

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

FEV [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is FEV [REDACTED]. That's the name I was given when I was born. My name was never changed by any of the foster carers I lived with. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Background**

2. My mother's name is [REDACTED]. I think she's still alive. I haven't seen her since she left when I was a baby. My dad's name was [REDACTED]. He died in 2009. I have a brother called [REDACTED] and a sister called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is about five years older than me and [REDACTED] is nine or ten months younger than her. I'm still in touch with my sister, but not my brother. My sister is a social worker in Plymouth. My brother is retired and lives in Dumfries. We haven't fallen out, we just never see each other.
3. I was three months old when I went into care so I don't have any memories of my life at home. I know that my dad was always working and my mum just disappeared. We were living in Dumfries at the time. My dad couldn't cope on his own. That was in the sixties and he was a typical man's man. He liked his nights out and his bevvie. He was the kind of man who thought only about himself.
4. I don't know whether we went into care on a voluntary basis or whether there was any kind of formal order. I've never been to a children's panel in my life, so maybe it was voluntary. I can't imagine my dad going to

the social work department and asking for us to be taken into care. He probably just left it for someone else to phone and tell them that we shouldn't be left at home. I didn't always see a social worker when I was in care, but any involvement I had with them was always with social workers from the Dumfries office in Gordon Street.

5. I think I was taken to a temporary foster care home at first. I then went to Wendy House Children's Home in Dumfries, which was a children's home for young kids. I think the three of us were in there together. I'm not sure how long I was there. I think it was a couple of years, maybe even three. I'm guessing really. A woman called Fiona Houston used to run it. I spoke to her in later years when I was in another children's home. I remember little bits about it, but not enough to provide any information. It's really only from talking to Fiona Houston and my brother and sister that I know I was there.

6. [REDACTED] and I went into foster care in [REDACTED] after Wendy House. [REDACTED] went to foster carers in Langholm.

**Foster Care – Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] JDS/SPO [REDACTED]  
Dumfries and Galloway**

7. [REDACTED] is about eleven miles outside Dumfries. It's still a very small place, but it was even smaller when I was there. There were only around sixty houses. It's full of folk who work for the Forestry Commission.
8. I think I went there when I was about three years old and stayed for about four or five years. I know for definite that I was there when I started primary school. I have no memories of being taken there or my first day in the house.

9. The male foster carer was called [REDACTED] and his wife's name was JDS [REDACTED]. I think they were in their late forties to early fifties. [REDACTED] was a forestry worker. They were horrible people. She was really nasty and was always abusive to me and [REDACTED]. That was her way. It was always her, never [REDACTED]. He wouldn't have said "boo" to a goose. He lived there though, so he obviously knew what she was doing. Someone from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] told me that JDS died two or three years ago. I believe [REDACTED] is now blind and is still living in the same house.
10. Neither of them showed us any love or affection. I've never been able to understand why they were allowed to foster kids. There was no relationship between us. I hated her with a vengeance. They got money from the social work department for us to live there and that was that. It was a job for her really.
11. I have no good memories of my time with them. I just remember it being a nightmare of a place to live. I have good memories of being out in the country and of the other people in [REDACTED] but none of those two. Everyone else in the village was really nice. Leaving was probably the best bit, although that wasn't even that good considering where we then went.
12. They had a daughter called [REDACTED] who also lived with us. She was alright. I don't know what age she was. I think she was in her twenties. She got married when I was there. I don't know how the daughter was treated. She must have known how her mother was with us. I wrote to her once, but she never replied.
13. My sister came to live with us about a year before we left. She hated it. I don't know why social services would decide to take someone from a loving and caring family and put them in a hellish home like that. I remember they fostered another lassie after my sister came. I don't

remember her name. She was about fourteen or fifteen. She and my sister were wild.

**Routine at the** JDS/SPO

14. I don't remember much about the routine in the house. I had to wash the sheets before school if I'd wet the bed. [REDACTED] and I had to do all the housework and walk the dog when we got back from school. We were skivvies. I found that a lot in care: kids being treated like skivvies. Whatever JDS [REDACTED] couldn't be bothered doing, we had to do for her. My sister had to do the same when she came.
15. We didn't get anything specifically for doing the housework, but we did get pocket money. I think we got one of those wee sixpences once a week. We had a post office account, but we never got the books when we left, so I don't know if there was any money in them.
16. We used to go to bed really early. I remember it always being light when we went to bed. There were no problems with hygiene. We got washed every morning.
17. JDS/SPO [REDACTED] were good cooks, so the food was fine. We were never starved.
18. We went out to play and stayed out all day whenever we could. We'd go down to the water or the woods. It was back in the day when kids stayed out all day. We had toys and could watch TV.
19. JDS/SPO [REDACTED] were from Manchester. I remember going with them to see JDS [REDACTED] mother in Belle Vue, Manchester. I also remember going to Inverness. I think these trips were probably our holidays, but I don't remember anything other than going to these places. Neither of the

JDS/SPO drove, and where we lived was a bit isolated, so we didn't go on day trips.

20. I think she was a mad Protestant, to be honest. She was definitely into her Protestant Church. She sent me to Sunday school, but I wasn't into that. Sitting reading bibles and things was not for me. I didn't go for very long.

### *School*

21. I went to Primary School, which was just fifty yards up the road from the house. It was a tiny wee village school. I don't remember being encouraged by JDS/SPO to do any school work. I don't really have any memories of being at school. Everybody in the village knew we were in foster care. The people in the village were all big lumberjacks and it was their kids who were at the school. I'd describe the kids as "rough and ready". They all used to slag JDS/SPO off. It was just kids' talk

22. I don't think what was happening at home ever affected my behaviour at school, but I do think everybody would have known what it was like at home for us. It was a small village. There was probably less than two hundred people living there. I think nobody ever said anything because people just took the view that it was none of their business. Also, they all worked together and it was a close-knit community.

23. We were always clean and tidy, dressed well for school and were well fed. Nobody could look at us and say that we were physically neglected. JDS obviously had to put in the effort sometimes to make it look like we were a family. That's probably how she got away with what she was doing to us. She wouldn't have got away with it if there had been nothing but abuse twenty-four seven.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

24. I remember only one Christmas there. It was alright. We got up early in the morning and opened our presents. That's all I can remember. I don't know if that happened every year. I don't remember any birthdays with them.

*Visits/inspections*

25. We used to go through to Dumfries on a Saturday and meet up with my dad for a couple of hours in a cafe. I don't know how often we saw him. I just know it was a Saturday. I think it was just me and [REDACTED] I don't remember who took us there. We probably went on the bus. We never stayed over. We just met him in the cafe and then went back to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I never told my dad what was happening. I don't know why not.

