

## **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

**Stewart BURGESS**

Support person present: No

1. My name is Stewart James Burgess. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1950. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### **Background**

2. Between 1965 and 1978, I worked in Poultry Husbandry. I began my employment in social care in 1978 at Kirkland Park Assessment Centre and remained there until 1980. From 1980 to 1981, I was employed at Craighens Children's Home. In 1981, I moved to Redheugh Adolescent Unit and I was suspended in 1991 and made redundant in 1992. Between 1986 and 1989, I also attended Langside College, in Glasgow. I was at Langside for just under three years doing a full-time course, a Certificate in Social Services (CSS) and during that time, I didn't work at Redheugh at all. I obtained my CSS and qualified as a social worker in 1989. I then went back to Redheugh.
3. Before I went to Langside College full-time, I went there one day per week, for an in-service day. It was a forerunner to the full-time course, to see if you could handle the paperwork and so on. There were various topics discussed regarding childcare and care in general, as there were people caring for the elderly there as well.
4. I went to Clydebank College to do a course about counselling. I think it was part of the three years I did at Langside College but I can't be sure. It wasn't after I qualified as a social worker.

## **Redheugh Adolescent Unit, Dipple Road, Kilbirnie, North Ayrshire**

5. Redheugh Adolescent Unit was situated on Dipple Road, Kilbirnie. It was a home for adolescents to live in. My first impression was that it was very large. The culture of Redheugh was to enhance the wellbeing of the young people. In general, the staff were caring, supportive, and friendly toward the young people.

### *My time at Redheugh Adolescent Unit*

6. I was employed at Redheugh from 1981 to 1992. I was a houseparent dealing with the day to day needs of the young people. In 1986 I went to Langside College, Glasgow.
7. Working at Kirkland Park Assessment Centre gave me a basis of the understanding and requirements to work with young people. Kirkland Park provided references for me to the management at Redheugh.
8. My line manager at Redheugh was **HDD**, who was **SNR**. Daily advice was given by **HDD**, if required, and there were weekly meetings.

### *Structure and recruitment of staff*

9. The leadership structure was the officer in charge, then the depute officer in charge, and then the senior houseparent in each house unit. On a daily basis there were three houseparents, both male and female. Each house unit had a senior houseparent on most shifts, who was in charge.
10. The **SNR** style of **HDD**, **SNR** at Redheugh was democratic.
11. I was not involved in the recruitment of staff. Recruitment policy and recruitment practices were not my remit. Volunteers did work in the institution; however, I had no involvement in the assessing or vetting process. I was not involved in the process of

obtaining references from former places of work, and I have no knowledge of whether referees were spoken to.

12. I have been asked whether I managed others in positions of care or responsibility at Redheugh. I think I was in post as a senior houseparent before I qualified as a social worker. The girl's unit came in and that was a change. I was senior houseparent there before I went to college full-time. When I qualified, I was asked by the officer in charge to set up an Independent Living Accommodation Unit (Independent Unit) in a building renovated to house five individual, single rooms. I was allocated two houseparents, reporting to myself. I was asked if I wanted to be the depute officer in charge but I liked the Independent Unit. It was something new and badly needed.

#### *Training*

13. I have been asked whether I was involved in the training or personal development of staff. The two houseparents chosen to work in the Independent Unit had a solid grounding in adolescent care. We had regular meetings on how to set up the unit. We discussed problems, sought answers, and worked as a team, to ensure a good environment for the young people. We also visited other establishments that had a similar objective to ourselves, a couple were in Glasgow and One was in Irvine.

#### *Supervision / appraisal / evaluation*

14. I was involved in the supervision of staff in the Independent Unit. The extent of my involvement was being given appraisal sheets by the management at Redheugh, which had questions on all aspects of working in care. That came in latterly, a year before I was suspended. You sat the member of staff down and went through the sheet, which had multiple choice answers. It was an appraisal, I interviewed the staff member and marked down the answers. I did my members of staff and SNR [REDACTED] did me. By that time, it was a different SNR [REDACTED] whose name I can't remember.

15. As far as I can remember, we had regular meetings with houseparents and staff management to keep everyone informed how the unit was doing. To my recollection, no volunteers were part of the Independent Unit.

