

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IPM

Support person present: No

1. My name is IPM. That was the name that was placed on my birth certificate and the name I was known by during my time in care. However, I am also known by the name IPM. My date of birth is 1972. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. It is difficult for me to say when I was at various places during my time in care because I was in so many and moved around so much. Sometimes I was in places for short periods of time. At other times, I was staying at one establishment during the week whilst going to another at weekends. That has complicated things when it comes to my memories surrounding my care history.

Life before going into care

3. My father's name was . He was formerly a miner. He suffered an accident where he lost an eye. I don't know when that happened, but it was when I was small. I don't know whether he stopped working because of the accident or whether it was because his pit was shut down. I don't remember him working after that. He has now passed away. My mother's name was . She didn't work. She has now passed away. I was born in Bangour General Hospital near Broxburn in West Lothian. I have two older brothers and one younger sister. My oldest brother is about five years older than me, my older brother is about two years older than me, and my sister is about a year younger than me. We all lived together in a house at , Harthill, West Lothian.

4. I went to school at Blackridge Primary School. Blackridge Primary School was to the north of Harthill. I found school alright. I wasn't the brightest at school, but it was fine. I had friends and would go out to play in Harthill with them. I remember I wasn't allowed to bring them back to the house but that was fine. We would just go out and play.
5. As a kid I thought that my family life was fine. My mother and father didn't have a lot of money, but we got by. I don't really remember how we all coped. None of my siblings were placed into care. I was the only one who was taken away. I don't know the circumstances that led up to me being placed in care. I had my records read to me in adult life. The social worker said that the records said that it was because my mother couldn't control me. However, I don't remember anything like that. I don't know what it was that I was doing if that was what was going on.
6. I remember social workers visiting me before I was taken into care. I have had a few social workers over the years, so I don't remember the names of any of them. There were a couple of visits by social workers to the house but there wasn't really anything that suggested to me that they were planning to take me into care. They spoke to my mother and father but not to me on those occasions. I remember that, during the last time they visited me at my home, the social worker said something like "just come with us, you will be better off with us." I was 'cracking up' with tears but they convinced me to go with them. My father was going crazy. He was totally against me being taken away. I don't know where my mum was with her emotions. I remember that I was made to go up to my father and made to say that I wanted to go. I think they made me do that to calm him down and to stop him from getting into trouble.
7. I was taken from the house to a children's hearing in a wee building in Shotts. My father wasn't there but my mother was. The hearing didn't last that long. All I remember is sitting in a room with a few other people who were introducing themselves to me. My mother couldn't read or write so she would have just signed anything that was placed in front of her. At the hearing it must have been agreed

that I would be taken into care. I was taken straight from there to a children's home in Torphicen in West Lothian. A social worker took me there. My mother wasn't on the journey. I don't really remember being able to say goodbye before I was taken away. I remember hating social workers after that. They were the people who took me away from my family home.

8. Looking back, I don't know for certain why I was taken into care. I didn't feel that there was anything wrong going on in the house. There wasn't any police involvement with the family. I wasn't dogging school at all. I was attending near enough every day because I was being made to go by my parents. It could have been financial but my siblings weren't taken into care so that doesn't make sense. It's all a bit of a mystery to me.

Wallhouse Mansion House, Torphicen, West Lothian

9. I went to a children's home near Torphicen in West Lothian at the age of about eight years old. That would have been in either 1980 or 1981. I don't remember how long I was there, but I don't think I was there that long. It was only a period of months. I don't remember the name of it, but it was a children's home. It could well have been named Wallhouse Mansion House but I am not sure. Secondary Institutions - to be published la

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

10.

11.

12.

13.

I don't have memories surrounding why I was moved from there. I don't remember the day I left, a hearing, social workers becoming involved or anything like that.

Bellshill Children's Home, Bellshill, North Lanarkshire (the first time)

14. It could be that I was taken to Bellshill after I left Torphicen, but I am not 100% sure about that. I have been in a lot of places, so it is difficult for me to say whether there was a children's hearing before I went to Bellshill the first time I was there. If I was there, I would have been there for something like a couple of years between the ages of eight and eleven or twelve years old. That means I would have been there at some juncture between 1980 or 1981 and 1984 if that was the first time that I was there. I think I was placed in the unit on the ground floor during the first time I was at Bellshill.

15. I have a memory of them trying to get me to go to a local school the first time I was there, but I didn't last very long. I don't recall the name of the school, but it wasn't far away from the home. I would walk to the school because Bellshill was right next to it. I can't remember why my time at the school didn't last that long. I don't remember any of the teachers. I don't really have any memories surrounding what happened at the school. I would just hang about in my unit during the period I wasn't going to school. There was a big playroom full of toys where I would just muck about during the day.
16. I ran away on a couple of occasions to Ayr with some other children from the home. I think that happened on either the first or second time I was there. It was when I was younger and not during the last time I was at Bellshill. I just went along with the others for something to do and to join in. There were three of us went on both occasions. I think we were doing it more out of excitement than trying to get away from Bellshill.
17. I think we left in the morning. The train station was a ten to fifteen minute walk up the street. We skipped a train to Glasgow before changing there for another train down to Ayr. It took us a long time to get there. We didn't have any money, so we just ended up walking about in Ayr until it got dark. I know we were back late because we ended up handing ourselves in at a police station in Ayr at the end of the day. We had nowhere else to go. On both occasions we did the same thing.
18. The police didn't say anything. All they did was sit us down and arrange for a social worker to come and collect us. A social worker came, on both occasions, down to Ayr to collect us in a car. On both occasions they drove us straight back to Bellshill. I don't really remember the social workers asking us why we had run away after picking us up. I do remember them being annoyed about having to come all the way down to collect us though. Nothing happened when we got back to Bellshill. I don't remember what the staff said to us, if anything, when we got back. What they did in response can't have been much otherwise I would have remembered it.

19. I don't remember leaving Bellshill the first time. I don't remember being told I was being fostered or how I got there. It would have been my social worker who took me there. I don't remember anything surrounding why I was moved from Bellshill to a foster care placement.

Foster care placement with unnamed couple, Shotts, North Lanarkshire

20. I think I left Bellshill and was placed in foster care for about a year. It could have been for a matter of months. I would have been between eleven and twelve years old when I arrived and about eleven or twelve when I left. That means I would have been there at some juncture between 1981 and 1983.
21. The foster couple had a house in Shotts [REDACTED]. I don't remember their names. The foster father was [REDACTED]. That makes me think that [REDACTED] with his job. They had two children, an older boy and a girl who was just a little bit older than me. I got on with them kind of alright. I remember a couple of times when the foster parents had babies staying with them. I don't know whether they might have been fostering those babies as well. I had my own room in the house. The other children had their own rooms too.
22. I was fed, the house was ok, and everything was fine. The foster parents were decent people, but I just didn't want to be there. I couldn't get my head round being there. They were happy to see me when I arrived, but I just couldn't adjust to them. I just couldn't settle. I can't remember talking to my foster parents about that. I think I didn't want to speak to them about how I was feeling because I didn't want to be there.
23. I went to the local secondary school in Shotts, Calderhead High School. I think I started in first year. I was only there for a brief period. One of the foster parents' children attended there. I remember that I didn't know anything when I started at the school. I didn't have a clue about what they were trying to teach me. I just remember going from classroom to classroom and not knowing what was going on.