26. I don't remember seeing my sister when she was in Langholm. I don't think she came with us to see my dad on a Saturday after she moved to [REDACTED] I never got a visit from a social worker or any other official visitor the whole time we were there. The only time I saw a social worker was when they came to take us away. Nobody ever came to see how we were doing.

*Healthcare*

27. I remember needing medical treatment only once. I was about six or seven. I fell when I was climbing trees and a branch got stuck in my leg. It was really sore. I had a big hole in my leg. [REDACTED] JDS wouldn't take me to the hospital in case the social work department got involved. She just left me lying on the couch. She put gauze in the hole for about three days, but stuff just kept seeping through it.

28. She took me to Dumfries Hospital after about four days, as it wasn't healing at all. It obviously needed stitched up. They must have realised at the hospital that I hadn't just got the injury that day. I don't think she was ever asked why it had taken so long to bring me. I never saw her challenged for anything. All the teachers knew about the injury, as it happened during the school lunch break. I had dragged myself back to school with the branch in my leg. My leg never healed right because it was left open for so long. I've still got a massive scar on my thigh to this day.

29. I don't remember going to the dentist. She used to make us brush our teeth at night, so maybe we never needed any treatment.

30. I found out in later years that I had been seeing a child psychiatrist when I was living with [REDACTED] JDS/SPO I don't know what age I was at the time, maybe between four and six. I think my head would have been a bit screwed up then. I think I was traumatised with my mother leaving. I remember being taken in an ambulance about once a week to the Crichton Royal Infirmary in Dumfries. We were in the middle of nowhere, so an ambulance picked you up to take you to the hospital in those days. I don't know how long I went for. I think it went on for a while. I don't remember talking about what was going on at [REDACTED] JDS/SPO

**Abuse in foster care with [REDACTED] JDS/SPO**

31. There were always beatings. As I said, it was only ever [REDACTED] JDS who was abusive. It was like [REDACTED] just didn't exist. He was in the woods working every day of the week and he just sat there when he came in. He was a pitiful man who couldn't do anything for himself. She ruled the roost.

32. She used to batter us about the head with brushes, shoes, slippers – anything within reach. [REDACTED] was deaf in one ear and she still battered him

about the head. I can't say for certain that it happened on a daily basis, but it was a regular thing.

33. I don't know what sort of things made her do it. I don't think anything merits that. We were just kids. I do remember she was crazy about the football team Manchester United, and she used to batter us if they got beat. She was loopy. Maybe she actually had a mental problem. I can't really remember anything she said to us. I think I've blocked a lot out my mind. When I think of her and see her face, the word that comes to mind is "evil". She was pure evil.

34. I used to wet the bed and she made me scrub the sheets in the sink with boiling hot water and bleach. My hands and arms were all red and burnt. I had to hang the sheets up to dry and then iron them. [REDACTED] didn't wet the bed, so that didn't happen to him.

35. She sent me to school once with a nappy on because I had wet the bed. I was in Primary 1 at the time. I took it off as soon as I got out the door and threw it in the woods.

36. She used to put hot mustard on our fingers to stop us from biting our nails.

37. She wouldn't dare do anything bad to my sister. She was abusive to me and [REDACTED] because she could get away with it, but she wouldn't do anything to anybody who could stand up to her. She didn't batter us when my sister was there. She had a rival then. My sister was five years older than me and she would have gone mental. She was only there with us for about a year at the most.

**Leaving** JDS/SPO

38. I think we were still in [REDACTED] the year we had that boiling hot summer, which I think was 1976. I think we left in 1977. I just remember coming home from school and being told that a car was waiting on us, and we were to pack our bags. Nobody said anything else. We weren't told where we were going or why we were leaving. I don't remember how I felt about it. It was strange. To this day, nobody has told us why we left. All three of us left together. There was no children's hearing or anything like that. We just got taken from there to our dad's in Dumfries.
39. JDS never got to foster any more kids after we left. Maybe the social work department eventually realised what she was like.
40. I saw JDS/SPO [REDACTED] when I was on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) with the Forestry Commission after I left school. They knew who I was, but I didn't speak to them. A couple of my old mates from [REDACTED] were on the YTS and they knew what JDS was like. We used to just laugh about it.

**Living with my dad in Dumfries**

41. I was about nine when we went back to my dad. I think we stayed with him for about a year and a half at the most. We should never have been sent back there. I don't know what made social services think that he was fit to look after us. He had met a woman, maybe it was that.
42. Life back home was horrendous. My dad didn't beat us, but he didn't feed or clothe us and the house was filthy. The woman he was in a relationship with was a loony. I think she was an alcoholic. They split up after about two weeks.

43. My dad was a very selfish man. We were totally neglected. He was always at the pub. We couldn't get into the house at night. We used to climb up the drainpipe and break in, or the police would come round and try to get the door open. That went on for a long time.
44. My sister and brother were a bit older than me, so I was on my own a lot. It was no good for a nine-year-old kid.
45. I can't remember having a social worker when we first went back home. I think they got involved after a few months. I think the social work department had to make it look like they were doing something because my dad got reported loads of times. The social worker was a young woman. I don't remember her name. She was lovely. She had to go everywhere on the bus because she couldn't drive. I remember her bringing Christmas presents up to my papa's house. He was my dad's father. We went to his house a lot as we knew we'd get fed there. My aunt lived with him.
46. I think everybody in the street reported my dad. My mate told me that his mother used to phone social services regularly and tell them that we shouldn't be staying there. She was our next door neighbour. It was obvious to anyone in their right mind that we shouldn't have been there.
47. The social worker turned up at the door one day and took [REDACTED] and me on the bus to the social work office. That's what I remember about leaving my dad's: having to go on the bus with her because she didn't drive. My sister didn't come. She stayed with my auntie. She was fourteen or fifteen years old by then. She was never back in care again.
48. We must have been removed on an emergency basis, because I remember sitting in the social work office for ages while they were obviously phoning round folk to find someone to look after us. I remember speaking to Dave McFarlane, who I think was the head of the

social work department in Dumfries at that point. We were then taken to foster carers in [REDACTED].

**Foster care –** [REDACTED] <sup>ESZ-SPO</sup> [REDACTED] **Dumfries and Galloway**

49. I was still in primary school when we moved to [REDACTED]. I think I was ten, coming up for eleven. I think we left my dad's just after Christmas and my birthday was [REDACTED]. I know for a fact that I stayed there until [REDACTED] 1980.