#### *Policy*

16. I was involved in policy in relation to the care, including residential care, of young persons in the Independent Unit.
17. The reason behind the Independent Living Unit was that back in the 1980s, when the young person reached the age of sixteen, they had to move on from Redheugh. When the Independent Unit was discussed, it provided a way for some to stay on until they were eighteen and learn about the skills required for managing in the future. This could be buying their own food, learning how to cook, handling money on a daily basis, finding employment, and going shopping for food.

#### *Strategic Planning*

18. The only part of planning I was involved in was with the Independent Unit. The planning involved meeting the needs and requirements of the adolescents in our care.
19. I have been asked whether the potential for abuse featured in Redheugh's strategic approach. This role was the responsibility of the officer in charge, the depute officer in charge, and the management of the Salvation Army Headquarters.

#### *Children*

20. The placing of children at Redheugh was primarily in the remit of the Social Work Department. Before a child was placed at Redheugh, an assessment was carried out during a meeting held between the officer in charge, the depute officer in charge, and the field social worker, and the senior houseparent of the unit. The field social worker worked for the local authority and had no connection with Redheugh. From these assessments, the team took on board the requirements and needs of the young person, to assess if Redheugh was a suitable placement for their particular needs.

21. Children stayed at Redheugh for between zero and four years. Redheugh had up to 26 children at any one time, fourteen boys and twelve girls. They were aged between twelve and sixteen years old. If I remember correctly, in any one unit, there could be up to seven residents to three staff.
22. The residents were provided with food that was both nutritious and appetising. If they did not like the food provided, they could talk to the cook who would offer them something else.
23. In the Independent Unit each person had their own room. In the main building there was a mixture of single, double, and three bed rooms. There were showers in every unit. Leisure time was spent in the snooker room, watching television, in the craft room, and in the woodwork room.
24. There were organised trips, holidays, and informal trips. There was always more than one staff member in attendance. I can remember one occasion where the young people were going on holiday. The officer in charge was driving with another member of staff, a woman, to pick me up, as I was the third member of staff on this particular holiday. The staff and young adults came into my home for a cup of tea, before we headed out for our holiday.
25. I do not recall having any dealings with volunteers.
26. The minibus took the school children to various schools around the district.
27. The houseparent would administer any medication prescribed to the children. I cannot remember any child taking any medication to manage or control their behaviour. I have been asked whether parents or any person with parental responsibilities and rights were asked to consent to the administration of medication. As far as I can remember it was the responsibility of the doctor and houseparent.
28. I have been asked whether children did any manual work such as polishing floors. Redheugh had cleaners to manage day to day cleaning.

29. Parents did visit children on occasions. Vetting was carried out by the field social worker. As far as I can remember, visits from parents rarely happened, they mainly came for reviews when they were picked up by the field social worker. A lot of the children were in Redheugh because of problems at home and Redheugh wasn't the easiest of places to get to. The majority of children went home at weekends. They tended to stay within Redheugh during visits.
30. Professionals, such as social workers, psychologists or psychiatrists, all visited children as often as required. The children spoke to them alone. Sometimes, their keyworker attended. Reports were written, read, and then they were put in the file of the young person.
31. Every child had a three monthly review. The review was attended by the child, the outside social worker, the child's key worker, and either the depute officer in charge or the officer in charge, who would be in control of the meeting.
32. The process for discharge of children leaving Redheugh was that reports were written, read, and put in the file of the young person. All the work needed before the young person left would have been completed. The outside social worker would have the responsibility to decide where the child went. This could be home or other accommodation.
33. The outside social worker would take over the responsibility of seeing that the young person had suitable support regarding a home, clothes, and some money.

*Living arrangements*

34. I lived thirty miles away from Redheugh, in my own home with my wife. As far as I can remember all members of staff had their own homes. Two of those houses were onsite. One was a gatehouse and the other was a bungalow across the back road.
35. All houseparents and senior staff had access to the children's residential areas.

36. There was a permanent night shift consisting of two adult members of staff, who were responsible for the children's residential areas overnight.