The only subject I was able to get a grip of was Maths. Everything else just went over my head. I didn't speak to anyone about how I felt and don't remember anyone sitting me down to help me.

24. My parents didn't visit me during the time I was fostered. My sister attended the same school as me. At the end of each day, she was going home to Harthill, and I was going somewhere else. I found that difficult to adjust to. I would sometimes bump into my sister at school, but I didn't really hang about with her.
25. Towards the end of my time being fostered, there was an occasion when I tried to run away. I got on the same bus as my sister after school. That caused a big scene at my house with social workers being called by someone. Social workers ended up having to come out to get me. It all just kicked off and my father didn't want to let me go. I just wanted to be with my family in Harthill, but all the adults didn't see it that way. Ultimately, I think that was why I was moved away from the foster placement.
26. I didn't go back to my foster parents but went to stay with one of my mother's brothers instead. He agreed to take me to the social work department in Shotts the following morning. It was from there that they found me another home to go to. I don't think there was a children's hearing prior to that move. I think I just sat around in the social work department office all day until they found me a place. I think that was from 9:00 am until about 6:00 pm. I just wanted to go home and couldn't understand why I couldn't go there. I'm not sure what happened after that, but I think that's when I might have ended up in Ballikinrain. It could be, however, that was when I ended up in Calderhouse. I can't say for certain. I was taken directly to wherever it was I was placed rather than going home or going back to my uncle's. IF I was taken to Ballikinrain, it could be that they took me there so that I was further away from my parents.

Ballikinrain School, near Balfroun, Stirlingshire

27. I went to Ballikinrain when I was about eleven or twelve years old. I think I was there for about a year, so I would have left when I was about twelve or thirteen years old. That means I would have been there at some juncture between approximately 1983 and 1986. Ballikinrain was up in the Trossachs outside of Glasgow in the countryside. The house itself was massive and had large grounds. I remember play equipment and assault courses. I don't remember any of the staff. There have been that many staff members involved in my care over the years that it is sometimes difficult to remember specific people.
28. There were quite a lot of children there. I remember attending assemblies and the hall would be full. It was just boys. I would say there were about fifty boys there in total. The other children were about the same age as me. There wasn't anyone a lot older than me. I shared a room with three other children. I found that fine. We didn't wear a uniform or anything like that. I think Ballikinrain just provided normal clothes for me. I don't remember Christmas.
29. We would do activities in the evenings. I remember being taken out canoeing, rock climbing, abseiling and things like that. There was a whole load of activities like that. You could just go out and play in the play area if you wanted to rather than doing the activities. I remember the home putting on sports days and things like that.
30. I didn't see my parents once during the time I was at Ballikinrain. It was quite far away for them to travel. I don't have clear memories of social workers visiting me. If that happened it wouldn't have happened a lot. My experience over my time in care was that social workers usually just appeared when they were taking me to another home to stay.
31. I think most folk went home at the weekends, but I didn't. I ended up going to Bellshill for weekends. I don't know why that was done or when that started. I was dropped off with other children at Buchanan Street then walked by the staff to Central Station in Glasgow. I would get a train to Bellshill from there. I hated doing

that. I would be picked up on the Sunday night from the same place that I had been dropped off in Glasgow.

32. Schooling was provided at Ballikinrain. We would go to school during the day. I wouldn't say it felt like I was going to school. They just sat you down and did some sort of activity. It wasn't teaching you subjects like English and Maths, it was more just keeping you occupied. I don't remember any of the teachers. I don't remember anything surrounding religion whilst I was at Ballikinrain. There was no praying, going to church or anything like that.
33. There was one occasion when I ran away but there wasn't anywhere to go to. There was nowhere you could go other than up into the Campsie Fells. I walked for hours and hours but didn't get anywhere. I think I walked in one big circle. The staff came out and got me on quad bikes then took me back. I realised after what I experienced when running away that I never wanted to do that again. I can't remember being disciplined for running away. There would have been something that happened, but I don't remember. It wouldn't have been something major otherwise I would have remembered it.
34. I didn't want to be at Ballikinrain, but I found it alright. The staff were alright. I felt my behaviour was fine when I was there. There was nothing bad that happened during my time there. I don't know why I was moved out of Ballikinrain and don't remember what happened when I was moved permanently to Bellshill again.

Bellshill Children's Home, Bellshill, North Lanarkshire (the second time)

35. I think I went to Bellshill permanently after leaving Ballikinrain. I would have been there between the ages of twelve and thirteen years old. That means I would have been there at some point between 1984 and 1986. I couldn't say exactly how long I was there.

36. I don't remember going to school throughout the second time that I was there. The second time when I was at Bellshill could well have been the time when I ran away to Ayr on two occasions. I don't recall anything surrounding how I ended up being at Calder House. I don't remember a children's hearing. I think I was sent to Calder House for periods during the week and I eventually just ended up staying there permanently.

Calder House, Bardykes Road, Blantyre, South Lanarkshire

37. I think I ended up in Calder House in Blantyre after leaving Bellshill, but it could have been before I went to Ballikinrain. I don't think there was a children's hearing held around the time of the move to Calder House. I was in second year at high school during my time in Calder House so I estimate that I would have been between twelve and thirteen years old when I was there. I left when I was thirteen or fourteen years old so I would have been there at some juncture between 1984 and 1987. I was in Calder House for a period of months.

Layout of Calder House

38. Calder House was a secure assessment centre. It was on the outskirts of Blantyre. It was a medium sized building with an ash football pitch and barn in its grounds. The barn was used for sports and activities. It was strict and the first place I remember being locked inside. The front door was locked, and you could only get out when you were allowed to. You were watched all day every day so that you couldn't do anything.

Staff

39. I can't remember any of the staff member's faces or anything like that. I couldn't say who was in charge, but it could have been more than one person. I don't think it was the same staff that were present at night-time as the ones that were present during the day. I think those staff members who were on shift at night were specifically

nightwatchmen. During the day there were staff members who worked in the office and staff who were in the living areas in the unit.

40. I don't remember any of the staff, but I remember them being there and watching us. Some of them would speak with the children but not all of them. Most of the time they were just sitting around watching us rather than interacting with us. They wouldn't, say, play cards with us or something like that. Looking back, the way they acted was more like you would expect a security guard to act.

The children at Calder House

41. I remember that, because Calder House was usually used for assessing children, children were only there for about three weeks at a time. Children were coming and going all the time. There were about fifteen children in there at any one time. It was boys and girls. The children were divided up between two units. One was upstairs and the other was downstairs. The unit downstairs was used for the girls. I don't remember there ever being all that many girls. I didn't really see them other than times when we were in the classroom being taught together. I've no idea why I ended up in an assessment centre. Unlike the other children, I wasn't in Calder House because of any offending history. I think it was because of that, I was eventually allowed to leave the property. I was the only one who was allowed that freedom.

