

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

MVL  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is MVL [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1975. My details are known to The Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. I was born in Bellshill, Glasgow and my parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I am the youngest of seven children and also have two half-brothers and two half-sisters from my mum's second relationship. My father also had another son with his girlfriend [REDACTED]
3. My eldest brother is [REDACTED] who was born [REDACTED] 1966 but died in [REDACTED] 2019, then it's [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] who has since died, [REDACTED] who we call [REDACTED], [REDACTED] then me. We all lived together in the same house and there's roughly 1 ½ years between each of us.
4. We lived in Stevenson just outside Carfin. It was a normal family life from what I recall but I was only a baby. I've always wondered why I was put into care and the Social Services have always said it was my mum's fault. They said my mum and dad split up and, because my dad was drinking a lot, he couldn't look after us.
5. My recollection is that my dad was going in for an operation and was asked to sign a form for us to be taken into care to give him some respite. The next thing he knew was that we had been taken into care.

6. My dad was quite violent with us and would shoot at us with air rifles, throw darts at us or hit us with his belt. When he had a party everybody would be drinking, playing cards for money and fights would break out including some using machetes. The police were often at the door but it wasn't always my dad's fault.
7. I went to St Patrick's Primary School in Stevenson Cross but the only thing I recall about it is that it got burnt down. I do recall climbing a tree with my brother [REDACTED], who I always called wee-man, and he fell and got badly hurt in his groin area.
8. The first Social Worker I recall was Fiona Martin or Fiona Johnstone. I had Social Workers by both names but I can't recall which one was first. I don't know why the Social Workers were in our life but they once made a surprise visit to the house and my dad was half-pissed.
9. The Social Worker started making advances to my dad saying that if he and her were to get married he would be able to keep his children. My dad said "No" and it was not long after that when we were taken into care.
10. On the day I was first taken into care my older brother reassured me that everything would be fine and I just thought we were going on a holiday. We all ended up going into care with the exception of my two eldest brothers. I think Social Workers came to collect us in two or three cars.

**Bellshill Children's Home – Resident there on two separate occasions**

11. I went into Bellshill children's home in 1982 when I was six or seven years old. It looked like an old school with a prison fence round it and it reminded me of a mental hospital. The place was enclosed. I could only go out if I had somebody with me.
12. The place was run by Strathclyde Council. It had two floors and I was on the top floor. I think I had four or five in my room, there were two others next door and somebody

on his own at the end. My brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were in the room with me but [REDACTED] later got moved into the room at the end on his own.

13. I only recall two of the staff one of whom was a guy called [REDACTED] who was either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. He was in his 30's, had brown hair, was well built and said he was an ex-policeman. The other was [REDACTED] who was in her 40's, had ginger hair which was always messy, a big nose and reminded me of Cruella De Ville. Her job was to look after the children.
14. I would say there were about forty or fifty children in the home. They were aged from about six to sixteen. Certain places were kept locked. There was a wee house at the side of the school which you weren't allowed in though [REDACTED] sometimes took me there.

#### **Routine at Bellshill Children's Home**

15. I don't recall anything about the routine other than going to the games room with one of my brothers or hiding in what was called the rumpus room which was a room full of cushions.

#### *Mealtimes / Food*

16. All I recall about the food was that one of the punishments we would get was not being fed. We all ate together in the dining-room. Most of the food I recall I was glad to get because I didn't get much at home. If you didn't eat what was put in front of you it wasn't a problem, you just went hungry.
17. When we first went to Bellshill we would get breakfast but that stopped when we went to school as we would get school dinners so they didn't think they needed to give us breakfast. The problem with that was I was forever skipping school which meant I wasn't getting fed throughout the day.

18. This was one of the reasons I fell behind at school. Because I wasn't eating during the day I was losing concentration and that's why I lost out on a lot of education.