#### *Discipline and Punishment*

37. I have been asked how, and by whom, children were disciplined and punished at Redheugh. There was a code of conduct and the children were disciplined. The young adults were made aware of those codes, as they were informed of them on admission to Redheugh.
38. Throughout their stay, older children were not allowed to discipline younger children.
39. The type of behaviour which resulted in discipline or punishment was evading school, deliberate damage, or verbal abuse to staff or to other residents.
40. The type of discipline that could be given was loss of some of their pocket money or privileges or being confined to their own unit. The discipline was administered by the head of the unit concerned and the key worker. Children, as far as I can remember, were not physically disciplined. No child was segregated from other children for any length of time.
41. I have been asked whether I disciplined children and in what circumstances. I kept to the code of conduct as before mentioned.
42. There was a record of all discipline and punishments. The reason was, if the child continued to portray this behaviour, the staff could talk about it and hopefully resolve the situation.

#### *Restraint*

43. Restraint was very rarely used. If two children were fighting each other, staff would intervene by standing between them.

44. I have been asked whether children were removed from other children or placed in a room alone. To my knowledge, this was never done. To my knowledge, medication was never administered to restrain a young person. As far as I can remember, the only time I would restrain a young person was if there was a fight going on.
45. I have been asked what policies, whether written or unwritten, and practices there were relating to restraint at Redheugh and how these changed over time. At full staff meetings, staff discussed appropriate methods of restraint.

*Concerns about Redheugh Adolescent Unit*

46. I have been asked whether, to my knowledge, Redheugh was ever the subject of concern, within Redheugh itself or to any external body or agency, or any other person, because of the way in which children were treated. The officer in charge, the depute officer in charge, and Salvation Army Headquarters would deal with any subject of concern. If it was a difficult or serious situation, the field social worker would be involved. They would also deal with making parents aware of such concerns and they had responsibility for reporting to parents.

*Reporting of complaints/concerns*

47. Each child had a keyworker that they could speak to if they had any concerns. In addition, the senior of the house unit would have regular meetings with the children in their unit.
48. Once a week the depute officer in charge would have an evening meeting with all the young people in Redheugh, where problems raised could be dealt with.
49. I am sure complaints were received but I was not aware of any.
50. I have been asked where complaints were recorded. Each houseparent and senior houseparent in the units had a knowledge of the logbooks, and where they were kept. The main house had three units and a logbook was kept for each unit in the main office for the recording of any incident or areas of concern. The Independent Unit had its

own office and its own logbook. Everything was recorded from a child being ill or depressed, or refusing to go to school. There was also a diary for each unit where things like doctor's appointments were recorded. There was also a main logbook and diary for all the units that staff could refer to when they came on duty, to find out what had been happening. Every member of staff recorded in the log books.

#### *Trusted adult/confidante*

51. If a child had any worries, they could speak to field social work, the key worker of the unit, a schoolteacher, the officer in charge or the depute officer in charge.
52. I have been asked whether, in practice, children raised concerns this way. While I was in Redheugh this was the practice. I am sure children raised concerns this way. I am sure children raised such concerns with me this way. For example, if a girl in the Independent Unit didn't like her employment, she may tell me and ask for advice. I had a good relationship with the staff at the Job Centre at Kilbirnie, I could phone up and say she wasn't enjoying the work and see if she could get another job.

#### *Allegations of Abuse*

53. During my time at Redheugh, there was a clear understanding of what was, and was not, abuse. Abuse was physical contact or inappropriate advances of a sexual nature.
54. This definition of abuse was communicated and explained to those working at Redheugh at regular staff meetings and in smaller house meetings with the senior houseparent.
55. I have been asked whether I saw behaviour that I considered to be abuse of any kind taking place at Redheugh. I cannot remember any one specific incident.
56. I cannot remember any child reporting abuse to me.

57. I don't think anyone could be confident that, if a child was being abused or ill-treated, it would have come to light at or around the time it was occurring. It is always possible that abuse incidents could occur.

