

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

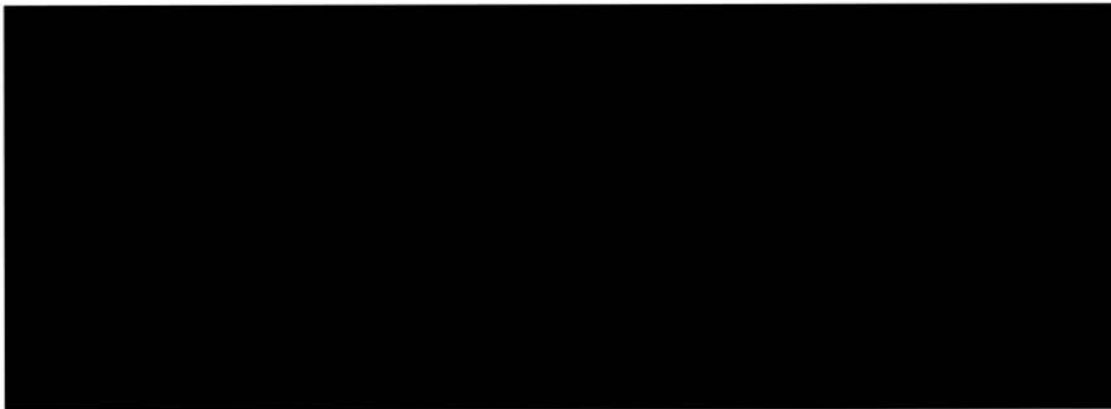
Witness Statement of

**Peter HARLEY**

Support person present: Yes.

1. My full name is Peter Harley. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1945. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

2.



3. During my fifteen years in prison, I addressed my offending behaviour many times. I came to realise the damage and the enormity of what I had done to the people in my care. The Scottish police had been very thorough with their investigations.

4. During my offending behaviour I became so depressed and I had many thoughts of suicide. It is because of this I will not discuss anything related to my offending.

5. My thoughts about my time at Merkland may be confused but I will help if I can.

## Background/Qualifications

6. I don't have any qualifications. I left school at the age of fifteen and worked in a garage for a year or so. I then went to a job in a grocery warehouse. From there I went to work in Cardiff docks as a driver.
7. After the docks, at the age of 21, I moved to Bristol and became an assistant warden in a probation hostel, Ashley House. After a few months I was promoted to deputy warden, I stayed there for about another year and then moved back to Barry.
8. I then worked as a delivery driver for Avon Cosmetics. When I was about 26, I bought a residential caravan and moved into that. About a year later I sold the caravan to a young lady, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] lived in Barry and after a while I saw a job advertised at Bryn y Don Approved School in Dinas Powys, just outside Cardiff. I got that job [REDACTED] moved there. They gave me a house at the school with that job.
9. I was at Bryn y Don for about two years. I started as an assistant warden and after about a year I was promoted to house warden. I was then in charge of a unit. Bryn y Don was all boys and they were all aged between thirteen and fifteen. Most had been in trouble with the law and he been sent there by the courts. Derek Brushett was the headmaster at the school. He was a very arrogant man I did not like him and I never socialised with him. I knew nothing about him or his abuse within the school.
10. I didn't always get on with all of the staff there and eventually I left.
11. I then applied for the jobs of officer in charge and [REDACTED] at Merkland Children's Home in Moffat, for myself [REDACTED] [REDACTED] didn't get the jobs but a couple of weeks later I got a letter from Merkland giving [REDACTED] the jobs. Apparently, the children there had chased off the person that took the job. I don't know the details.

### **Merkland Children's Home, Moffat, Dumfries and Galloway**

12. Merkland was in Moffat which is in Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland. The head office was in Dumfries itself, at 5 Gordon Street.
13. Merkland was concerned in the care of children. Some had been there for years and some were brought fresh in. It was for older children, aged from about twelve to school leaving age, fifteen or sixteen.
14. They brought some maladjusted children in at one time and tried to adjust the status of the home, but that wasn't allowed. To do that would have meant an upgrade in pay and staff and everything, and my immediate boss <sup>PMO</sup> [REDACTED] suggested that we do this as it would give me more staff in the home. I can't remember when that was.
15. I don't recall having any first impressions at Merkland. I remember the accommodation for me [REDACTED] was lousy. We had three rooms in the attic, our toilet was on the floor below and the kitchen was in the basement four floors below. There was no running water or cooking facility's in our rooms.
16. It was an old building. The children had a TV room which was basically a cord carpet, no furniture and a black and white television on the wall. I turned that room into my office and turned the sitting room opposite, into the children's TV room and lounge area. That was better for the kids and for the home.
17. In relation to the culture at Merkland, it was an open house as far as any visitors were concerned. <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED], who was an assistant director with the social work, would visit regularly. The social workers who were in charge of the kids would visit regularly, once or twice a month, and the schoolteachers also called in occasionally.
18. The main social workers I remember, that worked with the kids and visited them, were Fiona Douglas and Bob Pagan, he went on to become a director, I think. They were social workers who looked after their clientele. There were also a Mrs Marriot and

Douglas Crowther who were directors with the social work. They would both visit periodically but they were more social visits.