*Washing / bathing*

19. I think it was baths they had as I don't recall any showers.

*School*

20. Bellshill didn't have a school but the nearby school wasn't far away. I don't recall what it was called and I wasn't there long. When I went back to Bellshill the second time I didn't go to school much as I was always getting bullied. Instead of going to school me and my brother would go swimming. I missed a lot of education and was always behind others.

*Trips / Holidays*

21. We went to Butlins once for the day but I had torn my ligaments and was on crutches so I couldn't do much that day. I had been jumping off a barn roof into piles of straw but I left it for a while and when I went back to do it again somebody had put a load of bricks in the straw which is why I tore my ligaments.
22. The only other sort of trips I went out on was when MVM used to take a few of us out in his car. The oldest of us always sat in the front. It was just around the nearby countryside and he used to drive really fast. When we told him he was going too fast he would say that he was an ex-policeman and could do what he liked.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

23. The only birthday I recall was when my dad didn't turn up. He had gone to the Social Work to get money to come and visit me but spent the money on drink instead.

24. I remember I got a bike for the second Christmas I was there but within half an hour somebody had bent the front wheel and nobody would fix it for me. I don't know if it was the home or The Social who bought the bike for me. That same year my brother got a pair of roller skates.
25. That's all I recall about Christmas other than playing with toys or watching television. I do remember that nobody shared any of the toys they were sent by relatives.

#### *Visits*

26. Social Workers came along only if something had happened. They didn't just show up to see how you were. They would take you out but it never felt real. They would come along if I had made a complaint about something but they would never ask much about what I had complained about.
27. The Social Workers sometimes gave me nice things and it always felt that they were trying to bribe me to say what they wanted me to say. Also, it seemed that every time I complained one of my brothers or sister would get moved.
28. My dad visited us on the odd occasion but it was more to come and collect us and take us to some meeting or other. This would be at a contact centre which was where he would see us under supervision but as often as not he didn't show up. He was always being told that he wasn't to drink the day before he came to see us.
29. Nobody else came to see us. If there were any official visitors then I wasn't aware of them. The only times I went home was when I skipped school to do so but that was considered as running away and we would get punished.

#### *Healthcare*

30. I remember going to see a doctor before a review and he would fill in a sheet of paper with the outline of a body on it. He would put down whatever marks he found on my body. These marks were usually caused if I had fallen or been fighting.

*Running away*

31. I ran away quite often with my brother [REDACTED] and when we did the school would punish us. The punishment depended on what time we returned. If it was late then we would just be sent to our bed with no supper. If it was earlier we would be put in the cupboard to do everybody's washing up.

*Bed Wetting*

32. My brother [REDACTED] wet the bed. He never got any help with it and staff just treated him like a child. They would give him a rubber sheet and made sure everybody knew he had wet the bed.

*Discipline*

33. You would get a punch or a clout round the ear but it wasn't as bad as I was getting at home so that was normal to me. <sup>MVN</sup> [REDACTED] was particularly vicious that way but I don't recall the names of the other staff who would hit us.
34. The other ways they would discipline us was to send us to our bed without supper or lock us in the cupboard for hours at a time. It was just a cupboard with a sink in it. Sometimes the staff would change shift and they would forget they had put us in there.

**Abuse at Bellshill Children's Home**

35. The first thing I remember is getting hit on the head with a shoe. It was <sup>MVN</sup> [REDACTED] who did it and my brother [REDACTED] saw her do it. I had jumped on the bed and she threw the shoe which hit me on the head. I complained about it as [REDACTED] said he would back me up but then they gave him a bedroom on his own and he then denied seeing the incident.