Routine at Calder House

First day / daily routine

42. I can't remember the first day I was there. Calder House was the same in terms of routine and structure as an assessment centre I later went to, Larchgrove. I think the only difference was that at Larchgrove you were locked in your room at night and at Calder House you weren't. Calder House was a bit stricter when it came to routine

when compared to some of the later children's homes I was at. You were supervised, couldn't leave and had to ask permission to do things like go to the toilet.

43. When I was there during the day, and later when I was there permanently, all I would do is sit in a room watching television with staff watching me. I was locked inside and couldn't go anywhere. After a few months, I was allowed to go out and wander about the grounds. That was different to the other children there. Later, I went out to school during the day then, when that didn't work out, attended classes in Calder House itself. Nothing much happened at weekends. We might go out to the barn to play football, or something like that, during the day. Otherwise, we would just sit in a room watching television.

Sleeping arrangements

44. I was there that long that they eventually gave me my own room. The rooms I slept in weren't locked at night but there was a nightwatchman outside in the corridor throughout the night.

Washing / bathing

45. There were showers available to use whenever you wanted. They never told you when to do that. You just kept yourself clean.

Mealtimes / food

46. Meals were had in the dining hall that they had. I can't remember the food, but I think it was alright. I don't have any memories in connection to the food. I think mealtimes were supervised because we were supervised everywhere we went.

Work / chores

47. I don't remember having to do any chores.

Clothing / uniform

48. There wasn't a uniform, but they provided you with your clothes. The staff would do your laundry for you.

Possessions / pocket money

49. I don't remember having any possessions. You never really got any pocket money. They just did everything for you

School

50. They initially tried to send me to an outside secondary school in Blantyre. I was the only child in Calder House who went to an outside school. It was all like 'double Dutch' to me because, by that time, I had missed a lot of school. I'd missed all my primary school and the early years of high school. I wasn't at the school in Blantyre that long. It was for a period of months if that.
51. They ended up having me attending the school within Calder House. I think there was a teacher who came in from the outside to teach us. There might have been a couple of teachers who came in. The classes only had between four and six children in them. The children were given different things to do in class. I think you were only given what you were capable of doing. For me, it was basic reading and writing. I think classes only lasted until lunchtime.

Leisure time

52. During recreation time they would take you down to the big barn and do activities. You would play football, badminton or something like that. They would sometimes take you out for a run for a circuit. You were supervised and watched by the staff all the time when you did those activities. There wasn't anything other than a television inside in the building. If you were inside, you were expected to sit watching a television and that was it. Some children played cards.

Smoking

53. They let the children smoke at Calder House. I didn't think that was right. The staff kept the cigarettes in a cupboard and would issue three cigarettes a day to the children if they behaved.

Religious instruction

54. I don't remember anything surrounding religion.

Trips / holidays

55. I wasn't taken on any trips or holidays. I remember one staff member saying to me that if I made a friend in the community I could go out and visit them. I didn't understand how I could do that because I was locked up inside Calder House most of the time I was there.

Birthdays / Christmas

56. don't remember anything surrounding birthdays or Christmas whilst I was there.

Visits / Inspections

57. My parents didn't visit me, and I didn't have any contact with them. I very rarely saw them at any of the places I was at. I very rarely saw social workers unless there was a children's hearing and the children's hearings weren't frequent. I didn't really have much contact with social workers during my time at Calder House.
58. I don't remember seeing any inspections being undertaken whilst I was there.
59. I didn't get the impression that I was being assessed in preparation for being moved on to another place. If that had been happening I would have only been in there for

about three weeks rather than a period of months. There was nobody who sat me down to explain what was happening or what would be happening next when it came to my care. I don't remember anyone sitting me down and saying that they were waiting for a space to open to get me into another place or anything like that.

Healthcare

60. I don't have any memories surrounding healthcare.

Running away

61. I didn't run away from Calder House. You couldn't really run away because you were locked in.

Bed-wetting

62. You could get up and go to the toilet through the night. There were no issues with bed-wetting.

Discipline and punishment at Calder House

63. It was quite a strict place, and they did discipline you. If you were misbehaving one of the punishments was to take you out for a run. That happened a couple of times a week. The run would consist of circuits around the grounds. You could be running up to three or five miles at a time. The routes were set by the staff. I remember being made to run happening quite a lot. After a while of that punishment being given to me, I started getting into it and regarded it more as an activity that I enjoyed. It didn't really pose a problem to me, and I was happy to do it. There were those who didn't like it though. Those who didn't want to do it would still be made to complete the route, albeit they would be walking.

Abuse at Calder House

64. There were other children there who had offending histories, but I don't remember that causing me any problems. I don't remember seeing anything happening, other than what I set out below, that could be considered abusive. Even then, I don't know whether it was abuse or something that was just part of being in care at that time. I didn't think it was bad at the time but, looking back, I think it could be.

Unnamed nightwatchmen

65. I remember that the nightwatchmen wanted complete silence after the lights went off. They made you stand facing the wall for hours on end if you were carrying on or making noise in your room during the night. They would come in, take you out of the room to the corridor and make you stand in the corner facing a wall for up to three hours. You were standing there right up against the wall in your pyjamas. You would stand there until you were that physically knackered that you just wanted to go back to your bed to sleep. The nightwatchman would sit watching you whilst you were standing facing the wall. They would be sitting in the hallway. It wasn't as if one person was being singled out. Being made to stand in the corridor at night happened a lot to everybody in Calder House.

Reporting of abuse whilst at Calder House

66. I didn't speak to anybody about what was happening. I thought the way the nightwatchmen treated us was just how it was. It was happening to everybody so I didn't see it as strange or something I should try and speak to somebody about.

Leaving Calder House

67. I'm not 100% sure what happened that resulted in me getting moved out of Calder House. There would have been social work involvement. I don't remember leaving

Calder House. It could have been Bellshill or Cecil Street that I went to next. Alternatively, it could well be that I went to Larchgrove. If it was Larchgrove, I don't know why I went there. I don't remember children's hearings or anything like that around that time. I hadn't got into trouble with the police. I had no history of offending. That only came about after I left Bellshill and was an adult.