50. I think the man who fostered me was called [REDACTED]. I don't know the first name of his wife. The house didn't have a specific address. It was just called [REDACTED]. It was massive house on its own beside the [REDACTED].

51. There was a squad of folk living there. Their adopted son was called [REDACTED]. I think he was about fifteen when I moved in. He was still at school then and left in the summer. Three other boys lived there and paid rent. They were aged between seventeen and twenty. I think they had all been fostered before and stayed on in the house. Their names were [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s brother [REDACTED] was also there. He was still at school, so I think they were fostering him. He was about fourteen.

52. [REDACTED] had his own single bedroom and there were two other bigger bedrooms for the rest of us. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I shared one and the rest shared the other.

53. I never understood why Mrs [REDACTED] <sup>ESZ</sup> was allowed to foster two young kids when she had a house full of other adults. She didn't know what was going on in her house.

54. It was obvious that Mrs **ESZ** had fostered loads of folk over the years. The cupboards were all filled with old shoes and clothes. We never got anything new. We were always told to get what we needed from the cupboard. She'd had that many people there, you could always find something to fit you.
55. I used to wonder how many folk had been through that house and where they had all gone. Her house was like a conveyor belt for the social work department. When I watched programmes later in life about the holocaust and saw the piles of teeth, hair and shoes, it reminded me of the house in **██████████**
56. It was a horrible place to be. There was no love, no family – there was nothing. I hated it. I think she was in her seventies. She certainly looked it. He worked for the MoD and was away all week. Nobody knew what he did. He came home on a Saturday and got absolutely steaming and then went away again on the Sunday. Seemingly he was traumatised from the Second World War.

#### **Routine at **ESZ-SPO****

57. **██████████** and I had to feed the animals when we got up in the morning. They had cats, chickens, rabbits and a dog. I then had a bath and went to school.
58. I was still bed-wetting when I was there, but it was never a problem. She just gave me clean sheets.
59. Again, we were just like slaves. **██████████** and I did absolutely everything in that house. We washed the dishes, did all the cleaning, chopped the wood, made the fires and put the boiler on every Sunday. Mrs **ESZ**

baked a lot and we had to wash all the baking dishes. The older boys didn't do anything.

60. There was always plenty of food. All Mrs <sup>ESZ</sup> did was cook and bake. She was alright that way.

61. After I did my chores, I spent my days outside if I wasn't at school. I was rarely in. My only escape was either going to school or being out with my pals. I didn't have any toys, but I did have a football. I was happy as long as I had a football. I thought about running away a few times, but didn't know where to go.

62. We didn't get pocket money or go on any holidays. I remember a day out in Carlisle once, but that was it.

63. There was no system of discipline in the house. You could do what you wanted really. Those boys ran the house. Mrs <sup>ESZ</sup> never had any authority or any say. She was just a dodderly old woman, and you never really saw Mr <sup>ESZ</sup> as he was away most of the time.

### *School*

64. I was at <sup>ESZ</sup> Primary School at first. I never used to go. The house was out in the country, so I would just go walking down to the shore and potter about all day. I don't know why I didn't go to primary school. It just wasn't for me. It was probably related to what was happening in my life. Also, everybody knew you were in care and I just couldn't be bothered with it.

65. The secondary school was better. I went to Annan Academy. I didn't really skive secondary school. I met a different bunch of folk there. There were a lot more people in care in Annan than in <sup>ESZ</sup>, so people just took you as you were. I was never into the academic side of school. I

didn't want to be a high achiever. All I was interested in was sport. I played football all the time. I think that was always my outlet.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

66. We only had one Christmas there. It was just like any other day. You got up, did the housework, opened your one present and that was it. It was just a crappy present which was worth about a fiver.

67. We had to do all the dishes on Christmas Day. After dinner, they all sat and drank, while [REDACTED] and I were in the kitchen clearing up. I can't understand why anyone would make kids wash dishes on Christmas Day. There were about fifteen folk round for lunch and that was our Christmas, washing loads of dishes.

68. I don't remember getting a card or anything else for my birthday.

*Visits/inspections*

69. My sister got the bus out to [REDACTED] and gave us a tenner from my dad for Christmas. That was the only time I saw her. I didn't see my dad at all. I wasn't interested in seeing him.

70. I remember someone bringing that female social worker out once and that was it. I think it was just to tell us that she was moving on because she couldn't drive. That's what I remember: her saying she was leaving because she couldn't drive. I'm sure that's why she had never been out to see us before. Not one person ever came to ask us how we were getting on. Not once were we asked whether we were enjoying it or what was happening in the place.

71. I should never have been in that house. The social work department were disgusting. They just chucked us in there, with all those other

adults living there, and the only other time I saw them after the social worker told us she was leaving was when they came to take me away.

### *Healthcare*

72. The [REDACTED] bred pheasants and held shooting parties. [REDACTED] sent me into the grounds one day to get a pheasant he had shot. I had to climb a large fence with four layers of barbed wire. I ripped my finger on the barbed wire as I was climbing down. Part of my finger was split in half. I wasn't taken to see a doctor. I didn't get a tetanus injection or any treatment at all for it. You can see by the look of it now that it's never been stitched. That's the only health issue I had when I was there.

### **Abuse in foster care with** [REDACTED] ESZ-SPO

73. I was bullied by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They used to punch and kick me and shoot at me with their air guns. They shot [REDACTED] with the guns as well. They didn't care where they shot you. They'd even shoot at your head. They used to soup up the guns by adjusting the springs so that there was more pressure. It left a fair old dent in your skin when you got hit. It was really sore. It was all fun and games to them. That's how they got their kicks. [REDACTED] was top dog in the place because he was Mrs [REDACTED] ESZ's favourite. He was her son. [REDACTED] could have been top dog if he'd stood up for himself, but he was just a nice quiet guy.

74. [REDACTED] made me give him oral sex. It happened about five or six times. It happened for the first time in his bedroom about six months after I moved there. I was ten or eleven, but I was very small for my age. I probably looked like an eight-year-old. He took me up to an attic above the scullery a couple of times and made me do it there. There was always a stash of porn magazines up there.

75. [REDACTED] got me to masturbate him once. We were out. I think we'd been up at a farm he was working on. I was sitting on the front bar of the bike. I was so wee I could fit there. He put my hands down his trousers and made me masturbate him. It happened not long after [REDACTED] had started to abuse me.
76. I told [REDACTED] what [REDACTED] had done to me and told [REDACTED] about [REDACTED]. I think they spoke to each other about it. I didn't tell anybody else.
77. I've asked [REDACTED] if they did anything to him, but he said they didn't. He was a lot older than me.