36. When I say it was MVN [REDACTED] who did that Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later
37. On another occasion I fell off a balcony and ended up with a fractured skull. I was unconscious but I don't know how long for. I nearly died. I recently got a copy of my records and there's no mention of that incident in them which I think is a disgrace.
38. Sometimes when we were locked in the cupboard as a punishment the door would be unlocked and opened and the light would go off. A man would then come into the cupboard and grope my bum then leave. It was as if they were doing a police search of me but more intimate. This was a regular occurrence. You never knew who it was that was doing it because the light was turned off.
39. When I think back to the abuse I suffered at Bellshill it's always MVM [REDACTED]'s face I see. I can't remember his second name but he was the one who would come into my dorm and take off my pyjama bottoms and used to take me into the wee cottage next to the school and do the same thing.
40. This happened several times. I can always remember him taking my pyjama bottoms off but I can never recall any further detail about what else he did once he took them off. Maybe I've just blanked it out of my memory.
41. I remember I used to use my bed and the drawers under it to make a wee den where I would hide to get away from MVM [REDACTED]

### **Reporting of abuse at Bellshill Children's Home**

42. I complained when I got hit on the head with a shoe but only did so because [REDACTED] said he would support me. I would complain to whichever member of staff would listen to me. However, it got to the point it wasn't worth complaining as nothing was ever done.

43. I also reported things like residents having sex in the rumpus room or people getting touched up but the only reason I complained was because I had been thrown out of the room.
44. I never complained about what <sup>MVM</sup> [REDACTED] was doing to me but that was only because I was too scared of him to complain about him.

### **Leaving Bellshill Children's Home**

45. I'm not sure how long I was in Bellshill the first time but it was probably a few months. The second time I was there for about a year. When I left the first time I thought we were all going back to stay with my dad for good.
46. It was the Social Workers who took us home but I don't remember what the conversation was or why it was we were suddenly going back home. I just remember that one of my older brothers had moved out to stay with a pal.
47. I don't recall how long we stayed with my dad because I contracted German Measles and pneumonia. I don't actually recall that but I got it from my records. I don't know if it's just a dream but I do recall being in a room with plastic sheets all round me.
48. At first being back home was alright and we did things like camping and fishing. I don't recall anything bad happening. My dad's girlfriend [REDACTED] moved in and she and dad were heavy drinkers. They had a baby but Social Work got involved and took the baby from them.
49. After school one day we all got picked up by the Social Work and taken to the Social Services in Motherwell and then were taken back to Bellshill . There was a children's hearing sometime after that during which I recall my dad shouting that he would take the matter further.
50. I then stayed at Bellshill for about a year. I don't know why I left the second time. By this time my brothers and sisters had been separated from me. I think [REDACTED] had gone

to Quarriers and my brother [REDACTED] went to Airdrie. Me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to Blantyre.

51. One time I was talking to a Social Worker who said I could end up in fifty different institutions before I got out of the system. They said that me and my brothers and sisters were being split up because they couldn't accommodate such a large family. It was unfair because we all wanted to stay together and even my dad said that if we were being taken off him we should be kept together.

### **Wooddean, Blantyre**

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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**Leaving Wooddean, Blantyre**

75. Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED] our social workers and the staff moved me and [REDACTED] but left [REDACTED] behind. The social worker, who I think was one of the Fionas that I've mentioned, said there were only two places available so one of us had to stay at Wooddean. That destroyed our relationship with [REDACTED] for years though she was eventually fostered into a really nice family.
76. The social work actually wanted to split up me and [REDACTED] as well but we refused to move if they split us. This apparently meant that it was more difficult to find a place for us to move to as they had to find a place that would take two. It took them a while to do so though I don't recall how long. We went to Roslyn Children's Home in East Kilbride.

**Roslyn Children's Home, Roslyn Avenue, East Kilbride**

77. I was in my last year at primary school so it would be 1974 and I would be about ten.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



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**Leaving Roslyn Children's Home, Roslyn Ave, East Kilbride**

118. I was in my bedroom with my brother [REDACTED] who was typing in programmes on his computer, a Commodore 64. A man and woman called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came into our room, introduced themselves and said that they were going to be looking after us.

119. Thereafter they took me and [REDACTED] out a few times over a period of weeks or months and would show us their house in Kilmarnock. We were really excited because we thought we would be part of a family and we finally left Roslyn Home and moved in with the [REDACTED] sometime in 1986 or 1987.