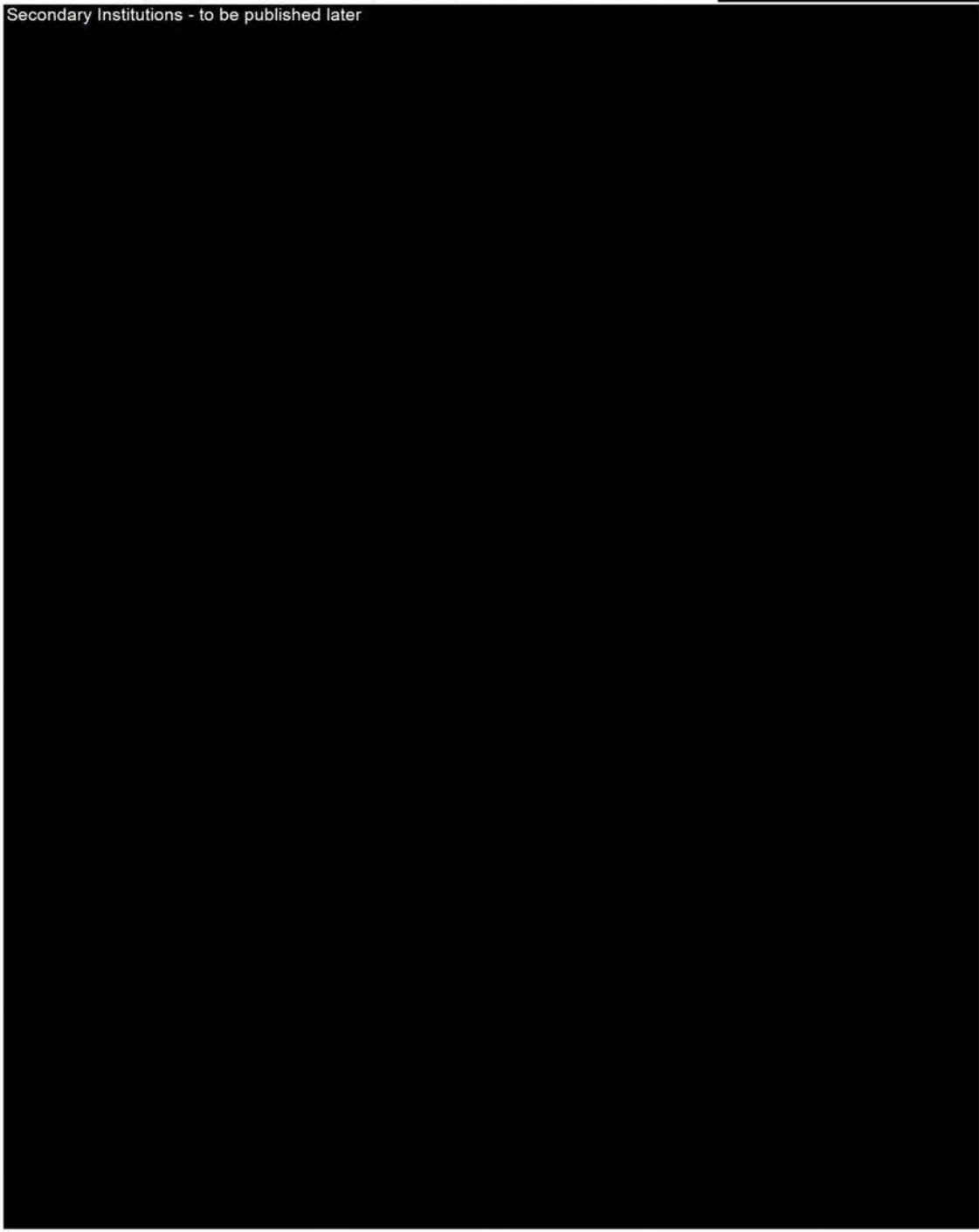
Larchgrove Remand Home, Edinburgh Road, Glasgow

68. I was in Larchgrove for a couple of nights when I was about thirteen or fourteen. That means I would have been there at some juncture between 1985 and 1987. It could have been before Calder House and Cecil Street. It might have been after. Larchgrove was an assessment centre that was secure. It was just across from St John's, which was the place I went to school as a day pupil later during the time I was in care.
69. Larchgrove was the same sort of place as Calder House. The only difference was that you were locked into your room at night. I had my own room. You knocked on your door if you needed the toilet during the night. There was always someone sitting supervising for that. I remember sitting in a room watching television during the day much like I did at Calder House. Looking back, there was nothing bad that happened there. I was only there for a brief time.
70. I don't remember what was happening around the time I was moved to Cecil Street, if that was where I went next. For some reason I think that social workers wanted to place me into Bellshill. However, for some reason they didn't and that was how I ended up in Cecil Street. I vaguely remember social workers saying that. I presume a social worker took me to Cecil Street if that was where I was taken after Larchgrove.

Cecil Street Children's Home, Cecil Street, Coatbridge, North Lanarkshire

71. I was around about thirteen or fourteen years old when I went to Cecil Street. I left when I was fourteen. I was there for about a year. That means I would have been there for a juncture approximately between 1985 and 1987. Secondary Institutions - to be pu

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



72.

73.

74.

75.

76.

77.

78.

79.

80.

81.

82.

83.

Secondary Institutions I later started going to St John's Springboig as a day pupil during my

time at Cecil Street. Attending St John's continued into my time at Bellshill the last time I was there so I would say I was there for at least a year.

84. I found St John's alright. It wasn't a bad school. Of all the schools I attended over my time in care, I felt St John's was the one place where I received a decent education. It was the place where my reading and writing improved the most. They taught you things like English and Maths in classrooms. I remember being made to read things and getting asked about it. It was all proper schoolwork. There were about five or six children in each class. The other people in the class were residents of St John's. I think, out of all the people who went to the school at St John's, only about ten were day pupils from other establishments. I found the teachers to be alright. I don't remember ever being given homework.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

85. I remember that St John's offered a few different sports. I played football for the school and enjoyed that. I remember that, by the time I was at Bellshill, I was appreciating that more because it allowed me to stay out longer when there was training.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

86.

87.

88.

89.

90.

91.

92.

93.

Leaving Cecil Street Children's Home

94.

I don't 100% know why I was moved on from there. There's something makes me think that I may have been moved because of competing social work departments and there not being enough room for me to be kept at Cecil Street. I think I had to be moved back to Bellshill because it sat in the local authority where my social worker was from. I think they were saying I was in the wrong authority when it came to my care providers. I'm sure I attended a meeting where social workers were present and that was discussed. I don't think there was a children's hearing around the time I moved. Moving me back to Bellshill was the worst thing that they ever did to me.

Bellshill Children's Home, Bellshill, North Lanarkshire (the final time)

95. The final time I was at Bellshill was the last time I was in an establishment under the age of sixteen. I arrived when I was fourteen years old and left just before my sixteenth birthday. That means that I was there approximately between 1986 and 1988. Bellshill was a local authority children's home. As far as I knew at the time, it was the social work department who ran the home.

Layout of Bellshill

96. Bellshill was located near to the maternity hospital. It was a big brick building and quite a basic place. It had two floors. On the ground floor was the office, kitchen,

dining hall and a unit which was attached by a long corridor. Upstairs were another two units. Units consisted of long corridors with bedrooms and big living rooms in the centre. There was a toilet and bathroom for each unit on the landing attached to them. There was a wee back garden with a fence around it. It wasn't that big. There wasn't anything in the garden other than grass.

97. It wasn't a secure place like Calder House. We weren't locked inside the place like we were there. It was quite a different set up in that way. People could just walk in and out of the front door. I think they locked the front door at a certain time at night but there were still fire exits everywhere. It was one of those places where it was easy to sneak in and out. People could, and did, just jump over the wall then freely get into the place. I remember that a lot of the kids were terrified of the folk that lived in the area. I remember getting off the bus back from school feeling terrified. There were gangs that operated in the area and there were times when gang members freely walked into the home.