19. The police visited regularly as well. There was a big policeman called Ian who would visit regularly and have a meal. There was another called Reg Gault, who had finished with the police but stayed in Moffat. I encouraged them to visit and to engage with the children. Some of the children were at Merkland having had problems with the police so it taught them that the police aren't all bad. Reg Gault came camping with us at St Marys Loch. When he finished with the police he stayed in Moffat.
20. We always had room at the dinner tables for a visitor. If kids wanted to invite friends from school back to Merkland for dinner they would need to organise it with the cook, but that was fine, we allowed that.
21. It was just an open house, none of those people needed to make appointments, any of them could come and I would welcome them.
22. The children could come and go if they wanted to as well. If they wanted to go down the street all I asked was that they notify a member of staff and it was recorded in the Day Diary. There were no restrictions on the children as such. We just wanted them to be back for tea or supper. We had a full time chef so all the meals had to be on time.
23. It's difficult to describe the attitude of the staff to the children because we very rarely had any staff. With the staff turnover we had, it meant that at times there would be no staff except me and JDW. I would then have to notify my managers and then suddenly the social work would employ somebody. Whoever that was would then come and do their job. I never had any problems with any of the staff. I don't think I ever had an argument with any of them.
24. When staff did come and work at Merkland they had a room to sleep in, nothing else. They had to share the general bathroom, toilet facilities and livingroom with the

children. Consequently, when they were off duty they'd either go out or sit in the livingroom with all the kids.

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

25. I was the officer in charge at Merkland. PMO [REDACTED] was my immediate boss and PLS [REDACTED] was PMO [REDACTED]'s boss. They were both managers in the social work department based at Gordon Street in Dumfries. It was PMO [REDACTED] PLS [REDACTED] and another social work director, Douglas Crowther, I think, that interviewed me [REDACTED] for the job.
26. I honestly don't know if I provided any references for the job at Merkland.
27. PMO [REDACTED] used to come up to Merkland maybe once a week. We would have a coffee and a chat and if I needed anything he would see to it for me. When I first arrived, the kids had a black and white television. I wanted them to have a colour television so I asked PMO [REDACTED] for one. He said it wouldn't be approved. I then organised an open day for the home, involved the local community and raised enough money to buy a colour television.
28. I was in charge of the whole home and took care of the general running of the place. When I first went there the cook would ask me for money for three tins of beans, for beans on toast at night, that type of thing. I changed that and started ordering food through a company, so the cook could make up a set menu every day.
29. If the staff had a problem, which they never did, they would come to me. They were friends. If I were taking a group out for the day, the staff would look after the group that remained or they would take the group that remained out if they wanted to.
30. I had responsibility for the staff and the running of the home and I had a responsibility for the children.

31. I'd like to think I got on well with the children. It was the children who decided they wanted to call me 'Pop' at Merkland. I put that to PLS [REDACTED] and he didn't see a problem with that, so that's what I was called. I was then introduced as 'Pop' by PMO [REDACTED] or PLS [REDACTED] whenever new kids arrived.
32. We had a set routine at Merkland. We got the children up in the morning and everyone went down for breakfast. After breakfast, the children did their jobs. One or two had maybe wet the bed so they would take their sheets down to the cleaner. We had a full time laundry lady.
33. After their jobs, we got everybody together in the TV room and they would go off to school in Moffat. They all just went themselves to school.
34. I would take children down the town to get clothes when they first came to Merkland. I'd take them to get their school uniform and various clothes and to the shoe shop to get suitable shoes. Some of the kids had never had different sets of clothes. Some of them were really poor.
35. After the kids had gone to school, I would maybe get some shopping for the home or go into Dumfries to see PLS [REDACTED] or one of the others. I would always make sure everything was okay for the kids coming back from school.
36. After our meal, depending on what day it was, we would have activities. We played bingo in the evenings, we took trips to the baths in Dumfries, we went hillwalking or sometimes we just went out for a drive in the bus. Incidentally, the local authority wouldn't supply a bus so I bought our own bus. It was all legal and insured.
37. I was at Merkland for about five or six years. I think it was between 1973 and 1978, but I'm half guessing. I honestly don't know.
38. I never had any period of probation at Merkland and I didn't have any qualifications and there were no prerequisites for the job, they never said anything about that at all. I didn't provide any references either.

39. They did build another new home in Dumfries. It was completed about five years after I started at Merkland and I thought they would train me up for that job and get me the social work qualification needed to run a home, whatever it was called, but they didn't. I packed the job in when that happened.
40. At that time because of the shortage of staff and the hours I was having to work, I was earning more than the director of the social work department. He didn't like that apparently. They didn't stop my hours, but I wasn't offered the job at the new home that was built. I was offered a job as deputy at the new home but I didn't want to do that. [REDACTED] worked at the new home for about a month while I was looking for another job.
41. I was getting the children up at 8am and seeing them through until bedtime at 9pm. Sometimes I would carry out the sleep-in overnight duty as well. There were a lot of sleep-in duties but it was just a way of life at the time, it didn't seem like work.
42. I don't know if [REDACTED] <sup>PMO</sup> did any kind of appraisals or reviews of my work at Merkland. He probably did as he was accountable. I saw him as a friend, the same with [REDACTED] <sup>PLS</sup>, he used to come up twice a week, he loved being with the kids.
43. I didn't receive any training at Merkland. They told me they would need somebody who was qualified to run the new home when it was built and I thought that was going to be me. I thought they were going to train me to run that home. I was told that about two or three years before it happened and there was never any mention of it after that. I did discuss getting training with [REDACTED] <sup>PMO</sup> at one time and he said he would pass it on but couldn't guarantee anything. I never heard anything more.

#### **Structure and recruitment of staff**

44. I was in charge at Merkland. Ideally, there was then a housemother, that was [REDACTED] <sup>JDW</sup>, and a housefather or housemaster. [REDACTED] took the job at Merkland [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] <sup>JDW</sup> was [REDACTED] <sup>SNR</sup>. She became housemother due to [REDACTED]

██████████ and that meant nobody senior was in charge, so her position changed and someone else became SNR ██████████. She then became the housemother and the housemother at the time became SNR ██████████. I think I had three or four different housemothers and housefathers during my time at Merkland.