#### **Foster care with the [REDACTED]**

120. [REDACTED] was a chef and a brilliant cook though he would never let me help in the kitchen. Him and his wife [REDACTED] were in their mid-40's and had two children of their own called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was about seventeen and his sister was ages with me, maybe a year older. It certainly felt it would be better than what we had been used to.

121. The house they lived in was a three bedroom detached house. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both had their own room and myself and [REDACTED] shared a room while [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] slept in a makeshift bedroom downstairs. We shared our room with another child they fostered called [REDACTED] until he moved and was replaced by a boy called [REDACTED].

122. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were strict but they were alright. They told us that because we didn't come from a wealthy background they wouldn't treat us any different from that. When they went on holidays we didn't go with them but, instead, went to Calm Us on Iona.

123. We went to Calm Us quite a few times, sometimes for a weekend and sometimes for a week. They would lend us all the kit we needed and there was hill-climbing and canoeing and it was brilliant. Lots of kids from other homes went there.

124. We got on well with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They also looked after other children one of whom was [REDACTED] who was a good bit older than us and who I ended up in a few scraps with mainly over daft wee things like who should have the TV remote. One of the others was called [REDACTED] but I'll talk about him later.

125. I actually went out with [REDACTED] for a wee while but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] soon put a stop to it saying we were more like brother and sister and that it was inappropriate for us to be going out together,

#### **Routine at the [REDACTED]**

126. We would get up at about 7:00 am and get washed and dressed before having breakfast. We would then get the bus to St Joseph's Academy and would have lunch at school.
127. After school we would head home and have dinner then spend the evenings with friends though we had to be home for 8:00 pm while our mates could stay out later. That was always annoying. Sometimes if we stayed out too late, especially at the weekends, the [REDACTED] would call the police.
128. At the weekend we would go swimming or go out with our girlfriends and sometimes have a drink. [REDACTED] could always drink a lot but I've never been a big drinker and would only have a couple.

#### *Food*

129. The food was great and we never went hungry. We always ate together and sometimes we would sit and eat in the living room watching TV.

#### *Chores*

130. Although the [REDACTED] always said they wouldn't treat us any different from their own kids, they did. It was always me and [REDACTED] who were told to tidy up the gardens and pick up the rubbish. We also had to clean our rooms and take turns doing the washing up. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] said that this was to help prepare us for growing up and for when we moved out.

*Washing*

131. We could have a bath whenever we liked but, with so many in the house, it would be every third day or so.

*School*

132. We went to St Joseph's Academy which was just the same as all the other schools we had gone to. We got bullied because we were so far behind in our education. I ended up dogging school and didn't go back until my final year when I had to cram my whole education into that one year.
133. If I dogged school [REDACTED] would make me wear weird clothes like a daft shirt or a strange pair of shoes as punishment. I didn't see any psychologists while at St Joe's. I eventually left school at sixteen and went to college where I studied to be a chef.

*Doctors/dentists*

134. I did go to a dentist a few times and got a couple or crowns. I know I would have had check-ups with a doctor but I don't now recall them. There was an occasion when I was in hospital after I was swinging on a door in school and fell off and landed on my head. I was off school with concussion for a couple of days after that.

*Religion*

135. We went to midnight mass but the only other times we went to mass was with the school because it was a Catholic school. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were relaxed as far as religion was concerned.

*Christmas/birthdays*

136. Christmas was well celebrated. When we got back from midnight mass [REDACTED] would have a big spread out on the table for us. We also had a big Christmas dinner and each of us got presents. We also got presents for our birthday.

*Clothes*

137. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] bought all my clothes, probably with money they were given for fostering us.

*Visitors*

138. Contact with our dad was still supervised. We also wanted to see our mum but social workers told us she didn't want to see us which we later found out wasn't true. However, on one occasion our older brother [REDACTED] brought mum to the house and we were allowed to see her.
139. As I got older I was allowed to go and stay with my dad sometimes at weekends. I think the main reason for this was that [REDACTED] had left the foster home before me, because he was that bit older, and went to stay with our dad. I think it was because [REDACTED] was in the house that the social work thought I would be safe there.
140. I did get visits from social workers but I don't recall anybody official coming to inspect the house. That was probably because [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had been fostering children for years and I think the social workers trusted them.