Staff structure

98. I only vaguely remember the staff. It was male and female staff and there were quite a few. They were all different ages. There were some old ones and young ones. I don't think any of them lived in the children's home. I think one of the senior ones may have stayed in the house overnight on shift to supervise. I'm not 100% sure but I think they slept in a room that was next door to the office on the ground floor. I wouldn't really be able to say who was and wasn't the senior members of staff. I think I thought that those members of staff who sat around in the office were the more senior ones, but I wasn't certain of that. I couldn't say who was in charge at Bellshill on any of the occasions I was there.
99. There was some staff change over the times I was there. I never really got to know any of the staff. The impression I got was that they were there just to watch you rather than to interact with you. They didn't really have much to do with any of the children and wouldn't hang about the units. They didn't care what was going on and would just sit in their office. It sometimes felt like you were in the middle of a riot and

the staff just weren't about. It was up to you to get staff members from the office if you needed them rather than them coming to you. They occasionally came out to get kids but that didn't happen with me. I don't remember sitting about with any of the staff members when I was there.

Staff

100. Mr Doherty is the only member of staff who I remember the name of. I can't remember his first name. He was a care worker in Bellshill. His role was to look after us. I don't think he was a senior member of staff. I think he was only there during the last time that I was at Bellshill. He was either in his thirties or his forties. He looked like a man to me at that age. He was quite tall but was quite thin. He had dark brown hair. I can't remember any other of his features.

The children at Bellshill

101. There were about thirty children in Bellshill at any one time. It was both boys and girls. A lot of the children were teenagers. I didn't see any children younger than about eleven years old. I know they had teenagers up until the age of sixteen because that was around about the age that I left. I don't know how the children were divided up between the units. Over the times I was at Bellshill I was in all the units. There were between eight and ten children per unit.
102. There were different children there each of the times I was at Bellshill. There were folk coming and going all the time. You would see someone then a few weeks later they would be gone. I was probably one of the kids who spent the longest amount of time in total at Bellshill. I don't recall any of the names of any of the other children there. I don't know what the circumstances behind the other kids being at Bellshill were. When we did talk it wasn't something that we really talked about. I don't really remember making any friends in there. A lot of the time I kept myself to myself.

Routine at Bellshill

Daily routine

103. I don't think Bellshill had any real routine. Mealtimes were about the only things that were part of the routine. The rest of the time you did your own thing. You got up whenever you woke up. There was never anyone walking around waking children up. After getting up you would get ready and go down to the dining hall for breakfast. Breakfast was had at a set time, but I don't recall what time that was. During the day I would go to school. If I wasn't going to school I would just hang around the unit. I'd play in the toy room. I remember sitting around playing Pacman on the games console they had in there a lot. I sat there playing that for hours on end. I remember that I could go out into the local area if I wanted to during the day. That wasn't something I really wanted to do because of what the area was like.
104. If I was going to school I would either walk or take the bus to school. I would travel on my own. They gave you a bus pass so you could get there. If I was at school I would have lunch there rather than returning to Bellshill. I would get the bus or walk back to Bellshill in the afternoon after school. After having tea in the dining hall, we were left to run riot around the home and the local area. Bedtime was a certain time but there was nobody there watching you. You could just get up during the night and do what you wanted to do.

Sleeping arrangements

105. We all had individual rooms. I don't think anyone shared. Inside your room was just a bed, a wardrobe and whatever else you had accumulated over your time in care. I think there might have been a sink as well. That could have been just one of the rooms that I was in over the years. There weren't locks on our doors and anybody could have access.

Washing / bathing

106. There was a bathroom and toilet for each of the units. Those were shared amongst all the children in the unit. It was a bath with one of the taps connected to a showerhead. I remember mostly taking baths. You just got yourself washed or bathed using the bathroom on your landing. I don't remember anyone making sure I was well or hygienic. There were never any staff members chasing me up to wash myself or to brush my teeth. As far as I remember, you were left to your own devices to get washed and brush your teeth. I remember that by the last time I was at Bellshill I was looking after myself a bit more than before.

Mealtimes / food

107. We had our meals in the dining room on the ground floor. The room was full of tables where we would sit. Everybody ate together. There was a hatch which we would go up to to collect our food. The staff selected what you would eat each mealtime. They made one thing for the whole place and that was it. I can't remember much about what we ate at mealtimes. I think it was cereal or toast for breakfast. I don't remember having any issues with the food.
108. During the last time I was there, I was placed in a unit that had a kitchen. Just before the time I left I started cooking my own meals using the kitchen. The older children in the unit were made to do that. The staff just gave us our stuff then we cooked it ourselves. I remember eating a lot of stuff out of tins, cereal, sausages and macaroni cheese. There was some frozen stuff but there was never really any fresh stuff. It was all basic stuff. I found all that alright and didn't mind sorting myself out. Looking back, that was about the only thing that Bellshill did to prepare you for leaving.

Work / chores

109. When I left I was placed on a Youth Training Scheme. However, there wasn't anything like that when I was at Bellshill. When it came to being prepared for work, I

remember that there were bits and pieces of things taught about trades at St Johns but not an awful lot of it.

110. There weren't any chores or anything like that. You had to keep your own room tidy, but you weren't expected to do anything else beyond that. That was the same throughout all the times I was at Bellshill.

Clothing / uniform

111. We wore normal clothes in the home. A grant was provided by social services so staff could buy clothes for you. That was the same in all the places that I went to whilst in care. Sometimes the staff took you out to buy your clothes, but I don't really have any memories of picking things. They would just give you things and that was you. You just had to wear whatever they gave to you. I don't remember whether I wore a uniform during the times I was attending school.

112. There was a laundry located next to the kitchen. I think you took your own clothes and bedsheets down to the laundry, placed them in a basket then someone washed them. They would be returned to you after that. They were piled up in a room and you would take what was yours.

Possessions / pocket money

113. I remember taking things with me on the times I moved out of Bellshill. I remember having a hi-fi and a weights bench, which I had brought with me from Cecil Street, during my final time at Bellshill. I kept those in my room.

114. I'm not sure whether we were given pocket money or given money to go swimming. I think I was provided an allowance at some time but that could well have started after I left Bellshill the last time.

School

115. The last time I was at Bellshill I attended day school at St John's Springboig. That had continued from my time at Cecil Street. Going to St John's was about the only structure and routine that I had during my time at Bellshill. St John's was alright. Looking back, it's the only place I remember being educated at during my time at Bellshill.

Leisure time

116. There was a toy room full of broken toys and a broken pool table. I remember spending hours of my time playing Pacman on the games console they had in there. There were no books or magazines. Most of the time was spent playing and running about in the local area. You could walk in and out when you liked but you had to be back by a certain time. Towards the end, I was a bit more wary about going out because of the local gangs in the area.
117. I think you could ask to be taken swimming. I think that was after you got your pocket money. I remember times when I went up to the pool but that didn't happen all that often. I think that only happened during the second time I was there.
118. They sometimes took you to play football. It was a particular member of staff who took us out in a van. I think the van belonged to Bellshill but I'm not sure about that. I remember the staff member who took us out being alright and interested in 5-side football. I think where we went just depended on how many people were playing. I remember times when the staff would play in matches. There could have been kids from other homes involved too. Being taken out to play football happened very rarely. It quite possibly only happened a couple of times. It's one of the few positive memories I have of Bellshill.