45. I can think of two housemothers before JDW ██████████, Alison Craven and JDV ██████████, who worked part time. I can only recall two housefathers, one was PXG ██████████ and someone I can only recall as Bill.
46. I then had a lady that came in as a part-time carer, she was very good, JDV ██████████ was her name. She liked being with the kids and took them out to do things, a bit of shopping or whatever.
47. There were also two female cleaners, one changed over the years, a cook, who was also changed; ██████████ took that job on, and a full time laundry lady.
48. I feel I got on well with all my staff, there was no firmness and they weren't scared of me or anything like that. That's what I'm trying to say.
49. The housemothers and housefathers were just there, the same as I was. There were rules to be kept, like observing the kids, noting when they went out, bringing any problems to me, basically just looking after them.
50. If we had staff, we would hold staff meetings once a month where we would discuss certain kids. I would give staff a particular section of kids from the home, that they were responsible for, and any dealings I had with those kids I would bring that staff member into it.
51. The staff were almost like normal friends to the kids, they weren't authoritarian and they didn't have to lay the law down anywhere. There was a routine in the house, with mealtimes, doing the dishes, and the kids had house jobs to do. The staff would then go around making sure those jobs were being done. That was never done in any nasty way.

52. I was never involved in the recruitment of any staff. That would have been done by PMO [REDACTED] and, I presume, PLS [REDACTED]. I don't know. I didn't even see it advertised anywhere. I had nothing to do with any policies or processes on recruitment.
53. I don't remember if there were any volunteers that came to work at Merkland. I don't think so.
54. I had nothing to do with the obtaining of references for any people who came to work at Merkland. I don't know if referees were spoken to. I was simply told a new helper or houseparent had been taken on and was starting on Monday, that was it.
55. I did have involvement in the management of staff at Merkland. The staff would work with the kids around the house and they would report back, to me, if there was a problem anywhere. I didn't have the power to fire them or anything like that. The staff were more like friends than staff.
56. I did have overall responsibility for the staff. If there was a problem, they would see JDW [REDACTED] or myself.
57. I was there all the time, so in a way it was unfair on the staff, because it relieved them of their responsibility. At the time I didn't think about it but with hindsight there were occasions when I would take a group of kids out and the staff would be left behind and they would just run the place as if I was there. On the other hand, they might have decided to take a group out and they would have asked me if that was okay.

### **Training**

58. I wasn't really involved in training staff. I did delegate and gave staff a certain number of children to deal with. That was to keep them interested. They would then come to the case reviews for the children I'd delegated them and give their opinion.

### **Supervision/appraisal/evaluation**

59. I was seen as the boss, but <sup>PMO</sup> [REDACTED] or <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED] might just ask me how someone was doing. I didn't see that as an appraisal as such. I didn't have any face to face appraisals with the staff or record anything like that.

### **Policy**

60. I was never involved in any policy decisions relating to the care of the children. That's not something that was ever discussed with me. Children were basically just brought along to Merkland. I wasn't involved in that side of things.
61. I wasn't involved in policy decisions at Merkland. I was not involved in anything relating to child protection, complaints procedures, restraint, punishment, discipline or record-keeping, nothing like that at all. The only records I kept were the Punishment Book and the Day Diary. I may have recorded something about food and the meals that we had. I also kept details from any doctor's examinations. Whenever a new kid came to us, I would get the doctor to examine the child. The doctor also came along every year to examine all the children. That was always the local GP, Doctor Sinclair.

### **Strategic Planning**

62. I didn't have any involvement in any strategic or long term planning at Merkland. Everything I've done, I've done myself. I managed to get the council to turn a piece of ground the size of a tennis court into an asphalt pitch for five-a-side football. It had a high fence and floodlights and was very successful. I wouldn't say I planned it at all, I just got on with the job and did it. I liked to get on with the job and do what was required rather than planning in advance.

## Children/Routine at Merkland Children's Home

### *Placement/assessment*

63. Children were placed at Merkland by the social work department. Sometimes it was done through the Children's Panel and sometimes the social work just turned up with children. I don't really know what the process was. I didn't have any dealings whatsoever with who came to Merkland.
64. I wasn't involved in any assessments of the children who came to Merkland. I don't know what reports or paperwork were completed. I don't remember receiving anything from the social work indicating why children were being placed at Merkland.
65. We would discuss the kids when we were getting ready for a case review and maybe arrange for the parents to visit or for the kids to visit the parents. It was often seen as a club attitude more than a care attitude.
66. We had case reviews for each child approximately every six months. Staff could write up anything they wanted prior to the case review and it would then be discussed at the review.
67. I attended the case reviews along with a social worker and, more than likely, PMO [REDACTED] PMO [REDACTED]. We sometimes invited a member of staff from the school, but that was rare. The child didn't attend the case review. The social workers recorded the case reviews and kept those records.
68. We had a filing cabinet in the office with files for each kid. Any incident would be recorded on their files there. The files were for any incident that happened involving the child, such as, absconds or health matters. There were very few incidents. Any medical information held was only from their time at Merkland and we would have yearly medical checks carried out by a local GP.

69. Children didn't stay for a set time. I only remember one child going back to their family and one boy coming who was over-age, he was put to work on a farm. I think the school leaving age was fifteen then, I'm not sure, but he was the only one who stayed at Merkland who was over that age.
70. I remember one family of children who stayed for years but children generally stayed until they were school leaving age or until their family got back together or whatever. I wasn't involved in those discussions at all.
71. As far as I can remember there were fifteen boys and four girls at Merkland. All the children went to Moffat Academy, so they were all secondary school age. I think it ranged from about eleven or twelve up to school leaving age.
72. I'm not sure of the ratio between staff and children, but there was myself and JDW, a housefather and housemother and a one part-time member of staff. On the other side there was one cook, one laundry lady and two cleaners.