*Child protection arrangements*

58. From management to seniors, to Salvation Army Headquarters, to houseparents, there were regular meetings on policy, and keeping children as safe as possible.
59. The guidance and instruction given on how to handle, and respond to, reports of abuse or ill-treatment of children by staff, other adults, or other children was that any such incident would be reported to the officer in charge or depute officer in charge.
60. I have been asked how much autonomy or discretion was given to staff and other adults, including managerial staff, in relation to these matters. The guidance should always be to inform the officer in charge and they would then relate it to Headquarters.
61. To reduce the likelihood of abuse, ill-treatment, or inappropriate conduct by staff or other adults, towards children at Redheugh, on every working shift there would be either a senior or managerial person who could give guidance. At the time I worked at Redheugh, such meetings were regular and supportive.

*External monitoring*

62. I cannot remember any inspector coming to Redheugh, other than an auditor.

*Record-keeping*

63. As far as I can remember, there was record keeping in each of the house units. In the General Office, there was a log book of all incidents. The officer in charge and the depute officer in charge kept a record book of all relevant information.

### **Allegations of abuse**

64. I was the subject of allegations of abuse or ill-treatment of a child who resided in Redheugh when I was at Redheugh. It came through a telephone call by a resident who was no longer in Redheugh.
65. I will speak about these allegations later in my statement when I discuss my convictions.
66. There was an investigation by the management and headquarters. They then suspended me while the police investigated. This was in 1991. No further action was taken, after the police questioning other residents that had been in Redheugh at the same time as myself, who did not complain or verify the allegations that had been made. I did not return to work at Redheugh after this and I was made redundant in 1992.

### **Investigations into abuse – personal involvement**

67. As far as I can remember, I was not part of a team investigating abuse or inappropriate behaviour.

### **Reports of abuse and civil claims**

68. I am not aware of being involved in the handling of reports or civil claims to Redheugh by former residents, concerning historical abuse.
69. I do not know whether Redheugh reached any conclusion, in light of such reports, as to the nature and extent of non-recent abuse at Redheugh.

### **Police investigations/criminal proceedings**

70. I became aware of police investigations into alleged abuse at Redheugh. I was accused of using lewd and libidinous practices and behaviour and one attempted rape. As I was made redundant in 1992 and had no more contact with Redheugh, I will deal with this later in this statement.

### **Convicted abusers**

71. Other than myself, I am not aware of anyone who worked at Redheugh being convicted of the abuse of a child at Redheugh, as I no longer worked there.

### **Other Staff at Redheugh Adolescent Unit**

HDD

72. I remember HDD. His time at Redheugh coincided with mine between 1981 to 1987. I am not sure how old he was then, I think around fifty to sixty years old. He was a likeable, good, SNR. He was fair in his decisions. He was in the Salvation Army and had a strong sense of fair play. I had contact with HDD on a daily and weekly basis and knew him only on a work basis. He was someone you could go to with a problem and was very approachable. I liked him because of that.
73. I saw him with children occasionally. He was fair minded and helpful with them. As far as I can recall, the young people liked him. In the community, HDD was a. He was well-regarded. Other people talked about HDD and I'm not aware of anyone having problems with him. I have been asked whether HDD was involved in disciplining children. He was always fair and consulted the houseparents and youngsters before making a decision.

RAB

74. This member of staff left shortly after I started at Redheugh.

RFF

75. RFF was a domestic worker who I did not have much contact with. She was the wife of HDD.

RSM

76. I remember RSM. His time at Redheugh coincided with mine around 1984. He was somewhere in his twenties. RSM's role was as a houseparent and I was a senior houseparent, in a different house unit. For a year, or a year and a half, he was a houseparent in the Independent Unit, where I was the senior houseparent. He was likeable and friendly. We worked as a team.

77. RSM was good with the young people and they, in general, liked him. As far as I know, his reputation was good. It was a long time ago, and as far as I can remember, he was well-liked. I have been asked whether RSM was involved in disciplining children. All houseparents were involved in appropriate discipline. As I said previously, the children could be kept to their own unit, never alone, or some games like snooker could be denied for a short period.

RSN

78. I remember RSN. His time at Redheugh coincided with my last five years there, from around 1986 to 1991. He was somewhere in his fifties. We were both senior houseparents but in different units. As RSN was in a different house unit, it was somewhat more difficult to get to know him, as he tended to keep himself to himself. The only contact I had with him was at senior's meetings, as we were also on different shifts. I neither liked nor disliked him.