**Abuse at the [REDACTED]**

141. The other foster boy I mentioned earlier, [REDACTED] had a relationship with an older woman who stayed nearby. When I was in England one time seeing my mum those

two and another woman and her daughter tried to fit me up and I got charged with lewd and libidinous behaviour to one of the younger girls.

142. The police had also spoken to [REDACTED] about it and he knew there was something strange about the dates involved but couldn't quite work out what it was. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] they had made it all up to try and get compensation. I had been terrified as I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life in jail.
143. While this was all going on I received no support or help from the social services and the only people I could talk to were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had found my bus tickets and knew I had been in England when the alleged events were supposed to have happened.
144. [REDACTED] some mates came round to give me moral support and [REDACTED] saw me talking to them on the street. He was wearing two studded wrist bands on his knuckles, came running at me and started punching into me.
145. During the attack I managed to grab hold of [REDACTED] by the neck and hold him. I was begging passer-by's to help and asked them to just get the studs off him and then I would deal with it myself but nobody helped.
146. The only reason the attack stopped was because [REDACTED] approached us and, as soon as he saw [REDACTED], [REDACTED] just put his hands up and said "enough". I stood up but as I did so I collapsed and was rushed to hospital. I ended up in Crosshouse Hospital after the attack and the doctors said I had 1,300 separate injuries on my head from the studs on [REDACTED] gloves.
147. [REDACTED] continued living in the same house as us but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] got him moved on shortly after that,

**Leaving Foster care with the [REDACTED]**

148. I left the [REDACTED] when I was about seventeen. From what I recall it was because of the way I was behaving towards [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] that I eventually left them. I wasn't present at any meetings about it but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] met with social workers and they all knew I wanted to be on my own or with my brother and the rest of the family. It was difficult for me when [REDACTED] left the [REDACTED]
149. When I talk about the way I was behaving towards [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I mean that I always felt that I had to deal with things on my own like the incident with [REDACTED] that I spoke about earlier. I felt alienated and I feel as if I took my frustration out on [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] which was unfair of me.
150. I thought I was going to be given my own house and a head start on things but, instead, was taken to a half-way house in Wishaw. My brother [REDACTED] helped me move in and I was to share a room with an old guy who was about sixty.
151. However, [REDACTED] asked this guy a few questions then told me to gather up my stuff and said that I wouldn't be staying there. It turned out that the old guy I would have been sharing the room with was a convicted sex offender and had just been released from prison.
152. I moved in with my brother [REDACTED] for a while before moving back in with my dad and [REDACTED]. After I left [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s I had no more contact with the social work. They didn't even know that I hadn't moved into the half-way house. They gave me absolutely no support when I left the care system.

**Life after being in care**

153. After college I worked in a few restaurants and got to cook for people like the pop band Deacon Blue. However, I had to give up work in the restaurants after a short while when I got stabbed in the leg during an incident in Kilmarnock. After that I got nervous about travelling by bus and was taking more and more time off work until eventually I had to give it up altogether.
154. I moved to live in Aylesbury where my brother [REDACTED] stayed and met my girlfriend who is now my wife. Her parents were deaf and she showed me how to do sign language which meant I was able to help her care for them like take them to dental and doctor appointments and translate for them.
155. About five or six years ago I was talking about my brother being in the TA in Afghanistan and how proud I was of him when a man suddenly punched me. That's what it felt like but it turned out he had stabbed me in the eye. I got eighteen stitches on the inside and 22 on the outside.
156. After that I moved back to Kilmarnock where I've stayed ever since which is so much more peaceful than Aylesbury was. I had to give up being a chef due to the fact that my lungs kept collapsing. At present I am working as a groundsman in [REDACTED].