#### *Meals*

73. The cook prepared the meals every day. The food was excellent. We had cooked meals every day, we could have haggis or steak or just bacon sandwiches. It just depended on the meal and what the cook had prepared for that day.
74. If a child didn't like the food, there was no punishment. JDW would deal with things like that, she was a disciplinarian. There was once a younger boy that wouldn't eat anything but I don't know the details, JDW dealt with that. Generally, the children did like the food, but if they didn't, the cook would make them something else, he was pretty versatile.

#### *Sleeping and bathing/washing arrangements*

75. With the sleeping arrangements, the girls' bedroom was on the ground floor and it took all the girls, then there were two rooms upstairs where all the boys slept.

76. There were two bathrooms in Merkland, both were on the boys landing. One was small with a bath and a wash hand basin within. This was used by staff and the girls as it had a lock on the door. When the girls used this bathroom, the boys were not allowed on the landing. The other bathroom had a bath and a shower within but did not have a door. This bathroom was used by the boys and some staff would use it when there were no children in the home.
77. There was one occasion when a girl was having a shower and I didn't know she was in there. I went down the stairs and told the staff off for not telling me.
78. The staff might be using the shower as well because they had to share that same facility. The bathroom had a Yale lock on it but it wasn't a very good lock.
79. Bedtime was at 9pm the kids would get into their pyjamas and meet in the TV room. They would then watch TV until around 10pm subject to what day it was. At weekends we would let them stay up a bit later.

*Leisure activities/trips/holidays*

80. The kids could watch TV, we played bingo and we took the kids hillwalking and swimming. I sometimes hired a 40-seater bus to take the children, complimented with some of the local children, to the swimming baths in Dumfries. I always took a female member of staff on those trips.
81. We also had a disco every week, in one of the outbuildings, and the children could invite their friends in. Once a week we would have a child's meeting. All staff and children were present. It was an informal meeting, kids were given menial jobs for the following week. It was open for anyone to say if they had any issues or problems. All staff and children were present. We would choose what record to buy for the children. The kids would vote for the choice of record to be bought. We would buy one record every week from the Top 10 or Top 20.

82. I played 'hide and seek' with them on occasion. I would chase the kids, catch one and then he would help me catch the others and it would progress from there.
83. We were out in the minibus most days and we used to go to Ayr for a regular holiday. We went to a farm there, the farmer was very good to us. PLS would come on a lot of those holidays and on our annual camp day. He liked the camping trips. He would sleep in the car usually.
84. I used to take the kids camping at St Mary's Loch as well. A local policeman once came on that trip and stayed the weekend with us. I was always very keen to encourage outside involvement.
85. One of the staff, PXG, once took a group of kids to walk Hadrian's Wall. I dropped them all off and then picked them up several miles down the track. That was good and healthy for the kids.
86. The children could go to army cadets if they wanted to. The guy that ran Merkland before me, I forget his name, was a disciplinarian. He made all the kids go to the army cadets every week. He forced them. When I took over, I didn't make them go, I said they should only go if they wanted to. Some continued to go and RFB, who ran the cadets, came up to see me after a while to tell me he'd built up a very good troop. It was far better having children that were keen than ones that were being forced to go.

#### *Healthcare*

87. If a boy had any health problems, I would deal with that, if it was a girl JDW would deal with it. We would either take the child to the local doctor's surgery or ask the doctor to visit. It was Doctor Sinclair that always dealt with us.
88. We had a medication cupboard on the first floor. JDW and I would have dealt with any medication at bedtime but I can't remember anybody having regular medication. If we did ever give medication, I don't remember asking for parental consent, I would have assumed that if a child was left at Merkland we were in loco parentis.

89. Nobody ever required medication to control their behaviour, there was nothing like that. I only remember one boy who had a colostomy but he looked after that himself, I never had any dealings with that.

#### *Work/chores*

90. The kids looked after their bedrooms and they would perhaps vacuum the livingroom at weekends but there was no work, it was more little regular jobs that they all had to do. It was more of a token gesture, it was never that necessary. We never had any problems with the kids doing their jobs.
91. There was a boot room on the ground floor and it was always somebody's job to go in and pick up any shoes and things that were left lying around on the floor, then mop it. The kids left their shoes in the boot room as we made them wear slippers in the house.

#### *Visitors*

92. I've spoken about how I welcomed visitors at Merkland. We didn't carry out any vetting of visitors, as we didn't have regular visitors in that way, other than the social workers. If it was a schoolteacher I wouldn't have given a thought about vetting them. There was really no need for that. We didn't have that many visitors.
93. The only record that would have been kept of visitors would be in the Day Diary. That was kept by the staff and by me.
94. Visitors wouldn't normally take the children away from Merkland. Most of the parents that visited, and we didn't have many of them, wouldn't take their kids out. It was mostly the social workers that took the kids out.
95. Social workers would sometimes arrive unannounced and I would encourage them to take the child out, down the town for a coffee or something. That was better than sitting in at Merkland with other children listening.

