s to the early 1990s. He was around the same age as me and was a houseparent. I was his supervisor in Group 1, although I couldn't supervise him according to PVX who told me to leave him alone. RFG was the source of many allegations against me about my relationship with PJP. He was a close friend of John Blair, and they operated like a 'tag team', making up allegations about me. PVX thought the best way to deal with the situation was for me to give RFG a wide berth.
151. RFG didn't like being challenged about anything. He was against the idea of putting locks on the bedrooms of the Group 1 children to give them privacy. When he was writing in the daily occurrence book he would pontificate at length and write screeds of nonsense.
152. There was one girl, who was just over sixteen, who slept naked in her bed. One morning RFG went into her bedroom using the master key and pulled the quilt back, to get her out her bed to go to work. The girl wasn't very happy with what RFG had done. She came to me and told me. I spoke to RFG and told him that he couldn't do that. RFG disagreed with me and thought this was okay. I reported this to PVX who just said I was giving RFG more ammunition to complain about me. He told me to leave him alone and stay clear of him. He said he would deal with RFG and I know he spoke to him but nothing was ever done about it.
153. RFG wasn't great working with the children. PJP, in particular, would bypass RFG and come straight to me or PVX if she wanted anything. We didn't want this because we were trying to give the houseparent's the power to make

decisions and deal with things like this. RFG found it difficult to make decisions and preferred the seniors to make the decisions for him.

154. RFG was very dictatorial in his approach to the children. Kathleen Irvine, who was a senior on his shift, complained to me that RFG was wearing very tight white stretch jeans. She wanted me to deal with it but because of what PVX had said I knew if I spoke to him on my own, he would just complain about me. I decided to speak to him with Kathleen present and I told him that a lot of young girls were in the unit and wearing this type of revealing jeans was inappropriate. He argued with me about it and told me that I couldn't tell him what he could and couldn't wear. He refused to speak further about it until he saw his union rep. Even Kathleen questioned how I was able to supervise RFG when he had such an attitude.

155. RFG was subsequently sacked in 1992/1993 for making false allegations against me. I was off sick at the time. He took his dismissal to an industrial tribunal a year later and I had to attend. The social workers had to twist my arm to encourage me to go. PWR even came and picked me up in a car to drive me to the tribunal in Mclvor House. I gave my evidence, but I was torn to bits and RFG won his case. He didn't go back to working in a children's home and went to work with the elderly.

156. Apart from the occasion where RFG pulled the quilt off the girl, I didn't see him disciplining or abusing any child or hear that he had.

EZK

157. I don't remember a EZK.

GCH

158. I know the name, but she was there before my time.

John Cushley

159. I don't know that name.

KTJ

160. I remember him. He was a social worker outwith Bellshill. There was nothing about him that would have raised any concerns. I can't recall how old he would be. I am not sure what his role was at Bellshill. I never saw him with children.

PWR

161. PWR was a nightshift senior. She was off sick when I first started. She was off sick for a year and was off sick quite a lot after that. She would have been in her forties. She was a strict disciplinarian and ruled with an iron fist. I wouldn't say she was abusive in any way. I never saw her abusing or disciplining a child. She had a fractious relationship with some of the children. Sometimes when she challenged a child, she would escalate the situation rather than defuse it. That was just the way she was. She wasn't someone who was keen for change.

GCP

162. I can't think of a member of staff called GCP.

Chef

163. There were a number of chefs working at Bellshill.

MVN

164. I knew MVN well. She was working there when I started as a houseparent and was still there as a houseparent when I left. She was in her fifties. She was initially in Group 2, but I poached her into Group 1. She had many skills and qualities that I

wanted in Group 1. I needed someone who would be like a 'mammy' to the older girls and be supportive to them. She liked to knit, and she was a great listener. The older girls related to her. In Group 2, before she moved, she was an authoritarian and shouted a lot, but she was one of the staff who took a quantum leap and was willing to change her way of working. She understood that the reward was better than the stick. I have the utmost respect for MVN. She was a really good houseparent and a good worker.

165. I never saw MVN disciplining anyone. I remember her challenging one boy's behaviour. He was highly sexualised and made sexualised comments to the female members of staff. MVN's way of dealing with this was to encourage the boy to come and get it. I knew that this boy would understand this to mean that she was giving him the 'come-on.' I had to step in, and I questioned the boy on why he was saying such things and told him it was unacceptable. I also told MVN that she shouldn't encourage him. She had difficulty understanding why because this was her way of dealing with difficult situations.
166. I saw MVN giving children a good 'ticking off' but never saw her disciplining or abusing any child. I heard some children say they wanted to complain to the social worker about MVN because she was confrontational, but I never heard anyone say that she had abused them.

Leaving Bellshill

167. My position in Bellshill for the last three years of my service was untenable. I was working with John Blair on the same shift and RFG was also in the unit, but I couldn't challenge them directly or supervise them. In the last three years it was a constant wave after wave of allegations against me and PJP and then subsequent investigations. I was constantly worried about what the next allegation would be. I was also ostracised by the other staff. I was so unwell by the end that I knew I couldn't stay.