#### Leaving [REDACTED] ESZ-SPO

78. We left on [REDACTED] 1980. The reason for us leaving was that Mrs [REDACTED] ESZ had to go into hospital and we were told that we couldn't stay in the house when she wasn't there. I wasn't bothered about her going into hospital. I had no emotion or feelings whatsoever for her. I felt the same way about [REDACTED] JDS/SPO
79. I remember coming back from school that day, and Stuart Sinclair and Peter Harley were in the house. Harley was the head of Merkland Children's Home and I think Stuart Sinclair was the deputy head of the social work department. They told [REDACTED] and I that we would probably be away for about two weeks at the most. We were then taken to Merkland Children's Home about twenty minutes later.

### Merkland Children's Home, Moffat

80. I was about twelve when I went to Merkland Children's Home. Mrs <sup>ESZ</sup> [REDACTED] died so we never returned to [REDACTED] I didn't care.
81. I hated Merkland, but I loved Moffat. I stayed there until [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1982. I think it was closed due to the age of the place.
82. It was a massive house, not dissimilar to the house in [REDACTED] It's a bed and breakfast now. It was a home for boys and girls. I think the age range was from about ten to sixteen. Nobody was over sixteen. [REDACTED] was fifteen when we moved there, so he only stayed until the following [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] also ended up in Merkland.
83. I think Merkland was run by the council. Peter Harley was the head of Merkland He was a raging paedophile. He was jailed in 1996. He lived [REDACTED] in a converted attic in the home. [REDACTED] name was <sup>JDW</sup> [REDACTED]. She was <sup>SNR</sup> [REDACTED] in Merkland. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
84. There were only about four or five other residential care workers. The other staff did sleepovers. One of the staff was called Bill Mathieson. He came from Glasgow. He used to stay in the home all week and go back to Glasgow when it was his weekend off. He slept in a bedroom next to the boys' dorms.
85. There was nothing normal about life in Merkland. All you got was abuse from Peter and <sup>JDW</sup> [REDACTED]. One other staff member, whose name was <sup>JDV</sup> [REDACTED] was abusive to the kids. None of the other staff were abusive. In my opinion, the others were all complicit, as they knew what was happening.

86. Merkland would have been ideal if it hadn't been run by Peter Harley. Moffat was a lovely place and the people were great. The kids in the home had quite good relationships with each other. There was no jealousy or rivalry. We didn't really fight among ourselves as we all hated the one person, and that was Harley.

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

87. We got up in the morning at seven o'clock and did our chores before breakfast. It was quite regimented.

88. The boys slept upstairs and the girls were downstairs. There were two dorms for the boys and one for the girls. There were bunk beds and single beds in the boys' rooms. There were around fifteen kids in total: eleven boys and about three or four girls.

89. I was still bed-wetting in Merkland, but I didn't get punished for it. It was just noted in the diary.

90. There was a rota for household chores. You checked the rota each week to see what you were doing. You could be doing things like washing dishes, cleaning the showers, or cleaning the bathrooms for the week.

91. We had a ten-minute walk to school, so we left at about eight-thirty after breakfast. I went to Moffat Academy. I loved the school. It was brilliant.

92. You got pocket money at the end of each week. There was absolutely no normality in the place. Everything involved violence of some sort. When you went to get your pocket money, Harley would sit the money on the end of the desk and you had to grab it before he hit your hand with an old school belt.

93. Harley got his kicks in weird ways. He used to wake us up at two o'clock in the morning in the middle of winter and drive us up to the Devil's Beef Tub, which is just outside Moffat, and get us to run back to the home. I remember running in snow blizzards. He'd drive behind us with full-beam headlights on, so that he could watch us running down. We had to do sit-ups and press-ups when we got back, and then he'd put us all in hot baths or showers so he could wash us. He did that a few times. It was one of his punishments. The boys who smoked used to get their fags taken off them as a punishment as well.

*Holidays and leisure time*

94. I always played football in my free time. I played for the school and other teams in Moffat and Annan.

95. Harley always had things arranged at night – anything so he was in the company of boys. He would maybe have you playing football, or he'd put on a film night. He had a movie projector and he'd show stuff on that.

96. Harley used to take the boys on holiday so he could get us in a caravan. He took us to Kilwinning in the summer and had us skinny-dipping down the beach. Most of the time he was the only staff member on holiday with us. The boys used to pile in the van with him and end up in places like Blackpool.

*Birthdays and Christmas*

97. <sup>JDW</sup> [REDACTED] was a Catholic, but the only religious thing we did was go to midnight mass at Christmas. Christmas at Merkland was tremendous. You got loads of stuff. A lot of kids went home at Christmas, so the ones who stayed got the run of the home. There were maybe just two or three of us left. We always had a big party before everybody went home and

they got their presents before they went. It was great. The boys who smoked used to get a big box of fags each.

98. We were treated well on our birthday. We got cake and everybody would sit down together and share it.

*Visits /inspections*

99. I wasn't interested in going home for visits and nobody in my family came to visit. [REDACTED] moved to a hotel to train as a chef when he left Merkland, but he didn't last long and went back to Dumfries. Neither he nor my sister visited me. I didn't bother about visitors. I had my own life. I had no family life in the first place, so I didn't miss it. I had my pals.

100. I didn't have a social worker for a long time when I was in Merkland. The previous one had left when I was with [REDACTED] ESZ-SPO I didn't go home at weekends because I didn't want to, so there really wasn't anything that a social worker had to deal with for me. I just spoke to Harley.

101. I did eventually get a social worker just before Merkland closed. I think his name was Alistair McQueen. I only saw him about twice. I don't think he would have known what was going on in Merkland. I think he just came up to the home for a jolly. He spoke to Harley. He didn't ask me how I was getting on in there. I wouldn't have felt able to confide in him. He wasn't interested in speaking to me. I didn't tell anybody what was happening in Merkland.

102. There were no official inspections, but the social work department must have known what was happening. [REDACTED] PLS and [REDACTED] PMO [REDACTED] PMO used to come up to the home quite a lot. They used to just sit and have a cuppa and a laugh with Harley. That tells the whole tale.