96. Some social workers were good and came to visit every two weeks but some never came up at all. It was nothing to do with me because I never knew the circumstances. We didn't have a designated room for social workers visiting so they may go into the TV room, but if they needed to speak to a child in private, I would let them use my office.
97. The social workers would have had to maintain reports on the children but I never saw them. If there were recommendations being made about the children it would have been the social workers that dealt with that, it wasn't something that was ever discussed with me.
98. There were occasions when a social worker would tell me they were taking children back to their families, or they were bringing a family to Merkland for a visit, but other than that I wasn't involved.
99. Children wouldn't have gone to any staff homes. There was only a part-time worker and cleaners that lived locally, so that didn't happen.
100. I'm not aware of a review being carried out by Merkland, or by the local authority or Children's Panel in relation to children's continued residence at Merkland. I never heard anything about anything like that but I never had children taken away to go to another home. There were other homes in the area that dealt with younger people, and there was an assessment centre that was built about three years into my working there but I don't think I ever sent a child back to the assessment centre.
101. I didn't really hear from the social work department about the children if things were ticking along. I remember there was a fire in the kitchen one time and I rang up the social work department to tell them and there was nobody available. I had to call the big boss, I forget his name, but he was the director of the social work department at the time. I was trying to tell him about the fire but he was asking me why I was bothering him when he was out socialising. I told him we'd had a fire and just hung up on him.

He called me back within two minutes to ask more about it. I ended up sorting it all out, it has been an electric fault.

102. I did feel as if the social work and council weren't really interested in how things were going along at Merkland. It wasn't until I notified them I was holding an open day at Merkland that we suddenly had fifteen new beds and new carpets put in. I didn't think anything like that would happen, that's certainly not why I arranged the open day but that was the one time the council did something to get it looking good. It was such a scraggy place when I first went there. They were going to open a new home in a few years so they weren't interested in the Merkland building itself.

#### *Children leaving Merkland Children's Home*

103. The social workers put things in place for children leaving Merkland. I did take two children on separate occasions to Edinburgh or Glasgow because they were joining the army.
104. I wouldn't know what support there was for children when they left Merkland and moved on. I would think there was very little support available for them. I had no dealings with them after they left.

#### **Living arrangements**

105. All the staff had access to the children's residential areas. There was a centre staircase which went to all the landings so if I was going to my flat [REDACTED] we would have to use the centre staircase. Anybody coming into the building would have that access. The house father lived in a room on the second floor, where the boys resided, so he would be able to come up and down whenever he wanted to.
106. If I had visitors, I would take them to the TV room or my office, whichever was more convenient. They wouldn't go anywhere from there unless they were staying for a meal.

107. At nighttime it was whichever member of staff that was on sleep-in duty that had responsibility for the children. There was always one sleeping for the females and one sleeping for the males.

### **Discipline and punishment**

108. There was no corporal punishment at Merkland. In fact, I didn't have to use it when I first went up but then I was forced to use it eventually. On the first night all the children were standing on their beds and banging on the ceilings and I didn't react. The next day, my second day, after breakfast they all disappeared and didn't go to school.
109. The school, Moffat Academy, contacted me to say none of the kids had gone in so I went round to the school to speak to the headmaster, John Stevenson. He was a really nice guy. John said he would have to belt all the children. The kids were away all day and I also took advice from <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED] at the social work department about what I should do. He said I should belt them, which seemed unfair as they would be getting belted twice. He said I had to stamp my authority on them.
110. I then agreed with John Stevenson that I would belt them on the backside and he would belt them on the hands so as not to overdo it. I don't think we belted the girls, just the boys, and that was probably about eleven or twelve boys. That was all recorded in the Punishment Book at Merkland.
111. I used the belt on one other occasion, for a boy that was stealing, I don't remember who it was. I think I gave him three of the belt over his clothing on his backside. I had another member of staff with me and he or she would have signed the Punishment Book. I introduced a witness being present for the punishment and having them sign the book because the headmaster in the last school I'd been in did that. Other than that, I never used the belt. After about a year or eighteen months the belt was made illegal anyway. The belt I used was one that belonged to the home.

112. If a job wasn't being done properly in and around the house, I would sometimes say the to the children that I'd set <sup>JDW</sup> [REDACTED], on them. I'd then have a word with her and she would deal with it. If someone wasn't making their bed for example. She would maybe go and have them make all the beds, something like that. It was never a physical punishment.
113. Likewise, for minor infringements, I would send children to <sup>JDW</sup> [REDACTED] and she would give them a talking to or a job to do. There was nothing physical in any of the punishments at Merkland. To my knowledge there was no one else who disciplined any of the children at Merkland. Other than the boy who was caught stealing we never had a major infringement, so I never had to deal with anything like that. To me, all the children seemed reasonably happy.
114. There was no formal policy or written rules at Merkland but I did make it plain to the children that I would belt anybody that stole. Other than that, there was no physical punishment. A punishment might have been something as simple as having the kid wash my car or just stop someone coming out on a trip; swimming or something.
115. Older children had no responsibility for any discipline of younger children. I did sometimes use a group punishment. If the kids were playing up at night after bedtime I may take them outside, on to the football pitch I had made, and make them run round in circles. I'd have the floodlights on and I'd maybe have them do fifty laps. They rarely completed all the laps, so I'd send them to bed and tell them they would have to do the rest if there was any more trouble.
116. I suppose swearing at staff would be behaviour that would result in discipline but we never had that type of incident. I'm seeing it from a member of staff point of view; that it was a reasonably happy home. They used to go to school unsupervised and then come back unsupervised. They got changed out of their school uniform into their house clothes and went to the TV room before tea. They were allowed out, down the street or to the park, they could do what they wanted really so there was never any need for discipline.

117. Children weren't separated or segregated as a punishment. I might send a child to bed early but there would be other people coming and going in the room.
118. There would be a record kept of discipline and punishments in the Day Diary or the Punishment Book. The Punishment Book was physical punishments, the belt basically, not a job that they were given to do. I would record the details in the Punishment Book and I would have a witness sign it. That was just what I did, in past jobs when I was in the maladjusted unit, we had a Day Diary and a Punishment Book, that was what we did so I did it at Merkland as well.
119. PMO [REDACTED] would sign the Punishment Book monthly if there was anything in it. There was never anything in it though.