168. 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.

Applicant allegations

169. **PRI** has given a statement to the Inquiry. I remember **PRI**. She was a very damaged young girl, a very sad case. She found it difficult to fit into the children's home. She tended to make up stories about people. This made her get picked on by others and teased. I never had difficulty in dealing with her when she was in group 1. I thought I had a fair relationship with her. I never sanctioned or punished her but when I was presented with her behaviour which was inappropriate, I addressed it with her, the same as I did with any other young person in the children's home. I didn't shy away from it. At no time did I ever abuse her.

170. At paragraphs 38, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, and 78 in her statement she has said

*'They gave us a bus ticket to get to school and back again but that was all. We got £6.50 for pocket money every week. I smoked so my money went on cigarettes. I didn't have money for lunch. We all had to give them ten pounds towards independent living. They would give us fifteen pounds back on top of that so that we would have £25 for food. A member of staff called **RBP** would ask us for the money and take us out with it at night.*

RBP was another member of staff. He was 42. 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 staff members, John Blair, PVX and I was thirteen the first time. I looked older because I was tall and heavily built. They would take PJP, RBM, RBL and I to the Hattorrigg Hotel and Valenti's Italian Restaurant. He would buy us meals and wine to get us drunk. I became dependent on alcohol.

If it was a nice day, they would take us out in the mini-bus 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.

RBP would buy alcohol with our pocket money. He would tell us to ask other staff to give us more money and say it was for the cinema. He'd take us back to his house in Stonehouse. He lived in a top flat. He used to put music on and the drinks would be flowing. He would tell us that we could take whatever we wanted out of his house but I didn't take anything. Some of the girls would take records.

He used to take a lot of girls back to his flat. At the time it felt like someone cared about you but they didn't. Now that I'm an adult, I think it was grooming. I heard from other people that he was interested in boys too but I didn't see anything like that.

He had drugs lying around his house. I didn't take them. I used to have the odd spliff but it made me feel sick. I just drank. I didn't take any pills but they were around. He used to have Ecstasy and Diazepam. On one occasion he had a lot of Cocaine. The other staff knew because he didn't even hide it.

His house was broken into so he moved into the independent unit for a few months. I remember he tried to give RBM and I drugs for the first time in the office.

RBP ended up getting a flat beside He got into a relationship with one of our friends. They had an argument one day when I was there. We were in the bedroom putting new covers on the bed. All of a sudden, he pulled the quilt over my head, and dragged me onto the bed, he tried to kiss me and open buttons on my

trousers. I froze. I told him to leave me alone. I started to walk out the door and he said that he was just kidding. I took my things and left.

He had tried to kiss me once before in Stonehouse but I had put it down to drunkenness. I was stupid for going in the first place but I thought that those people cared about us. I didn't speak to RBP again after that.

One day RBP took RBM, PJP and I to the hotel. RFG and John Blair turned up after about an hour. RFG went to the bar and told the staff that we were underage so we were asked to leave. I think he recorded that incident in the logbook.

We had our own logbooks along with a group logbook. They were stored in boxes in the loft. Two days before the police came to the home, I saw RBP removing the boxes from the loft. I asked him what he was doing and he said, they were having a clear out. He took the boxes outside and I saw him putting them in a car. Luckily, I found out recently, RFG had taken copies of them. He told me that he had given them to the police'.

165. What PRI has said about coming to my house in Stonehouse with other people and taking drugs that were in my house is absolute nonsense.
166. Getting from Bellshill to Stonehouse was a two-hour journey by bus. If I took kids from the home to my house and was giving them drink and drugs to the extent that PRI has mentioned, when they got back to the home, it would have been very noticeable. If they stayed overnight at my house in Stonehouse it would be noticed and logged by the night staff and the kids would have been reported missing to the police. It would be recorded, both at the children's home and by the police. That didn't happen. I have never taken any child from the children's home to my house in Stonehouse or Bellshill.
167. PRI says in her statement that we were in the bedroom when I dragged her onto the bed. That flat didn't have a bedroom. It was a studio flat and the bed was pulled down from a unit.

168. PRI did come and visit me after she had left care. She had visited the children's home after she had her baby to let the staff meet her baby. I was off sick at the time, so she asked for my address and PVX gave it to her. She came to my house, with her boyfriend, to show me her baby. I welcomed them into my home, because she had left care by that time, and had her own house in the community. We had coffee and I thoroughly enjoyed the time and meeting her baby. It was lovely to see her. After that she invited me to her house for dinner with her and her boyfriend and spend time with her and the baby, which I did. My wife helped me buy a baby-grow for her baby to take with me. If PRI had any concerns about my treatment of her or any other children, why would she turn up at my door to show me her child, and invite me to her home to spend time with her child if I was what she said I was.
169. The passage of time has absolutely not affected my recollection of what is alleged.
170. I don't know what was going on in PRI's mind that made her say these things. She has always been one for telling stories, and not just about me. What she has said are serious allegations. I think she may have said all these things about me in response to me appearing in court for the defence in the court case against Edward Doherty. She wouldn't have known the background behind me being there. I appeared at court because I was cited in his defence. I understand that PRI wouldn't have known I didn't want to be there and she would have assumed that I was taking his side.
171. During the police operation called Sunflower, 500 people were interviewed, and I was never mentioned by any of them as having done anything to any child. Suddenly after Edward Doherty's court case, PRI has come up with all of these allegations. I don't think I should apologise for that happening, but I will because I know I let the girls down by not taking their side and representing them.
172. I agree one hundred percent that if what she has said did happen then that would be classed as abuse. What she has claimed was never my thinking or behaviour. I don't know where all the things she has said has come from.