**Abuse at Merkland Children's Home***Abuse by Peter Harley*

103. Harley grabbed any opportunity to get you naked and touch you. On my first day in the place, he took me up to the bathroom to wash me. He said he was using de-lousing shampoo and checking me for tattoos. As if an eleven-year-old boy was going to have a lot of tattoos. He did that to all the boys who came into Merkland.
104. I was abused by Harley from the day I went into Merkland until the day it closed. That is no word of a lie. The only time it didn't happen was when he was away on holiday [REDACTED]. He did it to all the young boys; I think he liked pre-pubescent boys. He wasn't interested in the girls. He didn't go anywhere near the boys who could stand up for themselves. There were some wild boys in Merkland. He made sure the ones he couldn't handle got sent to List D schools.
105. Harley was a total predator. He was constantly touching you. He'd put his hands down your pyjamas, shower you or take you into the bath with him. You would be lying in bed in the middle of the night and he'd come in and touch you. It was unreal. It really was constant. He'd masturbate you and get you to play with him and finger his bum. When he took us to the caravans on holiday, he'd have about five or six boys sleeping in bed with him.
106. It was blatant as well as constant. You could be sitting next to someone in the living room watching a film at night and he'd have his hands down your pyjamas, masturbating you. That's what he did in front of folk, so you can imagine what he was like when he got you on your own. He was always trying to get your pyjamas off in front of other people as well. He'd then try to make it look like he was doing it for a laugh.

107. The other staff knew what was going on and they just turned a blind eye. Every single member of staff saw what he did. I would say that there were hundreds of occasions when Harley did something to me or another child in the presence of another staff member. Every one of them knew what he was doing. Bill Mathieson left Merkland about six months after I arrived there. I think he knew what was going on and just decided to get out.
108. JDW [REDACTED] must have known what he was doing to us as well. She was sitting in the living room at times when he was in there with his hands down boys' pyjamas.
109. It came out later that he had also been abusing [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was a witness against him in the criminal case against him.
110. [REDACTED] told me that he wasn't sexually abused by him. He was probably too old for him.
111. Harley was also physically abusive. I saw him smacking kids about the head with torches and kicking them in the face. He didn't do that to me because I was just a wee boy. Kids went to school black and blue with bruises, but nobody ever said anything.
112. He had a school belt and he wouldn't think twice about smacking you with it. He used to check the house every day, and you'd get it if you hadn't done your chores properly. He'd take you into his office and bend you over the chair and give you the belt on your bare arse. No doubt he enjoyed that. He hit you as many times as he wanted. I believe it was legal back then.
113. Bill Mathieson broke Harley's leg in a game of football. To this day, I think Bill meant to do it, as he left Merkland not long after that.

Harley was pretty much bedridden for about six months. He was in the bedroom that Bill used to stay in during the week. He couldn't get up to hit kids with the belt, so he'd smash them with his crutch.

114. He got an Atari video game when he was bedridden and all the boys would go into the room to play it. He'd be playing the game with some boys and masturbating others. It's what he did all the time. It was just part of life for us. It was the norm. You didn't think "Oh, this is weird". You do when you're older, but you didn't at the time. You did feel uncomfortable and you'd try to avoid him, but you couldn't avoid him. You couldn't say "no" to him. He had so much power it was unbelievable.
115. It wasn't just within Merkland he had power. He had power in the community. Kids used to run away and tell the police that they were getting beatings from him. The police used to bring them back to Merkland and tell Harley what they'd said. They'd then get battered again.
116. There were at least two boys who told the police about the sexual abuse. I know that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] told them. [REDACTED] told me in Merkland that he'd also told his social worker. His name was Mathew Marchbank. He didn't do anything about it. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both got moved out of Merkland. [REDACTED] is dead now.
117. As I said, [REDACTED] PMO and [REDACTED] PLS from the social work department were always at Merkland. I think they knew what Harley was doing. They were all pals. I think they were all in it together. You hear about paedophile rings: I think it was like that.
118. Harley and [REDACTED] PLS used to run trips to Dumfries swimming pool. We didn't use the individual cubicles. They used to take us to a big room at the back. Harley and [REDACTED] PLS used to chuck all the boys around in the pool.

119. Neither PLS [REDACTED] or PMO [REDACTED] ever did anything to me. I didn't see either of them sexually abusing any other boy either, but I saw them touching. It's hard to explain. They just liked being around wee boys. I think that's how Harley got away with it: they knew what he was doing.

*Abuse by JDW [REDACTED]*

120. JDW [REDACTED] was a nasty piece of work. She used to cut the boys' hair and if you didn't want your hair cut, she'd get Harley to pin you down by the arms and slap you about a bit, and then she would cut your hair. You had to go to school with a really bad haircut. That happened loads of times. It wasn't normal behaviour. The pair of them were sick.

121. She mentally abused the kids. She would ground you for no reason at all. If you had plans to do something after school, she would put a stop to it. She was twisted. She would stop people going home for the weekends just because she could. She used to get Harley to batter kids when she took a dislike to them. She thought it was funny.

*Abuse by other staff*

122. JDV [REDACTED] was another member of staff who was physically abusive. It never happened to me, but I saw her hit other kids. She was terrible. A lot of people weren't happy that she didn't get charged when the police were investigating Peter Harley.