### **Restraint**

120. There wasn't any restraint used on children at Merkland. There was no getting a hold of a child and being physical with them. No holding anyone down or anything like that.
121. There was never any medication used to restrain children.
122. There were no polices provided by the social work or anyone in relation to restraining children. That was never discussed.
123. I didn't restrain or hold down any child and I didn't ever see anyone else restrain or hold down any child at Merkland.

### **Concerns about Merkland Children's Home**

124. I'm not aware of anyone ever raising any concerns about the way Merkland was operated or the way the children were treated there.

125. There is only one incident I can think of that was a concern that I dealt with. That was to do with a girl who worked at Merkland, she lived in Carlisle I think and had a bit of an affair with an older boy who stayed in the home. I caught them in bed together. I told her the next day that I could either report it or she could walk out and not come back. She left and didn't come back. I then told PLS [REDACTED], who told me off, he said that wasn't the way I should have done it and I that should have reported it to my line managers, PMO [REDACTED] and him. It was too late though, it was done.

### **Reporting of complaints/concerns**

126. There wasn't any complaints procedure as far as I remember. I don't remember anything happening, or there being any complaints, but if there had been, the procedure was that I would refer them to my boss, PMO [REDACTED].
127. If a child made a complaint to me, I would have referred it to PMO [REDACTED]. I never had to do that but if I had I would have phoned him up and called him into the home.

### **Trusted adult/confidante**

128. If a child had any worries or concerns and wanted to speak to someone, they had options. They had their social worker who they could speak to, the doctor or their teachers at the school, that's about it I suppose. I'm not aware of any child raising any concerns though.
129. I didn't have any child raise any concerns with me other than some bullying. JDW [REDACTED] dealt with that and it didn't come to anything. It was one of the older boys who'd been at Merkland a long time and he was becoming a bit of a bully. I don't remember what he had been doing, or what it was about, but JDW [REDACTED] got all the boys together and told them not to speak to him. That worked as he came to JDW [REDACTED] one day complaining that none of the boys were speaking to him. That was about it, that ended it and he started behaving.

## **Abuse**

130. I'm not aware of Merkland having a definition of abuse in relation to children and the treatment of children. Not when I was there.
131. I never saw any behaviour at Merkland that could be described as abuse, not at all. I never had any abuse reported to me by any children.
132. Looking back, I would have thought that if a child was being abused or ill-treated at Merkland it would have come to light at or around the time it was happening. We were a very close knit home.
133. I wouldn't have thought abuse could have happened and gone undetected but I don't know. Most of my offending happened with the younger boys after bedtime when no one was about.

## **Child protection arrangements**

134. I don't think there were any instructions or guidance given to the staff on how the children should be treated and cared for and protected against abuse. We wouldn't have ever discussed it, I don't think. There wasn't any training or meetings between the staff or with the social work about anything like that.
135. There wasn't any guidance or instruction given on how to handle and respond to any reports of abuse that might be made by children. It was never discussed so it was never an issue. After the incident with the member of staff that had a relationship with one of the boys, there was nothing further done. There wasn't any training offered about how to deal with that sort of incident if it had happened again. PLS [REDACTED] just told me I'd handled it wrong and that I should have reported it to him. That was the end of it.

136. There weren't any child protection arrangements in place to try and reduce the likelihood of abuse happening to children by adults. There was nothing like that at all.

### **External monitoring**

137. I am not aware of any inspectors or monitors visiting Merkland. The only people I recall attending were PMO [REDACTED], my supervisor, who would visit weekly. He would wander around but I don't know if he spoke to anybody at all. PLS [REDACTED], Douglas Crowther, and Mrs Marriott would also visit. I think they were assistant directors for Social Services but I cannot be sure. Individual social workers for the individual kids would also attend. I don't recall any feedback or any specific meetings to discuss what was going on at Merkland at all.

### **Record-keeping**

138. I kept a Day Diary, a Punishment Book and a Menu Book, that was about it. I think there may have been a Visitors Book as well. Visitors could sign in if they wanted to although if they were regular visitors I can't say we would always have asked them to sign in, it may have just been mentioned in the Day Diary. All the books were kept in the office at Merkland and they were all there when I left.
139. The Day Diary was basically a record of whatever happened during the day. PMO [REDACTED] PMO [REDACTED] would look at the diary probably on a weekly basis and sign it to say that he'd seen it. We would then discuss anything that was of interest to him.
140. There would be entries about the routine, it could be that someone was in a bad mood at a certain time or perhaps that someone wet the bed again, just details basically. Whatever activity we all did in the evening was also recorded in the Day Diary.
141. All the staff made recordings in the Day Diary and at the end of the calendar year it was handed over to PMO [REDACTED]. I never had a Day Diary come back for any reason. He would have taken the diary back to 5 Gordon Street.

142. The Punishment Book was kept in the office drawer and again [PMO] inspected it if there was ever anything in it, but there was never very much recorded in it, just a couple of happenings that was all.
143. The two occasions I'd used the belt were entered into the Punishment Book, it was for any physical punishments, but there wasn't anything like that. The day jobs that were handed out by [JDW] were entered in the Day Diary.
144. The Menu Book was just a record of the weeks' meals. That was also signed by [PMO] [PMO].
145. There weren't any guidelines about what was to be recorded in the books, it was only what I suggested, that was in the book. I would also get members of staff to add a couple of lines in the Day Diary about how their shift went, before they went off duty, that sort of thing.
146. I never thought about making things more formal at Merkland. It was run day by day and we would be notified by the social workers if there were ever any problems. We never held any discussions with the social work about making things more formal. I think they were happy that the home was being run smoothly and it wasn't giving them any problems.
147. There were very few records, if any, kept at Merkland when I started there. There were no records for individual children maintained or kept there during all the time I was there, apart from the files I have already referred to in this statement, at paragraph 68. Those files were for any incident that happened involving the child, such as absconds or health matters. I introduced the Day Diary and the Punishment Book was there when I started, but empty. The Punishment Book was all there was when I started.