**Impact**

157. The damage to my eyes is probably the worst impact I have from my time in care but my lungs started to collapse when I was sixteen and I often have to have them drained. I blame that on the various attacks I received during my time in care. If people had followed up on things that led to me going to hospital, and what the doctors advised, I doubt if I would be in this situation.

158. I suffer with my mental health though I try to put that to the back of my mind as you don't want your children knowing about that sort of stuff. Sometimes I would snap and take it out on those closest to me which is wrong.
159. My wife has always been understanding of all this due to what she went through with her parents being deaf and the bullying she received because of that. She had been my sister's baby-sitter and knew what our family had gone through.
160. I had problems when my daughter started her periods and they were so bad she was having to stay off school. She was also hanging around with the wrong crowd. Social work got involved which infuriated me due to my previous experiences with them.
161. Had I not gone through that I may have been able to trust them but they were twisting everything that was being said and lying about what I was doing and the sort of help we were needing. We were doing everything we had to do but the social workers were denying we did this. That nearly destroyed me and made me feel as if it was the same way they treated my dad and us when we were younger.
162. My education has certainly been affected. I wanted to go further in cooking but theory is very important which meant a lot of studying which I simply didn't have the education for. I learned what I knew from watching people and I could never do the academic part of it. I could have gone so much further if I had had the proper help with my education when I was younger.
163. I have never taken to drink because I had seen what it did to my family and, while I might have had the odd joint when I was younger, I have never taken to drugs.
164. I have always found it difficult to open up to people, even my wife who has been like a rock to me throughout our time together.
165. Another impact my time in care had on me happened when my brother died in [REDACTED] this year. All my brothers and sisters got together to put something together to talk about our life with him. I realised as I was listening to them that I had nothing to

contribute. That was due to the amount of time I had spent in care away from my family. That broke my heart.

### *Counselling*

166. I have never sought counselling about my time in care because I have such difficulty in opening up to others. Also if you do speak up to doctors all that happens is that you end up on a waiting list for years and by the time you get to an appointment you've moved on to some other problem. If I had had the opportunity to speak to somebody when I was younger it might have enabled me to be more open as an adult.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

167. I have no recollection of ever reporting anything that happened to me other than speaking to the police about Bellshill. In 1993 I was questioned by the police about Bellshill but I couldn't remember much but, even if I had remembered anything, I doubt if I could have opened up to them.

### **Records**

168. I started trying to get my records when I moved to Aylesbury and spoke to my mum. Her version of events were very different to what social workers had told me. Although I wanted to see my records there was always a fear of what I would see and I tended to blame my mum for everything that had happened.
169. I eventually phoned social work and they said I would have to put it in writing and pay for it. I did this but nothing happened. I have done the same thing about twelve times over the years and it was only when I threatened them with legal action that I got my records.
170. Even after threatening them with legal action it took me between six and eight months to get my records and I even had to go myself to Motherwell to pick them up. There's

a considerable amount of records and, to date, I have only flicked through them but they are heavily edited and there's a lot of blanks.

**Lessons to be Learned**

- 171. When the social workers took me from my parents they became my legal guardians. If they had protected me and spoken more openly with me I could have learned to open up more and got to the bottom of what problems I had. Help from outside people doesn't come about unless you open up to the social workers first and I could never do that. That has to change.
- 172. I should have had more and better contact with my siblings. More should have been done to keep us together. We would have been able to support each other through those bad times that we all had in care.
- 173. Social workers should have been more open with us and told us the truth. I wouldn't have blamed my mum if I had known the truth. Maybe it was right to take us from our dad but they shouldn't have taken us away from each other.

**Hope for the Inquiry**

- 174. I hope we get some answers. There is so much about my younger life that I don't know about. It shouldn't be down to social workers to decide what happens to families. It should involve a third independent party that can look at things objectively.
- 175. 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.

MVL  


Signed.....

Dated 11/7/2019.....