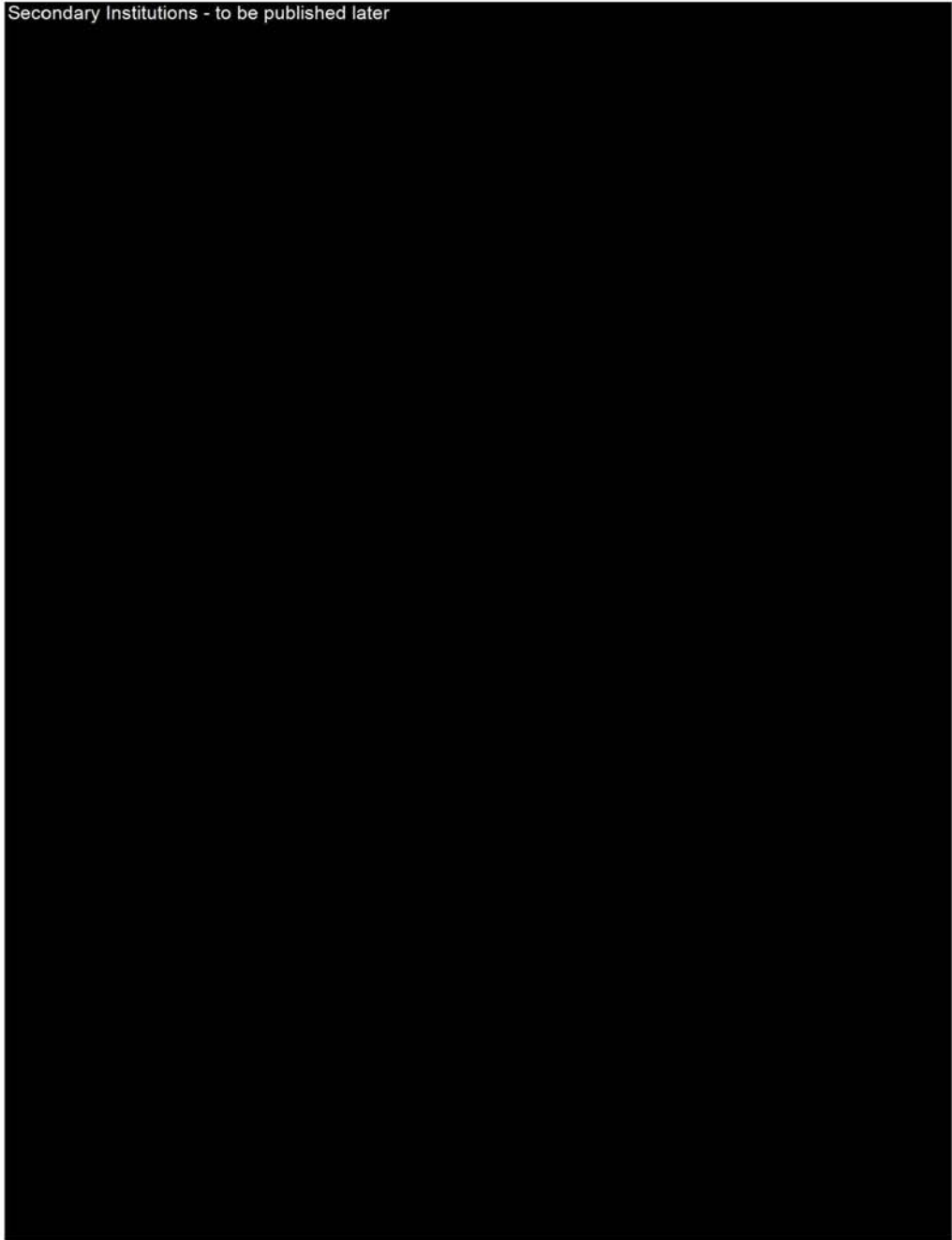
123. Secondary Institutions - to be published later [REDACTED] She was a totally different member of staff in that home. She was brand new. It must have been because she was working under Harley that she was bad. She was only a young woman. She must have been only nineteen

or twenty. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

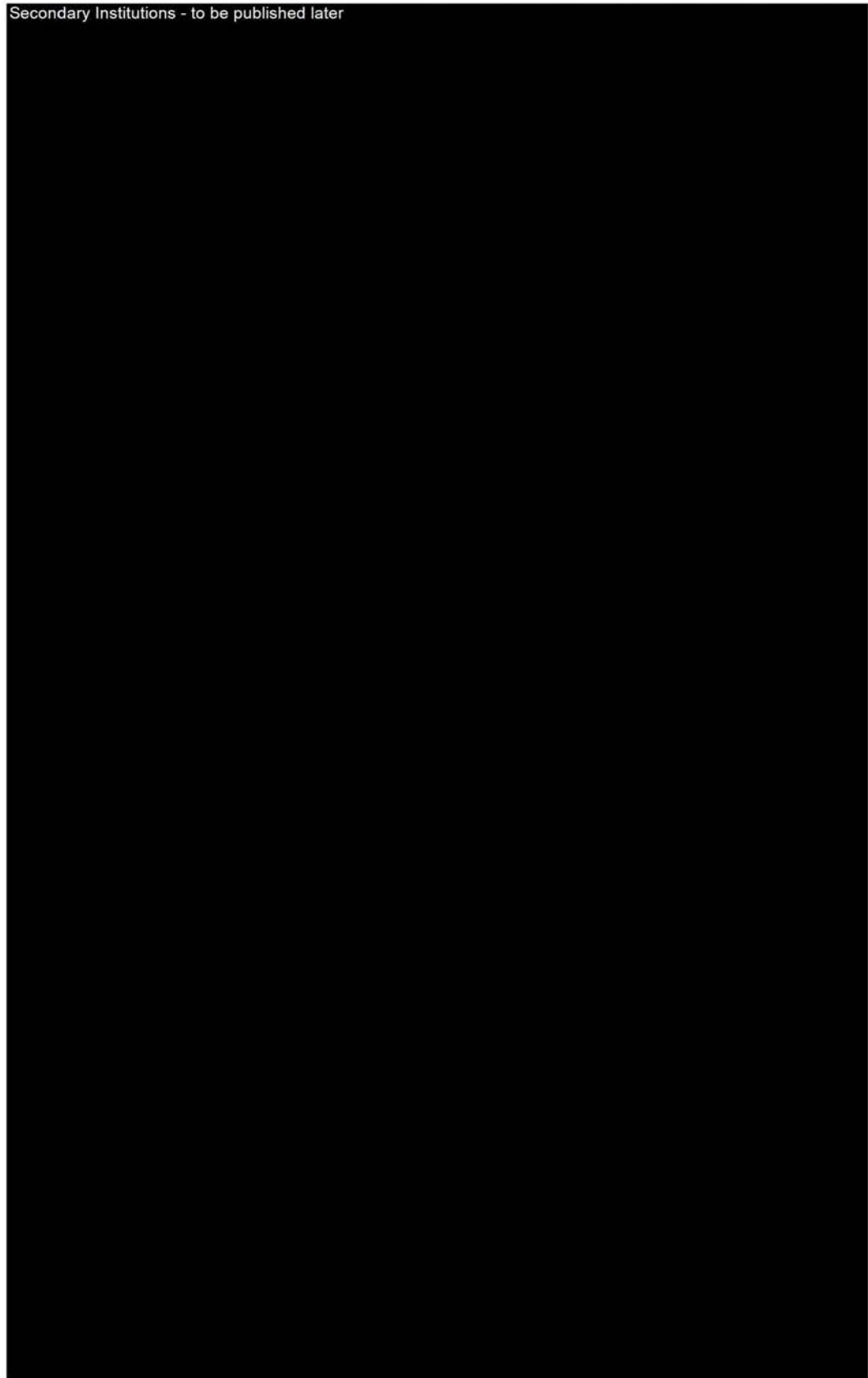
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