79. Due to our different work patterns, it was not always possible to gauge how he interacted with the young people. I have been asked what RSN's reputation was, if other people talked about him, and what they said. He was known as a disciplinarian. As a senior houseparent, he had the role of disciplining children.

80. There was a set of rules, written and unwritten and, if a member of staff came to him about a child, he would have dealt with it as per policy. It's difficult for me to say how he disciplined children as I was in a separate unit, the girl's unit and I was not involved with him day-to-day. The senior houseparents were usually kept on different shifts so that there was a person in charge on each shift. I was the person in charge when I was on the backshift.

RBE

81. I have no memory of this man. He may have worked in the craft unit or with other groups with special needs that came to Redheugh.

IJU

82. I remember IJU. His time at Redheugh coincided with my last six years at Redheugh, from around 1985 to 1991, in the girls' unit. He was in his forties at that time. IJU was SNR and my immediate line manager. He was very approachable and had good knowledge of childcare. I had daily contact with him and knew him very well, on a professional level. I liked IJU because he was friendly and gave good advice if I required his guidance.

83. I have been asked if I saw IJU with the children, and how he was regarded by the children. He was very approachable for staff guidance regarding individual young people and as SNR he interacted well with the young people. IJU had a good reputation and the feedback from other people was always positive. His involvement with discipline was more to advise the houseparents and senior houseparents about discipline.

KOO

84. I remember KOO. His time at Redheugh coincided with eight years of my time, around 1987 to 1991. He was in his forties at that time. He was a houseparent, working in another unit. KOO was likeable and generally well-liked. I had general work contact with him, at meetings and mealtimes. I got to know him over the years and he was friendly towards me. I liked KOO because he was easy to talk to and we could talk about other topics, other than work.
85. He interacted with the young people, who generally liked him. As far as I knew, he was well-liked and generally had a good relationship with staff and young people. KOO was involved with discipline as part of a team. As I have said earlier in my statement, the guidelines were in place for staff to follow.

PXL

86. I have no recollection of this man. He may have worked in the craft unit or with other groups that came to Redheugh.

*George Gillan*

87. I remember George Gillan. He was at Redheugh when I started and when I left. He was in his late forties. George and I were senior houseparents together and, as he lived in a separate cottage on site, he was around the place quite a lot. We were on a different shift pattern but, due to him being around the grounds, I got to know him very well. We always had a good relationship and I liked him because we were like-minded, on many issues. George was married to Edith Gillan and they lived in [REDACTED].
88. George Gillan was liked by most of the children, as far as I can recall. He had a good reputation. I have been asked whether George Gillan was involved in disciplining children and, if he was, what he did to discipline children. It was all set out, as I have stated earlier in my statement.

*Edith Gillan*

89. I remember Edith Gillan. She was there all the time I was at Redheugh. She was in her middle to late forties at that time. Edith Gillan was a houseparent and was part of my team when I worked in the house unit. I had contact with her on a daily basis when on shift. Over the years, I got to know her quite well and my impression was that we got on well together. I liked Edith Gillan because she was friendly and likeable.
90. The children, in general, liked Edith Gillan and could communicate well with her. Edith introduced animals such as rabbits and goats to Redheugh. It was therapeutic for the children and the children enjoyed looking after them. Generally, she had a good reputation. I have been asked whether people talked about Edith and what they said. I can't remember anything specific; it was 33 years ago. I have been asked whether Edith Gillan was involved in discipling children and, if she was, what she did to discipline children. The code of discipline was adhered to and the team administered discipline where appropriate.

RLX

91. I have no knowledge of this name. This person may have worked in the craft unit or with other groups that came to Redheugh.

*Joe Sanderson*

92. I remember Joe Sanderson. His time at Redheugh coincided with my last seven years, or thereabout, from around 1984 to 1991. He was in his late forties at that time. Joe Sanderson was a houseparent but he was not in my house unit. He was generally well-liked and lived in a separate cottage on the grounds. Joe Sanderson was on the same shift pattern as me but in a different house unit. I got to know him quite well over the years and he and I got on well together. I liked Joe Sanderson because of his general, easy-going manner.
93. In general, Joe Sanderson got on well with the young people. He had a good reputation and I am not aware of anything negative being said about him. I have been asked

whether Joe Sanderson was involved in disciplining children and, if he was, what he did to discipline children. It is not the individual on his or her own. It is the team that deals with it together.