Part D and other allegations

North Lanarkshire Council

173. I have been aware of other documents held by North Lanarkshire Council and the police where my name has been mentioned.
174. I have been shown a document from North Lanarkshire Council titled 'Alleged abuse in the establishment.' This document states,

'It appears from the review of individual case records and documents relating to the establishment that there were clear issues around the late 1980s and early 1990s 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 every substantiated. The staff members concerned with the allegations and counter allegations were RBP [REDACTED], RFG [REDACTED], PVX [REDACTED] and John Blair.

175. There are some truths and some deviations from the truth in this. I want to make it clear, I never took any child from the children's home to my home. Children did come to my home accompanied by another member of staff. One example was when RJS [REDACTED], RJS [REDACTED], RJL [REDACTED] and RJV [REDACTED] were brought to my home by a member of staff, in the minibus, to collect a fishtank. RJV [REDACTED] was going to get a snake as a pet, and I had a spare fishtank but it was too big for me to take to the home myself.
176. They arrived and it took the four of us to carry it down all the stairs because there were internal and external stairs. We put it in the minibus then they went to the pet shop to get his snake then back to Bellshill to set it all up.

177. There was another time when I was at home, off sick, when a temporary member of staff, Anne Coyle or Boyle, turned up at my door. She had RJL and RJV with her. She told me that they decided to come up and visit me. They came into the house, had a can of ginger each, then left. I wasn't happy with this. The next day I was backshift, so I spoke to Kevin Murphy and told him that this can't happen. I know Kevin spoke to her and explained the reasons why it shouldn't have happened. That was the only time that any children were in my house at Stonehouse.
178. RBL came to visit me at my house in Bellshill with a 'Get well soon card' when I was off sick. PVX 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.
179. PJP came to see me at the house when she had her baby. She had left care by then.
180. PRI came to my house, but she had left care and was accompanied by her boyfriend. She only came so I could meet her baby. These are the only times that any of the young people were in my house
181. The idea and the myth that I took children from the children's home to my home is a complete and utter fabrication.
182. What she says about children being taken out by staff members in a social context is not true. It wasn't in a social context. It was more a case of supporting young people to be able to socialise when they got out. It wasn't every night, not even every week. On some occasions I took PJP, RFL, and RJS to local restaurants for a meal. Alcohol was available to them because, with supervision, young people were legally allowed to have alcohol. Wine was available to them if they wanted it, depending on their age, but it was only under clear supervision. This was supported by management, as demonstrated when on a trip to France, when PVX sanctioned the young people to have wine with their dinner. This actually went a stage further, but I wasn't there, and it was outwith my supervision. I stand by my

decision to involve myself in such activity because it was a good thing. One night I took RFL [REDACTED] for a meal the night before she was leaving care to go home. I had a particularly good relationship with her, hence I thought it would be a good and productive thing for her to end her time in the children's home and my company, in a positive manner.

183. Another reason for me taking children to restaurants was that some girls were interested in following a career in the restaurant business. I thought taking them to experience the restaurant first hand and on occasion I even asked the chef to speak to them and give them any advice. The inference that I was taking children out and the drink was flowing was not the case. I took them there to help them realise their aspirations and potentially help them when they left care. A lot of the work I was involved in was supporting the young people in their dreams and aspirations. This was frustrated by other staff not understanding the concept that young people had dreams and aspirations.

184. An extract from a North Lanarkshire document details a complaint made by a RFO [REDACTED] RFO [REDACTED]. It was recorded on 27/10/1987, 19/6/1986 and 3/11/1988. The complaint is an allegation made by RFO [REDACTED] that I made a violent threat towards him.

185. I recall this complaint. The issue with RFO [REDACTED] is that he was one of the older boys and had a lot of power within the group. He was very challenging and had been used to getting his own way. My opinion was that he got his own way to keep him quiet. He challenged me and my authority within the group because he wanted the keys to the office. I didn't threaten him. I told him to stop, go away, and think about what he was doing and his behaviour towards me.

186. He went away, left the building, and went up to his mum's house. He told her that I had aggressively threatened him and she then told the social worker. That was certainly not the case. I was assertive towards him and stood my ground with him. The social worker came to Bellshill for a meeting with myself and my senior, Heather Hall. The social worker indignantly put it to me, quite assertively, that I had threatened RFO [REDACTED]. I told the social worker in no uncertain terms that I didn't threaten him

aggressively but stopped him in his tracks and sent him away to think about his behaviour. RFO [REDACTED] remained with his mum after that and never returned to the children's home.