**Ladyacre Children's Home, Craigs Road, Dumfries**


Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later



134. I was in Ladyacre until [REDACTED] 1984. I was nearly seventeen when I moved out. I had started the YTS with the Forestry Commission [REDACTED]

**Life after being in care**

135. Social services tried to get me a flat when I was coming out of Ladyacre, but nobody would rent me one because I was in a home. They then just stuck me in a place called the Rotchell Hotel. It was a place for down-and-outs. I was in a bedroom with two alcoholics, which the social work department were well aware of.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Secondary Institutions - to be published later



137. I just went off the rails when I came out of care. I was supposed to do a year on the YTS with the Forestry Commission, but I only did six months. I did the same as I did when I was at primary school that time in foster care with **ESZ-SPO**: I just stopped going. I ended up drinking a lot, but didn't go down the drugs route.
138. The social worker, Alistair McQueen, came to visit me at the Rotchell just before Christmas. He didn't even come in. He got me to come out to his car. He told me he was going to Newcastle and wasn't going to be my social worker any more. That was the last I saw of him and I never heard anything more from the social work department. I had been in care since I was three months old, and they just stuck me in that Rotchell and left me.
139. I've bumped into my key worker Arthur Ryden in Dumfries a few times. He once said to me that he'd never forgive them for putting me in the Rotchell. I said to him that he knew what was happening. He had come with me to have a look at the Rotchell before I moved in, so he knew exactly what it was like. He just said that it wasn't his decision to make.
140. I moved from the Rotchell to a bed and breakfast. It was advertised as a bed and breakfast, but it wasn't really. It was just a dosshouse. It was dirty and run-down. It had a bad name in Dumfries. I was still only seventeen at that point. I sat up watching telly all night and slept most of the day. I wasn't working and was on the dole. I wasn't

doing anything productive. I was always just up the town with my mates, getting up to no good.

141. I met a girl when I was eighteen and went out with her for a few months. When we split up, my mate, who also lived in the guesthouse, and I decided to hit the bright lights of London. I lasted the weekend and then got on that National Express bus back to Dumfries. My girlfriend and I got back together and I moved in with her. I stayed with her for the next nine years. We separated in 1995. We have a son called [REDACTED] who is now twenty-nine.

### **Reporting abuse**

142. I never reported any of the abuse to anybody at the time it was happening. I don't know why I didn't.

143. The first time I spoke to anybody about what happened in Merkland and in foster care with [REDACTED] ESZ-SPO was when I saw a psychologist for the first time in 1987. I've seen about five or six psychologists and I've told them everything.

144. I never went to the police to report the abuse in Merkland. They came to my door, because someone else had reported it. I then gave a statement about Merkland to the police. I told them what I've told the Inquiry. I think Peter Harley was the only one from Merkland who was ever prosecuted.

145. I reported the sexual abuse by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to the police in August 2013. It had been bugging me for years and I just wanted to get it off my chest. I should have reported the abuse in foster care with the [REDACTED] JDS/SPO in [REDACTED] at the same time, but I thought it was a bit trivial after all those years. I just stuck to what happened when I was

with <sup>ESZ-SPO</sup> [REDACTED] I probably thought that the sexual abuse was more harmful than the physical and mental abuse.

146. The names of the police officers I dealt with in 2013 are Murray and Jim. I think Anderson is the surname of one of them. They were in the child protection unit in Dumfries. I dealt mostly with Murray. I gave them a statement about the sexual abuse in more detail than I've gone into today. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] got arrested, but no charges were brought because there wasn't enough evidence.

147. The police got my medical records and found no mention of the abuse in them. I told all those psychologists the same as I've told the Inquiry and not one of them recorded it. If they had recorded it, at least there would have been something to back up what I was saying. I told all those people and they've either not written it down, or it's been chucked out after so many years.

148. Murray was very apologetic when he was telling me that they couldn't take the case any further. He said that it would be put on the "back burner," as maybe one day someone else would come forward and they'd be able to get them then. My brother [REDACTED] knows about the abuse, but I don't know if they ever interviewed him.

#### **Criminal case against Peter Harley**

149. I was to appear as a witness at the criminal trial against Peter Harley at Glasgow High Court. I got a phone call from the Procurator Fiscal (PF) on the Sunday night to tell me that he had pled guilty. They had obviously given him a deal. He got fifteen years in jail. That was around April or May 1996.

150. He'll be out now, unless they got him for other things. When I was in Ladyacre, he turned up there with a minibus full of kids. He must have been working with kids somewhere else then. He was so brazen. I told the police this when they interviewed me. I know that he [REDACTED] went to Australia and then to South Africa. He probably worked with kids there too.

### **Impact**

151. I think what happened to me in care has affected me in every way. I don't have a normal life. I have thoughts about what happened to me every day. It's constant.

152. I've suffered from anxiety since 1985. That's when I had my first panic attack and I haven't been right since. It happened about six months after I came out of care. I knew it was related to what had happened in care as nothing else had happened in my life at that particular point to cause it.

153. I had anxiety and depression for about seven or eight years after I came out of care. I didn't work at all during that time. I also had agoraphobia for two years, which I think came along with the anxiety, as I didn't want to go out. My doctor referred me to a psychologist in 1987. I knew it all stemmed from what had happened to me in care, but I never told anybody until I saw the first psychologist in 1987.

154. I've seen about five or six psychologists. I last saw one in 2013. She diagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder caused by the sexual abuse. She's the only person who's ever said that.

155. I suffer from depression on and off. I'm on anti-depressants and beta blockers just now. I think it's anxiety more than depression. I don't

get suicidal or anything like that. I've had anxiety since I was seventeen. It's always there. I've never had a normal day since I first got it. I can't have a normal, carefree day with no worries. Once you've got it, it never goes away. You're always thinking of something to worry about. If you get over one worry, you just make up another one and so it goes on. I can honestly say that I've never had an anxiety-free day since 1985.

156. The anxiety stops me doing things. If I can think up a way of getting out of doing something, that's what I'll do. I make up excuses not to go to nights out with my work. I'm surprised I made it here today. If I'd had to go to Edinburgh today to give my evidence, I wouldn't have done it. I know that for a fact. I felt I owed it to the Inquiry to come because I only had to walk ten minutes to be here and the Inquiry staff had come down from Edinburgh.

157. I've been told I've got social anxiety now. I think I always had it but they've just got around to naming it. I can't blame everything on it though, as I've got a personality and that probably comes into it as well. I am a nice guy and I can't help thinking that if it wasn't for what happened, I would have been an even better guy.