### **Allegations of abuse – Merkland Children’s Home**

148. When I was at Merkland I’m not aware of any children making any allegations of abuse against me.

### **Investigations into abuse – Merkland Children’s Home**

149. I was never involved in the investigation of any allegations of abuse when I was working at Merkland.

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

150. I was never involved in the handling of any reports, that were made to Merkland by former residents, concerning historical abuse that happened there.
151. I was never involved in handling any civil claims, that were made against Merkland by former residents, concerning historical abuse that happened there.

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

152. I was never aware of any police investigations into alleged abuse at Merkland while I was working there.
153. The only statement I have given to the police regarding abuse at Merkland was the one I gave regarding my own offending.
154. I have never given evidence at a trial regarding alleged abuse at Merkland.

## Convicted Abusers

155. I don't know of any person, other than myself, who worked at Merkland and has been convicted of the abuse of children at Merkland.

## Other Staff at Merkland Children's Home

JDW

156. [REDACTED] JDW stayed and worked at Merkland the same time as me but thereafter, when the new home was opened, she moved there and worked there for about a month, I think. I didn't move to or work in the new home.
157. I don't know how old JDW was, she would never tell me, but she was a few years younger than me.
158. JDW got on well with the girls she was looking after. The boys feared her, but in a joking sense, they weren't scared of her. If someone said they were going to tell JDW JDW they would say "oh no, please don't do that", that kind of thing.
159. [REDACTED]
160. JDW was alright with the kids, I saw her working with them. She was accepted [REDACTED] and there were children who would go to her if they had a problem. If children wanted to go somewhere, they would ask her and if she was going somewhere, she would often ask children if they wanted to go along with her.

161. As far as seeing her discipline children, it's too long ago for me to remember. I did send children to her to get a job to do as a punishment. If she was disciplining a child herself it would have been verbal, whatever it was they'd done.

162. I didn't see or hear of JDW abusing any children at Merkland.

[REDACTED]

163. [REDACTED]

JDV [REDACTED]

164. JDV [REDACTED] was a part-time member of staff, her job title was part-time carer. She worked alongside me and would have been at Merkland around about the whole time I was there. I only knew her as a member of staff, I didn't know her at all outside of Merkland. I did know her father, he ran the stables.

165. JDV [REDACTED] was young, I don't know how old she was then maybe 25 to 27, but that's a guess. She would mingle with the kids and if there was something needing supervised, she would supervise it. She was full of fun, a happy person, who was very popular with all the kids. She was very willing in any task she was given.

166. I was JDV [REDACTED]'s line manager. I was the line manager for all the staff at Merkland.

167. I didn't see JDV [REDACTED] discipline any children. I don't think she ever had a problem with any of the children.

168. I definitely did not see JDV [REDACTED] abuse any children and I did not hear of her abusing any children.

PXG

169. I remember PXG I think he was a London boy. I think he worked at Bryn y Don and then, for some reason, he got in touch. I then invited him up and he got a job at Merkland. I should imagine he started in my early days but I can't remember.
170. PXG was a care officer. I remember he was very active with the children and was good with activities. He was the member of staff who took the kids for the walk along Hadrian's Wall. PXG was friendly with the children, he liked them and they liked him.
171. I remember he was once dislocated his knee on the five-a-side pitch. Doctor Sinclair came up and dealt with that. PXG was living at Merkland, so he didn't have anywhere to go, he spent a month or so with his knee all bandaged.
172. I never saw PXG discipline any children.
173. I did not see PXG abuse any children and I did not hear of him abusing any children.

PLS

174. PLS interviewed me for the job at Merkland and he was the one who hired me. He came to see me regularly at Merkland. When I gave my notice in, he was the one who came to see me. I went to PLS's retirement do. PMO PMO phoned me up and asked if I'd like to go up. I was in Doncaster at the time so I went up.
175. When I first met PLS, he would have been in his early fifties. He was an assistant director in the social work department for Dumfries and Galloway. He wasn't my direct line manager, that was PMO but he would give me advice if I ever needed it. Like when the children all ran away on the first day.

176. In relation to Merkland, he knew all the residents and knew all about their pasts. He was friendly with everybody and was popular with the kids. He didn't have a specific role at Merkland, he was just involved as a social worker and he liked it there.
177. I didn't know then, but I know now, that he was going through a bad time in his marriage and he was wanting to spend time somewhere else. He was friendly with the kids, but not over friendly and he would come up to Merkland and either sit and chat with me in the office or sit in the livingroom and be with the kids.
178. He would sometimes talk to me about some of the kids, maybe let me know someone's mother had been on the phone and he'd tell me if there was a problem of some kind with one of the children. I can't think of an example but he would sometimes talk to me about the kids. Just an insight of some of the information that he was getting. He was a good friend to have as he was in a powerful position. He was always friendly with staff as well, he would put them at ease.
179. I never saw <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED] discipline any children. When it came to discipline, he wouldn't go down that road, he might say something to me, but he would never have got involved personally.
180. I never saw <sup>PLS</sup> [REDACTED] abuse any children and I did not hear of him abusing any children.

[REDACTED]  
PMO

181. <sup>PMO</sup> [REDACTED] was my line manager when I was the officer in charge at Merkland. He was there when I arrived, right through until I left, always in that role. I can't think what his job title was now, but he was in charge and was responsible for Merkland.
182. I would guess that he was in his forties when I was at Merkland. <sup>PMO</sup> [REDACTED] was good guy, he knew all the kids and what had happened before to them. He was a good ally to have. <sup>PMO</sup> [REDACTED] wanted Merkland to be regraded. I didn't realise and understand what it was but I signed a form for him one day, that because of the type of children then

staying at Merkland it should be a Class 'D', or something like that. It never happened and it didn't matter to me.