187. The passage of time has absolutely not affected my recollection of what is alleged.
188. Another extract from a North Lanarkshire document details a complaint by a RFM [REDACTED]. It was recorded on 30/5/2022. RFM [REDACTED] states via his solicitor that throughout his 3-year residence at Bellshill he was sexually assaulted and abused by staff members RBP [REDACTED] and They would grope his genitals and sometimes dragged him into rooms to do so, watch him bathe and physically assault him with kicks and punches. It says that the historical abuse allegation was investigated by the police and that I was charged and convicted. It was unclear which resident this related to.
189. I was never charged, convicted, or prosecuted in relation to anything like that. The fact that it says I was convicted should speak volumes.
190. The only significant event I remember with RFM [REDACTED] was one time I was walking past his room and he was trying to hang himself [REDACTED]. I stopped him because that was my job to safeguard him. I never assaulted or groped him. I lifted him up by the legs, so [REDACTED]. I got a member of staff to [REDACTED]. I placed him on the bed and held him down, but only for his own safety because he was going to hurt himself. In no way did I go out to sexually or physically assault him. I was safeguarding him. I stand by the decisions I made at that point in time. Looking back, I wouldn't alter them in any way if it happened today. This was one of the most frightening experiences I ever had in my time working in childcare.
191. The passage of time has absolutely not affected my recollection of what is alleged.
192. RFM [REDACTED] was alcohol, solvent, and glue dependent. I believe his thoughts were absolutely scrambled because of his substance abuse. I quite believe that he believes

the things that he said to be true because they were part of the horrors from the effects of his abuse. I can't speculate what he was thinking because I don't know.

193. If what he said happened, then I agree, one hundred percent that this would be classed as abuse.

Police statements

194. John Blair has given a statement to the police, dated 25/01/2002, which was made available to the Inquiry. I have been read an extract of his statement. The first section is from Page 2 Paragraph 6 to Page 3 Paragraph 3. In this section John Blair says,

'I reported Ed Docherty to RBP on two occasions during the summer of 1988. This was about what I thought was his improper language towards the girls. This continued even after that and so I went to management about it and spoke to Kevin Murphy who was I think SNR of the home. A meeting was called with Kevin, Heather Hall, RBP and Eddie Doherty. RBP denied that I had made initial complaints to him and during the meeting Eddie threatened to assault me. Eddie never worked here much after that as he went for a permanent post after he was off sick or on holiday but I never saw much of him. I never later challenged RBP about it as I felt that I was hitting my head off a brick wall. I was told that there had been discrepancies in Eddie's application form and that was why he did not return. This was about November 1988'.

195. John Blair did come to me about Eddie Doherty's sexualised behaviour. I addressed this with Eddie Doherty and I took it forward with both Kevin Murphy and PVX. After this had been done, I did not report back to John Blair and update him with what I had done and what was happening because I wasn't obligated to do so. In fact, it would have been wrong for me to have done so. I did not have a meeting with Heather Hall, Kevin Murphy, John Blair, and Eddie Doherty. That absolutely just did not happen. That was not how the issue would have been resolved.

196. I don't know what action PVX took with Eddie Doherty about his language and behaviour in the two incidents talked about. One was to do with REG and the pool balls, and the other was after the trip to Largs when he made the comment in the minibus in front of young girls and boys. I give more details about these incidents in the response to the statement of Kathleen Irvine. I don't know what happened as a result because PVX didn't report it back to me. It was up to PVX how he dealt with it.

197. John Blair, in his statement, goes on to say,

'I started to have concerns about RBP taking girls out on their own. PVX was now.... The girls that RBP took out were PJP and RFL. RFL said that she was "going out posing in Hamilton with RBP" PRI was another girl who had been at RBP's house in Stonehouse'.

198. Yes, I did take RFL out for a meal in Hamilton. I quite believe that she would tell people that she was out posing with me because that was RFL's nature and sense of humour. I don't think it was inappropriate because it was just the sort of thing she would have said. She didn't walk down the street with me arm in arm. I took PJP out for a meal on her birthday when she turned sixteen. PRI definitely did not come to my house in Stonehouse. When I lived there, she would only have been fourteen or fifteen. There was no way I would have taken PRI anywhere near my house because I didn't work directly with her at that particular point in time. I also didn't have a trusting relationship with her.

199. In the next section titled Page 3 Paragraph 4 to page 2 Paragraph 1 John Blair says,

who is another member of staff was told to take them, that is PRI and RFL and PJP to RBP's house. This would have to come from management and George told me that PRI was smelling of drink when she came out. PVX seemed to give into PJP all the time and I could not understand the reason. This year RBM was in here and said "PJP lumbered PVX" ... was with her and she said "Why was RBP

never sacked along with Eddie Doherty". She said she had been told things by PJP [REDACTED] and RBL [REDACTED].