Religious instruction

119. I don't remember there being any religion. I don't remember being taken out to a church on Sundays or anything like that.

Trips / holidays

120. I think I was taken away for an overnight trip on one occasion, but I can't remember whether that was at **Secondary Institution** Bellshill. I think about ten or twelve kids went and we were all taken in a van. We were taken to stay in a house in, I think, Aviemore for three days. It was a big old house. I don't know what the purpose of the trip was, but I think it was a holiday. I remember walking up burns and rivers. I think that is mostly what we did. I don't remember it being enjoyable, but it was something different.

Leave home

121. I didn't visit home during any of the times I was at Bellshill. Going home to visit my family was never discussed at any time.

Birthdays / Christmas

122. I don't remember the staff making a fuss over us at any time or on any occasion. I don't recall anything being done to mark my birthday. I think you were given a certain amount of money to buy yourself a Christmas present.

Visits / Inspections

123. I think my mother and father came to visit me twice over the times I was in care. I think they visited me once at Bellshill. I can't remember which time it was. If I were to guess I would say it was during the first time I was there. It would have been when I was younger. I remember there being a long wait before I got that visit

throughout my time in care. For some reason that wasn't encouraged. I don't remember the staff at Bellshill speaking to me about my parents.

124. I had a lot of different social workers over my time in care. There was never enough time to get to know any of them because they were constantly being replaced. I can't remember any of their names. There would have been more than one social worker who would have been attached to me over the times I was in Bellshill. The only time I remember a social worker visiting me at Bellshill was towards the end when I was playing up. I don't think I had any visits prior to that.

125. I don't remember there being inspectors or anybody inspecting the place. I don't ever remember anyone asking how I was doing whilst I was in Bellshill. I would have had a keyworker, but I don't remember them. Nobody sat me down to ask me what I wanted. I don't remember anyone sitting me down and telling me what was happening when it came to my care. I don't remember there being any children's hearings during my times at Bellshill. The only ones I remember attending was at the end of my placements before I was moved to another place. That was the same at all the places I was at. I remember that the very last hearing I attended at Bellshill was the one where my supervision order was taken off by the panel. There were no children's hearings after that.

Healthcare

126. I don't know what would happen if you were ill or injured. I wasn't ill or injured and I don't remember anyone being taken to a doctor or hospital. I didn't see a doctor or dentist at any time whilst I was there.

Running away

127. I didn't run away during the last time I was at Bellshill because I knew that if I ran away I wouldn't have anywhere to go to. I was beyond the age where I would run away for fun and realised that I was just stuck at Bellshill.

Bed-wetting

128. I don't think I had a problem with bed-wetting at Bellshill, however, I can't remember much surrounding that.

Discipline and punishment at Bellshill

129. Apart from towards the end, I felt I was a quiet kid during my times at Bellshill. I don't think I was a bad kid overall. I don't remember there being anything done if you misbehaved or there being anything they did to discipline you. We were mostly just left to our own devices. There was nobody there watching you and you could do what you wanted.

Abuse at Bellshill

130. The last time at Bellshill is the only time that I consider I suffered abuse during my time in care. Looking back, I should have been getting looked after at that time. I was about to be getting ready to leave the care system. I should have been getting taught how to cook and being prepared for the outside world. Instead, I had to experience what I did at Bellshill.

Mr Doherty

131. I would have been between fourteen and sixteen during the time Mr Doherty was working in the home. I would have been in the unit that was located on the first floor to the front of the building. It was the only unit with a kitchen because it was the unit where they taught you cooking in preparation for you leaving. That was the purpose of that unit.
132. Mr Doherty bought us alcohol to drink and would get us drunk. He would either bring the alcohol in himself or he would give you money to get it. If I was buying the

alcohol I would get it from the shop round the corner. I'd stand outside and wait for someone who looked old enough to go into the shop for me. Getting alcohol from the shop never seemed to be a problem. It was usually half bottles of Buckfast that I was drinking. That was what Mr Doherty would bring in and what I would buy at the shop. I remember that, at that time, I thought he was one of the alright members of staff because of that. Looking back, he shouldn't have been doing what he was doing.

133. Mr Doherty bought alcohol for the other children at Bellshill. I think he did that with at least a couple of other people. I went to the shop with the money Mr Doherty gave me to buy alcohol with other kids, but I never said to them where I had got the money. I remember sitting down and drinking the alcohol with them. I remember us sitting in the kitchen, which was shut at night, and the games room doing that. However, we drank anywhere we liked to. There was nothing like us trying to hide our drinking because there were never any staff members around. There was no hiding away to do your drinking in your room or anything like that. Mr Doherty wouldn't sit with us if we were drinking. Looking back, I think he watched out for children who were looking drunk then took his opportunity.
134. Getting us to drink was how he managed to start doing what he did. He would only do the things that he did after he had given you alcohol. If he was giving the alcohol to me directly he would come into my room and give it to me. If it was at the weekends that could be at any time of the day. Sometimes it was in the morning. If it was during the week it would be in the evenings and at night. I don't know whether it just depended upon what shift he was on. A lot of the time it was happening at night-time because I remember it being dark outside.
135. Mr Doherty would let me get drunk then come into my room and show me his penis. He'd get me to take out my penis so that he could compare sizes. He'd masturbate my penis so that he could do that. He made it all seem as if it was fine. He would then get me into positions. That happened a good few times over the last time I was at Bellshill. He might be in my room for only ten or fifteen minutes when he was doing what he was doing. There were other times when he would take me into the

toilet and do the same to me. I don't know whether staff were around when Mr Doherty was going into my bedroom or when he followed me into the toilets. There weren't any staff members about to see the things he was doing to me. Looking back, a lot of the time he was the only staff member about on shift.

136. I remember that he would try and get me to go into the girls' rooms to get them into compromising positions. He'd try to get me to convince them to take their clothes off. I remember him trying to get me to do that on two occasions. I refused to do that, and I don't remember ever seeing him going into the girls' rooms. However, he must, at the very least, have wanted to do that otherwise why would he have been trying to get me to get the girls to take their clothes off?
137. Mr Doherty wasn't ever physically abusive towards me. He didn't hit me or restrain me. However, he was verbally abusive. He used to say that if I told anyone what happened he would speak to members of the local gang in the area and arrange for them to come in to get me. He started saying those things towards the end of the time I was at Bellshill. I don't know whether he was saying those things because he saw that I didn't like what he was doing and noticed that my behaviour was changing in the home. As my behaviour got worse those threats became increasingly frequent.
138. The local gang was a real thing. The gang was made up of teenagers who were either fifteen or sixteen years old. Everybody was terrified of the people who were in the gang. Gang members coming into the home happened a few times over the time I was at Bellshill. They were coming into the home and attacking people. I remember sitting in the living room and a gang member walking into the building. I remember them coming up to the living room door and trying to kick the door in. I remember kids holding the door shut. I don't know where the staff were when these things were happening.
139. I don't know whether it was connected to Mr Doherty, but I remember an occasion when one of the gang members got into Bellshill, ran up the stairs after me and tried to get into the toilet I had locked myself in. I remember the gang member trying to

kick the door in to get to me. That incident terrified me and felt as if it lasted forever. I don't know where the staff were then for that to be allowed to happen. The toilet was right above the staff office, so I don't know how they didn't hear what was happening. At the time, I was convinced that it was all to do with Mr Doherty. The incident all the more made me think that I needed out of the place.