*Isabel McGookin*

94. I remember Isabel McGookin. Her time at Redheugh coincided with my last five years, from around 1986 to 1991. She was in her forties at that time. Isabel McGookin was in my team, in the Independent Unit, as a houseparent. She was quiet and did not show much of her personality. As she was in my team, we had weekly and daily contact. I knew Isabel McGookin only on a work related basis. She respected me, only as the senior in charge. I did not know her well enough to interact with her, other than with work-related matters.
95. Some of the young people liked Isabel McGookin and some were more ambivalent. We did make an effort to include Isabel. Her reputation was that she kept herself to herself. I have been asked whether Isabel McGookin was involved in disciplining children and, if she was, what she did to discipline children. Discipline was managed by the house senior and appropriate steps taken.

*Grace McGregor*

96. I remember Grace McGregor. Her time at Redheugh coincided with mine for around six years, from 1984 to 1991. She was in her early forties at that time. Grace McGregor was a houseparent on my team when I was senior houseparent. She was warm and friendly with the young people and enjoyed her role as a houseparent. I worked with her on a weekly basis and got to know her very well over the years. She liked me and we got on well together. I liked Grace McGregor because she was good at her work and brought a warmth into the house unit.
97. Grace McGregor liked all the young people and they liked her. She had a good reputation with staff and young people and, as far as I can remember, all conversation about her was positive. I have been asked whether Grace McGregor was involved in

disciplining children and, if she was, what she did to discipline children. When a problem arose, the whole team talked together to come up with an appropriate course of action.

PZD

98. I do not recall this person and did not work with him. He may have worked in the craft unit or with other groups that came to Redheugh.

#### **Leaving Redheugh Adolescent Unit**

99. I left Redheugh because I was made redundant. I was not provided with references. I did not need references as I did not work again.

#### **Convictions**

100. I was convicted in May 2008 at Kilmarnock High Court of two charges of using lewd and libidinous practices and behaviour and one charge of attempted rape. The dates of the alleged offences were between 1981 and 1986 and the place where the alleged offences took place was Redheugh. The sentence was ten years imprisonment reduced on appeal to five years imprisonment. I was released in 2013.
101. I was convicted on 30 March 2022 of a charge of using lewd and libidinous practices and behaviour against one person. The date of the alleged offence was between 1984 and 1986. The place of the alleged offence was Redheugh. The sentence was 42 months imprisonment and I was released on 20 December 2024. The prosecution used a witness from my first trial in 2008 to corroborate the evidence of the one witness in the 2022 trial. I had already been convicted of the charge relating to the first witness and served my sentence, and I felt it was wrong and unfair. The jury were not told this either. The judge said that the circumstances were reflected in the sentence of 42 months, which would have been more if I'd been convicted of both offences in 2022.

102. I did not have any of these convictions when I started my time at Redheugh. I worked in two other care establishments and there were no allegations or convictions from either of them.
103. I did not commit these offences. I pled not guilty. I have answered all questions to the best of my ability as my health and memory have deteriorated. It is over thirty years since I worked at Redheugh.

**Helping the Inquiry**

104. I have been asked, if I did not see or hear of any abuse while I was at Redheugh, can I help the Inquiry to explain how it can be that such allegations of abuse have been made. As far as I can remember, I did not hear of any allegations of abuse. I cannot explain why allegations have been made now. I have no knowledge regarding other staff members.
105. I am told the Inquiry has information to the effect that the experiences of abuse some children had at Redheugh has continued to affect them and impact on their lives. I have been asked, if I did not see or hear of any abuse while I was there, can I help the Inquiry to explain how that can be. I cannot explain why, as far as I could see, the young people were well looked after.
106. The lessons that can be learned to protect children in places like Redheugh, now and in the future, are to have smaller house units and more staff who are qualified in childcare.

**Other information**

107. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....  .....

Dated..... 13 - 1 - 26 .....