200. [REDACTED] was a houseparent and became a senior houseparent at one point. He would never have taken any child to any member of staff's house because he wouldn't like it done to himself. It never happened. This is a complete and utter fabrication. I am quite certain if PJP [REDACTED] and RBL [REDACTED] were approached they would tell you that. In relation to the comment about PJP [REDACTED] lumbering PVX [REDACTED], which I believe means they were kissing, I find it hard to believe that either PJP [REDACTED] or PVX [REDACTED] would do that. I think this is more a reflection on how John Blair's mind works.

201. 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'.

202. 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 [REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] a full account of PJP [REDACTED]'s background, including her family background before she came into care and the reasons she was in care.

203. John Blair's [REDACTED] 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.

204. 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.

205. In the next section titled Page 5 Paragraph 3 John Blair says,

'RFG used to work here and was sacked after he complained about RBP RBP. He took his complaints to Ian Gilmore who was high up at McIver House in Glasgow. One night RFG and I were in the snooker club in Bellshill and RBP RBP walked in with RBM who would have been about 16/17 years old then. This was about two years ago. One of the staff said they knew that we worked in the home and that RBM was too young and from the home as RBP had come over to us. I saw RBM give money to some local boys to buy her drink after they left again to stand at the bar. I saw her have at least two drinks. RBM also told me that RBP had regularly taken her to karaoke nights in Blantyre and she was bribing him. I saw one incident in which she had been out and had a drink and came in and wanted £10 and he gave it to her'.

206. RFG made allegations against me that were totally inappropriate and untrue to the extent that he was sacked for it. There are some half truths in the incident at the snooker club he talks about. Yes, I did take RBM to the snooker club to have a game of snooker and to discuss issues she was having at that particular point in time. I saw RFG and John Blair sitting there. When I went to the bar, I ordered two glasses of coke and said to the bar staff, who I knew, after introducing RBM that she was only sixteen and asked them to take note of what we were drinking. I did that because I knew what John Blair and RFG would say.

207. We went through to have a game of snooker and there were some local boys there who knew RBM . One of the boys went to the bar and handed RBM a glass and told her it was a glass of Coca Cola. My ears pricked up when I saw the bar staff coming over to the table. They told me that there was vodka in her Coke so they couldn't serve it. I told them they already had and they replied saying they didn't know it was for her. They took the drink away.

208. At this point I realised that it was getting too risky, so we left and headed back. When we got to the children's home I spoke to PWR , the senior nightshift. I explained to PWR what had happened and asked her to log it in the recording book, which she did. I absolutely stand by the decisions I made that day. Nothing I did was inappropriate. RFG and John elaborated on the situation and were miles away from what happened. They would just have seen the bar staff taking the drink away and us leaving.

209. In the next section titled Page 6 John Blair says,

'Another incident was on a trip to Alton Towers when I was driving the minibus. Cathy Mulgrew and Jess Weir were the staff along with RBP . RBP kicked RFT in the mouth and he lost two teeth. This was reported to management but I can't remember who and this was about five years ago. Nothing was done about that. ... came to me about 18 months ago and told me that RBP had assaulted REB REB . He felt guilty about it as he said that she had been at her house being dropped off and ... and others had been winding her up. She went mad and RBP kicked her on the knee. I saw later that there was a large bruise on her knee. This was also reported to management. The children trust me and tell me things and this has caused me a lot of problems'.

210. I have no recollection of ever going to Alton Towers with John Blair, Kathy Mulgrew and Jess Weir. If he was missing two front teeth that would have been noticed when he returned to the children's home. Someone would have asked him what had happened. I have subsequently met RFT in my wife's company and he couldn't say enough good things about me. What John Blair has said did not happen.

211. I remember the occasion we took [REB] home for a visit. Nowadays, [REB] would probably be diagnosed as being on the spectrum with autism. She displayed very difficult behaviour towards me. She found great difficulty in expressing herself appropriately. She would 'act out' and would kick and punch. [REB] knew she was safe with me. She knew that if she hit me, I wouldn't hit her back. I would always try and calm her down and address the situation so she would stop.
212. The incident John Blair talks about was when [REB] got out the minibus with her wee sister who was just a toddler, maybe only one or two years old. [REB] picked her up by the arms and started spinning her round. My thoughts were that if she let go of that baby it would end up in the middle of the road and get killed. I got out the minibus, stopped her from spinning and gave the child back to her mum. I told [REB] she shouldn't do that because it was dangerous. At no time did I kick [REB]. [REB] would tell you that I never, ever hit her because of her behaviour. I would talk to her, to calm her down and stop her, but there was never any violence.
213. John Blair says the incident in Alton Towers was five years before he gave his statement which was in 2002. This means the incident took place in 1997. I left Bellshill in 1993 so wasn't even at Bellshill.
214. [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] [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.'*
215. 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 SNR [REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED]. I had a close relationship with RES [REDACTED] because I didn't have any other option. It was my job. RES [REDACTED] had a close relationship with me because none of the other staff liked him.