Reporting of abuse whilst at Bellshill

140. I never said a word to anybody about what Mr Doherty did. There were other staff members at Bellshill, but I didn't feel I could talk to any of them about what was happening. There was no one from the outside who I felt comfortable speaking to. I had that many social workers over my time in care that I never felt I had the relationship with any of them where I could go and speak to them. I didn't speak to any of the other children about it. The other children spoke about Mr Doherty to me, but they never talked about him in a way that would say he was abusing them. There were no conversations like that.
141. Over time, I started cracking up from the abuse I was suffering. I just wanted away from Bellshill so I could escape it. I had a female social worker during the final time I was at Bellshill. I can't remember her name. I didn't tell her about the abuse I was suffering but I told her that I wanted to be moved out of Bellshill. She wouldn't listen to me and, in the end, I had to find other ways to try and get moved on.

Leaving Bellshill

142. The only way I could stop Mr Doherty doing what he was doing was through misbehaving. I thought that if people thought I was bad they would move me out of Bellshill. I realised that if I was as difficult as I could be then I would be moved on. I just went berserk. I remember smashing the place up, breaking windows and climbing on the roof. I continually upped the ante until they could put up with me no longer.

143. I remember that on the occasion I was on the roof I was breaking the slates and throwing them down. I can't remember whether anything was damaged because of me doing that. The police were called out and I was happy to see them. When the police came they talked to me and persuaded me to come down from the roof. The police didn't take me away and I wasn't charged with anything. I just went to my room after the incident. I don't remember staff members speaking to me following the incident. No one came in and sat with me. I'm not sure whether Mr Doherty was there that night or not. I can't remember whether anybody asked me why I did what I had done. That could be just because I don't remember though.
144. I was chucked out of Bellshill within the space of a few days after the incident where I climbed onto the roof. It all happened very quickly. The following day a social worker came to speak to me at Bellshill. I remember being taken by my social worker to a children's hearing and the panel taking the supervision order off me. I can't remember the name of the social worker, but it was a woman. I'm not 100% sure where the hearing was held but it may well have been in Shotts in the social work department there. My parents weren't there and I'm not sure whether they were made aware that I was leaving care. It was all very quick because the panel all agreed what they wanted to decide. I was in and out. It all felt as if it was a bit of a done deal. That was me off supervision and out of the care system. I was glad after the hearing because I was away from everything. I remember feeling relieved.

Life after leaving Bellshill and before ending up in Longriggend Detention Centre

145. After the hearing, my social worker took me back to Bellshill to collect my stuff, took me to Park Gate Market to buy some clothes, a hi-fi and some other stuff then dropped me off at the office at the bottom of some flats in Cumbernauld. The social worker showed me the facilities in the building, the flat, handed me a key then left straight away. That was the last time I had any contact with social workers. There

wasn't anyone from Bellshill who came to check on me or came out to provide me with support. There was no through care from anyone.

146. The flat I was placed in was, I think, a YMCA place. I initially shared the flat with one other person, but we were later joined by someone I had been in care with at Cecil Street. I think the boy from Cecil Street was called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] hadn't been at Cecil Street all that long. The other person was an older guy who was waiting on his own flat. He was hardly ever around. We shared a kitchen and a living room. It was furnished and had everything other than a television and a hi-fi. The flat had three bedrooms and a living room which we all shared. I was young and under prepared, but I was glad to be where I was. I was excited to be in my own flat. It felt as if I was getting my own freedom.
147. I attended a couple of placements on YTS schemes for about a year. The first placement was around the block from my flat. I presume that that was set up by my social worker. They gave me £29:50 a week throughout the time I was part of the placements. My first placement involved just going to sit in a building. I would go in, put on some overalls and boots then just sit around doing nothing all day before going back to my flat at night. I did that for a while before finding another placement where I could actually do some work. I found that placement in a job centre. It was working for a company doing landscaping. They would pick you up in the morning in a van and drop you off. I was based in a massive garden attached to a nursing home. After that placement, I got a job working in a greenhouse that farmed tomatoes. By that point I would have nearly turned seventeen. I would call that my first proper job. By that time, I was still in the same flat in Cumbernauld. I then met a girl and she got pregnant. I ended up moving in with her in Kilsyth near Cumbernauld. The relationship lasted for about two years.

Longriggend Detention Centre, Airdrie, North Lanarkshire

148. I was in Longriggend for one period of three weeks then another period of a couple of days. The part of Longriggend I was in was for younger people. Everyone I was

with was seventeen or under. The older inmates were kept elsewhere in the jail. I think they were the ones who did all the work that needed to be done in the prison.

149. The first time I was there I was either nearly seventeen or just turned seventeen. That would have been in 1989. I was under remand for assault. I was taken there straight from Hamilton Sheriff Court. After those three weeks I was on probation and did community service emptying condemned houses and taking the contents to the tip. I had to do 180 hours of that. I did my community service twice a week for what felt like months and months. The second time I was in Longriggend was because I had got into a fight. I was caught doing that and that meant I breached my probation. I was only there for a couple of nights. That would have been in approximately early 1990. My probation continued after I was released.
150. During both times in Longriggend, I was locked up in my cell for the whole time I was there. That would have been for at least twenty three hours a day. The only times I got out was for a wee walk in a small courtyard once a day and for two meals a day. We were given a breakfast pack in our cells in the mornings and had lunchtime and dinner in the dining hall. The dining hall wasn't that big so I think only a few people could go down at a time. It was straight back to your cell after meals. We had a potty in our cells for when we needed the toilet. We had to empty it in the mornings. I think they gave you a uniform for clothes. There was no television, radio, books or anything. The only thing I could do is read the one letter I received a week from my girlfriend. It was just boredom.
151. Nothing bad happened during my times at Longriggend. The guards were just guards. Considering I was in a jail, I don't think the guards were that bad. It's hard for me to tell what they were really like because I was hardly out of my cell during the times I was at Longriggend. There wasn't any trouble with the other inmates. You would hear other people shouting and balling but that is just what jail is like. I kept my head down.

Life after leaving care

152. I don't know how but I ended up at my parent's house in Harthill after I split up with my girlfriend. I was there for a brief period until I got a place in a hostel in Livingston called 'Open Door'. I was there for a while. During that time, I wasn't working. I received a grant that allowed me to stay in the hostel. I ended up staying with a friend in Broxburn then moved down to Leeds in England for a couple of years. I worked in construction building an office for an insurance company. I then moved back up to Scotland. I did berry picking in Blairgowrie for a summer. I moved around all over the place after leaving Blairgowrie. My life spiralled out of control because I was spending a lot of time drinking. My life just went AWOL. I lost control and nearly ended up killing myself with liver failure.
153. By the time I was in my late twenties, I was in and out of hostels for a while before getting a house in Edinburgh. I was looking for work in a job centre and was offered the opportunity to train in the food industry. It was all to do with service and food preparation. As part of that training they offered a three week placement in Italy. The training was provided through a scheme called Real Start and I had to attend college. The scheme was for people who hadn't had much education. The instructors spent more time with you. I ultimately obtained an HNC in Professional Cooking. I did well on the course and ended up excelling at it. I later worked for companies such as Sodexo in catering.
154. I met a girl on the course, and we ended up moving in together. We had three kids together. That was a period when my life felt a bit stable. Although my life stabilised at that point in Edinburgh, I was still drinking. There were always things still going on in my head. I never drank in front of my kids. I always made sure that I went away when I did that. I would disappear for a couple of days so people couldn't see me drunk. My partner couldn't put up with that and that led to us splitting up. After splitting up with my partner my drinking continued. That was when I started taking heroin. Heroin helped me blank everything out. I did that for about ten years.