158. I'm off work with anxiety just now. I'm a cashier with [REDACTED] Bookmakers. I'm in the midst of losing my job. Working in the bookies is quite stressful anyway, but when you've got anxiety it's a whole lot worse. I had a sick line up to the beginning of May, but I phoned my work and said that it might be better if I just left and didn't bother working my notice. I've had my P45 and last pay, but I've been trying to speak to my boss to explain things and tell him that the medication I'm taking is a lot better and I feel alright.

159. Even if I go back to work, I might only last another three months and leave again. I've been with [REDACTED] on and off since 2010. I used to work for [REDACTED] as well. It's a horrible job sometimes but now that

I'm about to lose it, I'm thinking that I kind of need it. It gets me up and out of the house. I go out to the gym, but sometimes I'm sitting thinking "That's another twelve hours before I can go back to the gym". At least at work I know the folk and you can get a good laugh at times. I think the hardest part is actually getting to work.

160. I don't think I've done myself any favours going on the sick. It's my own fault if I've lost my job. I don't want to think about what it'll mean for me if I have lost it. Having anxiety has had a big effect on me career-wise. I've had panic attacks in other jobs and never went back again. I've had about fifty different jobs.

161. People look at me and think that I'm one of the boys and I'm good crack. Anybody who knows me will say that I'm a good laugh, but they don't really know anything about me. I don't tell anybody about what's happened to me. I just get on with it, but it's in my head. That's what I take home with me. I have to deal with the demons in my head when I get home. I'm not nasty or horrible. The only person I beat up is myself and I've been doing it for years.

162. I've not had one good night's sleep since the anxiety started. I get four hours, maybe five if I'm lucky. It's certainly made the rest of my life pretty crap.

163. My relationships with women have also been affected. I had a relationship with [REDACTED]'s mum for nine years and was with another lassie for three years. I've not been in a proper relationship since then. I've got too much baggage and I don't want to put that on anybody else. I kind of shy away from getting into relationships because of that.

164. I've done alright as a dad. [REDACTED]'s like my best pal. It could have gone the other way, I suppose. I could just have bugged off. I know a lot of boys from care who've got about ten weans. They just move from

relationship to relationship. That's never been my cup of tea. I always wanted to be a dad to [REDACTED] He was a great kid. It was easy. I just took him to play football with me all over the country. He's getting married in Ibiza in September. I'm supposed to be going to that, but no doubt I'll make an excuse not to go. I will try to go. I've paid the deposit so at least I'm making an effort.

165. I stopped playing football because of the anxiety. That was in 2002. Up until then I played amateur football on Saturdays, which was a good standard. It wasn't your Sunday league football. I played up front and was always running about. I was always fast. Football was my release. It took my mind off things. I then started to get really breathless after I'd been sprinting. I felt that I couldn't catch my breath. It was the most horrible feeling. I used to think that I was going to have a heart attack and collapse and die in the middle of a football park. It was the anxiety that made me feel like that. I stopped running fast when I was playing because I was so scared to get out of breath.

### **Treatment and support**

166. I didn't attend regularly for the appointments with any of the psychologists. If I was due to go ten times, I would go two. I would think up any reason whatsoever to not go. That's why I went through so many psychologists. I never did a full term or a full course of treatment.

167. I didn't find any of the psychologists or counselling to be of any use. I wouldn't go through it again. It's a waste of time. One of them gave me a relaxation tape and I just put it in the bin. I used to sit and talk and they just listened. I didn't want to sit and talk. I wanted someone to listen, write it down and do something about it, like phone the police. Nobody ever did that.

168. I've dealt with it better myself. Even the pills I've been given don't really help. I started taking anti-depressants when I was signed off work recently. I'm not really depressed, so I don't feel any different. My problem is anxiety and I'll always have that. The beta blockers slow everything down, but they don't stop you thinking. I've not had a panic attack for years but I'm always conscious of it. For example, if I'm sitting on a bus, I'm okay if I know that I can get off at any time. I would sit and worry if I couldn't.

169. I didn't know that I had seen a psychiatrist when I was a child until I was told by a psychologist who I was seeing a few years ago. He told me it was in my records. He didn't give me any more detail. I don't know if he was meant to tell me. Nobody else I'd seen had mentioned it so I was quite shocked. I don't know if the records still exist.

#### **Other information**

170. After Harley was convicted, it got round through word of mouth to about twenty of us to go and see a solicitor in Dumfries called Lyall Moodie at John Henderson and Sons. We'd all got criminal injuries compensation and we went to see him about taking the social work department to court. I don't quite know what happened with the case. The social work department or their insurers did something, I'm not quite sure what, and it never came to anything. The solicitors didn't explain to us what had happened. We never heard anything from them. Not one of us got a letter saying that it was time-barred.

171. I went to numerous solicitors in Dumfries and not one of them would touch it with a barge pole. I then went to a company in Glasgow. I don't remember the name. It was in the town centre on a street full of solicitors. It was a top-notch firm. They were the first ones to tell me that there was no chance of success as the case was time-barred.

172. Two of the boys and I then met with John Houston, who was the head of the social work department in Dumfries at the time, to talk to him about it. That was in 2008 or 2009. I think the council were getting a lot of hassle because there were so many folk complaining about us not getting any compensation. He then agreed that the council would pay £20,000 to everybody who was ever in Merkland.

173. The criminal injuries payment for the abuse in Merkland was about £2000. I've applied for criminal injuries for the sexual abuse at [REDACTED] The case has been ongoing for about two years.

### **Records**

174. I've never tried to get my records from the social work department. I don't know if they exist. I think the PF must have tried to get them for the criminal case against Peter Harley, but I've never seen them.

### **Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

175. I don't know what it's like for kids in care now. If things are still the same, what I'd like to see come out of the Inquiry is a better system in place for people leaving care. Young people need proper help to make the move from being in care to living on their own. They need to have someone with them for a certain amount of time. They shouldn't just be dumped.

176. I don't think you can't stop paedophiles from getting jobs in care. I think they always will. That's just life. But, children should only be fostered to people who have been checked out properly, and kids need

to be seen regularly after they've been placed in care. Hundreds of things happened to me in care that shouldn't have happened. It's ridiculous what people got away with. Social workers should go out to care and foster homes regularly to make sure they know what it's like for the kids living there.

177. Kids in care need to be given hope. They should be able to expect that they will have a good life in front of them. Things need to be put in place to give them the chance to have a good life as an adult.

178. 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.

FEV  


Signed.....

Dated.....

28.6.17