216. I did sometimes stay in the children's home overnight because of the shift pattern. I didn't stay on the children's floor. I slept in a secure area of the building where the children didn't have access. It was the old officer in charge's flat which was detached from the children's home so I could lock the door. I can remember PVX [REDACTED] saying to me on one or two occasions that I looked tired and that I should go home. On those occasions I went home.
217. Where he says I would always take the side of the kids then that is one hundred percent true. I would always represent the children that I was working with. I would always take their side because there were very few other members of staff in the building who would. Anything I said or actions I would have taken I stand by them. If I said something I meant it and I retract nothing. If staff were saying anything about the children, I believe that the children have a right to know what people are saying and give them a right to challenge it. That is transparency, and that is one of the words PVX [REDACTED] was famous for. When it came to transparency that was going to cause him problems then that was a completely different kettle of fish.
218. He says I was like one of the kids. I would say that I would rather be akin to the children than akin to some of the staff. If he had an issue with this he should have said something, but never did.
219. What he says about trying to stop children from coming to my house is not true. The girls who came to visit me were PJP [REDACTED], RBL [REDACTED] and PRI [REDACTED]. PRI [REDACTED], PJP [REDACTED] had left care. RBL [REDACTED] was still a resident at Bellshill but was on a Section 16 voluntary order. She was over sixteen and could

make her own decisions. **PRI** had also left care and visited me with her new baby. **PVX** gave these girls my address in Bellshill.

220. I am clueless as to why **PVX** has said these things about me.

221. Kathleen Irvine has given a statement to the police which has been made available to the Inquiry. I have been read an extract from her statement, and she says,

'I came to Motherwell police office today at the request of the police regarding my time working in Bellshill Children's Home. I went to work in Bellshill Children's Home in 1979 on a temporary basis, got made full time in 1980. I was first the host parent and then became a senior and then a deputy.

*There was a flat attached to the home. I remember a staff member **RBP** would stay in. I thought it was weird as he had his own place. I didn't like **RBP**. I remember reporting Edward Docherty to him years ago as he was his senior. He done nothing and said I was to deal with it myself. Ed Docherty had said sexual stuff to a girl called **REG**. He had said that he would put the pool balls up her hole which is disgusting. The girl was so upset'.*

222. I have already explained that there were occasions when I stayed over but in a secure area of the building where the children didn't have access. I am not worried that Kathleen Irvine didn't like me. I wasn't paid to be liked. That may sound arrogant and I don't mean it to come across that way. My job was to go in and work with young people to the best of my ability. It was the same with the staff, but you can't have good relationships with everybody.

223. Kathleen did come to me, along with John Blair, in relation to Edward Doherty's comments about the pool balls. In response to what they told me, I spoke to Edward Doherty and explained to him why it was inappropriate. I then took it to Kevin Murphy and explained the situation to him. Kevin and I both took it to **PVX** because we thought it was up to him, as **SNR**, to address the issue with Edward

Doherty. I didn't go back and tell Kathleen Irvine what I had done because I didn't see the need.

224. I didn't tell her to deal with the incident herself, but I may have questioned her as to why she brought it to me. She said she did because I was his senior. I told her that I may be the unit senior, but she was the senior on shift, and she witnessed it, so she should have been addressing the issue directly with him. I stand by what I said to Kathleen. As a woman who witnessed this incident, and it obviously upset the girl, then she should have dealt with this herself, there and then, and not waited to pass it to me.

225. RFG [REDACTED] has given a statement to the police which has been made available to the Inquiry. I have been read an extract from his statement, and he says,

'I am 62 years old and I live at the address I have provided to police. I have previously provided a statement to police a number of years ago in relation to when I worked as a house parent in Bellshill Children's home.

Today (18.09.17) the police have reattended and asked me to provide further information about when I worked in the children's home which I am happy to do and if I'm aware of any abuse that had taken place in the children's home when I worked there.

I think I began working in Bellshill Children's home in 1990. I don't remember the exact date. I worked there for approximately three or four years. The home was split into three groups with roughly six children per group. Group 1 were the older children and ranged between 15 to 19. They were called the Preparation for Independence Unit. This was my group as well as Cathy Mulgrew who I think is dead now. Annette Crosby Laura Fisher and our senior was RBP [REDACTED].

I've been asked if I was aware of any form of abuse taking place within the home whilst I worked there. I remember one occasion when there was a child RHF [REDACTED] in the house and there was a guy working at the house Eddie, I don't remember his

second name but he was from Carluke Children's Home and was covering which he would do regularly but he sort of teamed up with RBP and they thought they were hard men. I can't remember what it was RHF had done that time but basically Eddie and RBP pinned him down, sat on his back and was bending his wrists back and digging their knee into his back. This was done in the main hallway in front of everyone'.

226. This is absolute fabrication. I don't recall anyone called Eddie, who worked in Carluke, coming to Bellshill to cover shifts. I didn't work directly with RHF. I have no recollection whatsoever of ever pinning him down and twisting his arm in the hallway, or anywhere in the children's home. This wasn't my style. Another thing I can say, and this is crucial, is that I didn't work on the same shift as RFG so he wouldn't have seen me working. We didn't work together on that rota.