155. Up until my most recent sentence I haven't really spent a great deal of time in prison. I was in prison for spells of nine, six and three months. My latest sentence, which is due to be completed in [REDACTED] 2023, has lasted four years. It came at a time when I was cleaning myself up. I got into a fight and was prosecuted for that.

Impact

156. I find it difficult to trust people. I have trust issues because those people who were supposed to care for me didn't. I think about my time in care a lot, but I wouldn't say that I think about it every day. It's more when I have quiet moments and I am sitting on my own. I think back to the abuse that I suffered. It's always there. Thinking about it isn't something that is easy to deal with, so I have had to find ways not to think about it. My drinking and drug use helped me block out my memories of my time in care. Heroin blanked that part of my life right out of my head. Heroin gave me that sense of escape away from things.
157. I especially think about my time in care when I see my siblings doing well for themselves. I see them doing well and think that I should have been left in the environment they grew up in. If I had been left with my parents I wouldn't have led the life that I have led. My time in care ruined that for me. I'd have found my own way. I think I would have grown up to be more like my brothers and sister if I had stayed with my family in Harthill. It can't have been that bad if my brothers and sister got through it and did well.
158. My time in care has affected my relationship with my family. My parents only visited me twice during my times in the various places I was at. For some reason that didn't seem to be encouraged. I had limited contact with them and sometimes there were years went by without me seeing them. By the time I was at Bellshill the last time, my parents were like strangers to me. The relationship seemed strange to me, and I stopped thinking that they were my parents. I did think about them though. I saw my parents more often as they got older. I made my peace with them. They never gave me a reason why I was placed into care though. I don't really have a relationship

with my siblings. They haven't provided me with any information about what was happening when I was in care.

159. I have a good relationship with my children. Being in care has made me a lot more protective when it comes to them. I had to make sure that they didn't end up in children's homes or anything like that. I'm happy that they have all come through fine. They are all doing brilliantly for themselves. None of them ended up on drugs and they are all working.
160. My time in care affected my education. When I left the care system my reading and writing was poor. I could read and write but I wasn't that great. There wasn't anyone throughout my time in care who really made the effort to help me out with my reading and writing. It wasn't until I was about thirty years old that I decided I needed to do something about it. I attended college to train to be a chef and they helped me out with that. It was there that one of the tutors saw my writing and worked out that I may be dyslexic. After a computer test I was diagnosed as having that. It was tough but I got through it. In the end, I got more help as an adult with my reading and writing than I ever did as a child.
161. My time in care left me with a lot of anger. That, combined with my drinking and drug taking, has resulted in me becoming physically violent. It just comes out at certain times. I can deal with it now but there have been times when I just can't deal with things and crack up. I've been violent a good few times and that has led to me spending time in prison.

Treatment and support

162. I have never really spoken about my time in care, but I have been diagnosed with PTSD. One of my doctors filled out a form and came up with that diagnosis. Although I didn't speak about what happened, the doctor said that my PTSD likely came about from things that happened over the course of my childhood.

163. My latest prison sentence has worked out for me. It's allowed me a bit of breathing space. It has allowed me to get away from drink and drugs and to properly think about my life. I'm learning how to cope with my anger a bit more. I don't want to continue the way I was before I went back to jail. I haven't received any psychological help or counselling during my time in prison and I haven't asked for that. I feel better now I have spoken to the Inquiry about what happened.

Reporting of abuse after leaving care

164. I haven't spoken to the police, or anybody else, about what happened. I don't know whether I will do that. The first time I have ever spoken about the abuse I suffered was providing this statement. I knew that I needed to get things out of my head and that was why I spoke to the Inquiry. I think speaking to the Inquiry will be beneficial for my own mental health.

Records

165. I had records at some point, but I don't know where they are now. There was a pile of paperwork. I went to see a social worker about my file at the social work department in Shotts. It was before I was thirty years old and before I had help with my reading and writing. I don't remember a lot about the meeting, but the social worker told me the reasons why I had ended up in care. I don't remember the social worker's name. They didn't elaborate other than to say that I was 'outwith parental control.' I didn't see that in black and white in my records but that was what the social worker told me. It all didn't make sense and there was a lot of chat about 'sections' and things like that. That's all I was told.

Lessons to be learned / Hopes for the Inquiry

166. I should have been taught how to do things and how to live as an adult when I was in care. That should have been especially happening when I was at Bellshill. However, when I was barely sixteen I was chucked into a flat and expected to get on with things. It was as if they were saying "there you go, have a nice life" without having prepared me at all.
167. All the social workers I had over the course of my time in care came from Shotts which is in North Lanarkshire. My parents lived [REDACTED] in Harthill which [REDACTED] sat directly between West Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council. I think there was [REDACTED] a boundary marker. We had a choice for what school that we went to because [REDACTED] both local authorities. That resulted in my siblings and I going to different schools. That might be one explanation why I was sent to places so far and wide over the course of my time in care.
168. I've been left thinking about what the social worker told me ever since I met them to look at my records. I was left with more questions than answers. I just wasn't satisfied with what I was told and feel that way today. I just can't understand how I could have been outwith parental control. I have had kids and been able to control them when needed. I don't know how my parents weren't able to do what I have been able to do with my kids.
169. It should be professional people who look after children. That's especially so if the children have come from broken homes. Children are complex at the age I was when I was placed into care. They shouldn't be shoved in front of 'just anybody.' There should be stringent checks undertaken on any person that works in childcare and children's homes. The things that happened to me should never have been allowed to happen. I don't think there should be any care homes. Families break down but that shouldn't result in a whole load of kids just being lumped together. Doing that just doesn't help anybody.

170. Looking back, if things had worked out in my foster care placement I might have had a better chance at life. I just couldn't cope with them being my mother and father when I knew they weren't. I wasn't in the right frame of mind when I was fostered and just wanted to be home. I never asked to be returned to a foster placement but, in hindsight, if that could have been arranged things would have been fine.
171. I should never have been taken away from my parents. I was let down during my time in care. I shouldn't even have been placed in care. There were times that were better than others, but I hated all my time in care. Everywhere I went I thought "I'm not going to be here that long" because I was moved that many times. I was always unsettled. I just didn't want to be at all the places I was placed because I just wanted to be back home. The things that happened to me should never have happened. I hope that through speaking to the Inquiry I have managed to get things out of my head and am able to move on. I hope that things will be better for me.
172. 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 20/7/23.....