227. The passage of time has definitely not affected my recollection of what RFG has said. I agree that if what RFG has described did happen then that would be classed as abuse, one hundred percent.

228. RFG was insistent on making malicious allegations against me, which is borne out by the fact he was sacked.

229. RFG goes on in his statement to say,

'On another occasion I was covering a night shift and I was aware PJP was out drinking that night. It must have been early hours of the morning. I was asleep in my bed and PJP entered my bedroom. She kept saying "RBP" and she sat at the edge of my bed. I was just waking out of a sleep and not really sure what was going on and then PJP placed her hand under the covers and touched my groin area. I immediately jumped up and told her it was me and she got a fright and ran out the room as quickly as possible. There was no doubt in my mind that there was something going on with the two of them especially the fact that she called RBP's name'.

230. RFG [REDACTED] claims that he was working nightshift, which would be a 'waken' nightshift. He wouldn't have been in his bed sleeping, that would have been wrong. If he did happen to be sleeping in one of the bedrooms in the unit, why wasn't the door locked because it would have had a lock. Why would he be sleeping in the unit when the officer in charge's flat was lying empty.

231. This is another example of RFG [REDACTED] having the audacity to use a young girl to get to me and make malicious allegations against PJP [REDACTED] and me. He regularly made allegations naming PJP [REDACTED] to get to me.

232. RFG [REDACTED] in the police statement, goes on to say,

'It was also well known that RBP [REDACTED] was taking the children back to his home and supplying them with alcohol. As far as I was aware he would take boys and girls but separately. The girls used to always come back and brag about it and again I thought this was really inappropriate.'

233. This is absolute nonsense, and I have already explained the occasions when young people visited me at my house. It is another block of allegations that RFG [REDACTED] was throwing about the children's home in cahoots with John Blair. This has been going on for the past thirty years, and I don't understand why.

234. In his police statement RFG [REDACTED] goes on to say,

'Looking back now I would say that PJP [REDACTED] was willingly involved with the staff members, however, that's because she was benefiting from it. She was allowed to do what she wanted and nobody would say or do anything about it.'

All of these incidents I have mentioned I reported to my senior at the time but basically nothing was done about it. The senior staff almost tried to talk me out of saying it couldn't possibly be happening. Most incidents were reported to RBP [REDACTED] in the first occasion and when he did nothing about it I took it further to senior social work staff and Motherwell District Council namely Bernadette Docherty (Principal Officer of

Childcare then to Fred Edwards who was Director of Social Work for Strathclyde Regional Council who referred me to his deputy Ian Greig. Again nothing was done and so I went to my MP. No matter who I spoke to most were frightened as they knew they wouldn't get promoted.

I ended up being sacked for basically logging everything in my logbook which we were supposed to do but they didn't like the fact that I was going into detail about wrong doings. They also claimed I had some sort of vendetta against RBP [REDACTED] which was a lot of rubbish.

In my opinion all of the staff knew what was going on but they just chose to ignore it for a quiet life'.

235. PJP [REDACTED] didn't get what she wanted. She only got what she needed and what she was entitled to. PJP [REDACTED], as was RBL [REDACTED], quite able to articulate what she wanted, needed, and was entitled to. RFG [REDACTED] says this was her getting her own way, but it was what she was entitled to. He saw it as her being rewarded for something. This wasn't the case. PJP [REDACTED] also had her own savings so she would come and ask for some of her savings. We couldn't withhold that from her because it was her own savings. The rest of what he has said is just ramblings. I think he did go to Bernadette Docherty, and she told him that I had been vindicated in relation to all the allegations that he had made against me.

236. Although I was vindicated, the damage had been done over the previous three or four years because of the false allegations made against me. My position at Bellshill had been compromised and had become untenable. I should not have been working there.

237. RIY [REDACTED] has given a statement to the police which has been made available to the Inquiry. I have been read an extract from her statement and she says,

'There were rumours going about that if you slept with staff, they gave you money or bought you things like new trainers. I know PJP [REDACTED] got anything she wanted but I don't know who she slept with.

One of the staff was a guy called RBP and he hated me because I didn't fit in with the gang. I asked him for a pair of new trainers one day and he told me there was no funds. PJP said "watch this" and she asked RBP for money and he gave it to her.'

238. Just to give this statement a bit of context, RIY was the girl who John Blair later married and had children to. John claims he met RIY after she had left care and formed a relationship with her. Maybe he did but I think this is still inappropriate. I didn't hate RIY at all, I just didn't work in her group. She would try bypassing the staff in her group and come to me looking for stuff. I would send her back to ask her own staff group and organise it through them.
239. PJP would quite possibly say "watch this" then ask for money. That was her kind of mischief. She did, on occasion, come to me and ask for money out of her personal savings, not out the petty cash. I had no option but to give her the money. She would probably have gone out the room waving the money in front of RIY's nose and boasted at what she could do.

Convictions

240. In 2019, I appeared in court for trial and was convicted of five offences. They were lewd and libidinous practices, Section 5 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 and three indecent assaults. I was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment. I have never had any other convictions.
241. I am well aware that this is not the forum to prove or disprove the allegations that were made against me. I think it is important that this Inquiry is based around, and be for, the young people that were residing in Bellshill Children's Home, and not about what happened to me, although I believe there is some relevance. Allegations were made about PJP and me. I found this quite obnoxious.

242. Leading up to my trial we got see the full statement of R.J.L. [REDACTED] which he had given to the police. R.J.L. [REDACTED] specifically named P.V.X. [REDACTED] as being the person who had done a number of things to him at the baths. He said he was in a cubicle with P.V.X. [REDACTED] and P.V.X. [REDACTED] had touched him inappropriately. This charge, which named me as being responsible, was subsequently withdrawn from the charge sheet. I can't understand why P.V.X. [REDACTED] 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.
243. Another anomaly in my trial was because in the charge sheet it said I took kids into my flat in Glasgow and pubs around Glasgow. In court, when my lawyer pointed out that I didn't stay in Glasgow, the judge said that was fine and they just changed the word to Bellshill. He pointed out to the Crown that this amounted to gross incompetence on the part of the Crown.
244. I understand why the jury came to their guilty verdicts although I disagree with them, and I still disagree with them today.
245. I was let down by my legal representative who was a QC. R.J.L. [REDACTED] and R.J.V. [REDACTED] both gave evidence for the Crown at my trial, but my QC did not cross examine them. I questioned my QC about it. He said that if he was to do so, they might just 'put the boot in' against me. In my opinion, they had already 'put the boot well in.'
246. When it came to the closing statements at my trial my QC more or less admitted to the jury that it was all high jinks that I'd had. I didn't have high jinks with young adolescent boys because it was dangerous. A lot of the time young boys will test you to see how strong you were and if they could beat you. For that reason, I always kept the boys at arm's length. I couldn't stand up in the dock and go against what he was saying because I didn't think I would be allowed to and thought I'd end up in more bother. I just had to sit there and take it. I questioned him when we came out the courtroom, as to why he said these things, but he never answered me.

247. After I was initially arrested, ^{PRI} [REDACTED] has put a post on Facebook dated [REDACTED] 2018. In this post she makes comment that people were crawling out of the woodwork saying they had been abused, and now that an enquiry was being held and despite not saying anything at the time innocent people were going to jail.

Helping the Inquiry

248. I don't think places like Bellshill should exist. It was far too big as a building and the staff team was too big. When I started, people coming in to work in Bellshill for the first time, if they were lucky, they would get shown round the building. Normally they would be given a set of keys and a logbook, told which group they were working with, and told to get on with it. That should never happen.
249. When I started there was no such thing as PVG checks. I know because I didn't have one. I applied for the job through the job centre, and I just walked into the job as a temporary care officer in elderly care. I picked up what to do and was trained on the job. People should be appropriately qualified to work with young people before they start. All staff should also be kept up to date in training in working with young people.
250. In my situation there were a number of people making allegations which, with appropriate training, could have been dealt with right at the very beginning. If after the first allegation by John Blair, he had been given a warning and given more supervision, things wouldn't have escalated. Because that didn't happen, he continued to make allegation after allegation. It didn't just affect my health, it affected the wellbeing and treatment of the children. What happened had an impact on my ability to do the job.
251. John Blair was sitting in the dock next to me in court because he had been charged as well. He said that if Edward Doherty had still been alive, I wouldn't have been in the dock. I believe the things that the young people had said, but I knew some of the allegations were actually committed by Edward Doherty and not me. I know that none of this will have any impact on the Inquiry.

252. I have always spoken openly about the allegations made against me by John Blair and RFG. The allegations they made against PJP and myself were abhorrent and offensive, designed to humiliate and intimidate. As far as I am concerned, I shouldn't have been working at Bellshill after some of the allegations they made against us. I should have been suspended, and a full police investigation should have been carried out.
253. Around 1992 I went to Bellshill with one of my sick lines from the doctor. John Blair approached me outside and told me about a young boy who had been brought into care. John Blair wanted my advice. He told me this young boy had said that his parents were going through a divorce and that if the divorce went through he was going to kill himself. I told John Blair that he had to take what he said seriously, but he said the senior management weren't listening. I told him to tell them again and that a case conference should be called with the social work department. I reminded him I was off sick and wasn't working at that time.
254. Several months later, Ronnie Nelson, welfare officer for Strathclyde Regional Council staff, came to visit me. He wanted to advise me that the young boy I had been talking to John Blair about had taken his own life. He knew I had worked at Bellshill and may have been involved with this young boy. I explained that I knew about the background but I wasn't working at the time when I had spoken to John Blair. I still wonder how John Blair managed to find the boy in the when the were so far away from Bellshill. How did he know to go to that specific place?
255. The majority of people who worked at Bellshill were well meaning who endeavoured to behave professionally in a very challenging environment in the best interests of the children. It would be unfair to 'tar' everyone with the same brush. It was a very small minority of individuals in the staff team who sometimes exacerbated the situation.

Other information

256. 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..... 16-12-25