183. I think that was to do with some of the children that were already staying at Merkland. They'd brought in a couple of car thieves and a couple of truants. People that had fallen foul of the law were always difficult with other young people.
184. I was told a lot of information by the young people themselves. We didn't really get anything from the social workers. I never really gave it a thought to ask PLS [REDACTED] or PMO [REDACTED] about giving me more information about the children coming into Merkland. I was just getting on with my job. Having [REDACTED] in the house all the time made it feel like home for me.
185. I couldn't go to the downstairs kitchen without passing the kids and I couldn't go upstairs to our flat without passing the kids. Kids would come up to our flat and knock on the door asking for me if something was happening or they wanted to ask me something.
186. I knew PMO [REDACTED] as well as I knew PLS [REDACTED]. I saw him talk to the kids but he would never discipline them or anything like that. I think he was afraid of undermining me in some fashion.
187. I would say PLS [REDACTED] was more friendly with the kids than PMO [REDACTED] was. I'm not sure what PMO [REDACTED] did before he worked with the social work but he was like an ex-Boy Scout, a sort of one of the boys type. He was very friendly with all of the children. He was good with them, he never took a boy off on his own. He would ask what I was needing and ask how the garden was performing, things like that.
188. I never saw PMO [REDACTED] abuse any children and I did not hear of him abusing any children.

### Visitors to Merkland

RFD

189. There was a [REDACTED], and a younger man, who was ex-forces, who was a [REDACTED] but his name wasn't RFD. I don't know a RFD.

RFB

190. That might be the man who ran the little army cadet troop that some of the boys went to. I knew him as RFB, if it's the same man, but I didn't know him as such.
191. I think he visited Merkland twice, and it was to visit me, not any of the children or other staff. One visit was because he brought a pair of boots for one of the boys who was attending the army cadets. The boy couldn't afford his own boots so RFB went out and bought him a pair then brought them along for the boy to wear to army cadets.

### Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry about me

FCW

192. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by FCW which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT.001.001.9475).
193. I'm not really sure who this person is. I have not offended against him in any way.

HGG

194. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by HGG which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT.001.001.1398).
195. Not someone I recall, however I did nothing against him.

PLB

196. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by PLB which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT.001.001.5645).
197. I believe I was convicted for offences against this person in 1996. I have nothing further to add at this stage.

PKA

198. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by PKA which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT-1-000001033).
199. I don't know this name; I have never offended against her in anyway.

PLJ

200. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by PLJ which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT.001.001.5768).
201. I don't really recall this person, he may be someone I was convicted of offending against in 1996 but I do not remember.

FEV

202. I have been shown a statement given to the Inquiry by FEV which contains allegations of abuse against me (WIT.001.001.6455).
203. I vaguely recall the name, I do not know if it's from being at Merkland, but I never offended against this person.

**Allegations against me contained in other documents available to the Inquiry**

[REDACTED]

204. I have been shown an extract of a document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Issues at Merkland – continued' (Extract of DGC-00000000532 – page 3). The document contains an allegation of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me.

205. I don't recall hearing her name at all. I never belted girls or punished them.

[REDACTED]

206. I have been shown a document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Merkland Précis' (Copy of DGC-00000000538). The document contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] and others against me.

207. I know him as [REDACTED]. I have been dealt with by the Courts previously for allegations made by him. I do not wish to comment further.

[REDACTED]

208. The document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Merkland Précis' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Copy of DGC-00000000538).

209. I remember this person, he visited me when I lived in Penarth, I never assaulted him at all.

[REDACTED]

210. The document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Merkland Précis' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Copy of DGC-00000000538).

211. I vaguely recall him but I never assaulted him.

[REDACTED]

212. The document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Merkland Précis' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Copy of DGC-00000000538).

213. I recall him being a small chubby boy but I never assaulted him.

[REDACTED]

214. The document provided to the Inquiry and called 'Merkland Précis' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Copy of DGC-00000000538).

215. I do not recognise this name.

[REDACTED]

216. I have been shown an extract of a document provided to the Inquiry and called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' (Extract of DGC-00000000552). The document contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] and others against me.

217. I do not know this person.

[REDACTED]

218. The extract of the document called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Extract of DGC-00000000552).

219. I do not recognise this name, however I would say that I was never in the bath with children.

[REDACTED]

220. The extract of the document called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Extract of DGC-0000000552).

221. I do not recognise the name but I would never have taken her out.

[REDACTED]

222. The extract of the document called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Extract of DGC-0000000552). The document previously referred to, provided to the Inquiry, and called 'Merkland Précis' also contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Copy of DGC-00000000538).

223. I recall this person. He was a big kid who I helped join the army. I never assaulted him at all.

[REDACTED]

224. The extract of the document called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Extract of DGC-0000000552).

225. I do not recognise the name. I was never in a bath with any kids.

[REDACTED]

226. The extract of the document called 'List of Merkland Residents who provided witness statements' contains allegations of abuse made by [REDACTED] against me (Extract of DGC-0000000552).

227. I vaguely remember the name but I never assaulted him. I don't recall picking him up at Stranraer as he says.
228. There is nothing further I wish to add at this stage regarding the people above. I deny any allegation of sexual abuse.

### **Convictions**

229. The Inquiry has provided me with the following: -
- a) Copy Indictment - Her Majesty's Advocate v Peter Harley. Glasgow High Court, Trial Diet 11 March 1996. (JUS-000000032).
  - b) Extract Court Minute – Glasgow High Court, dated 19 March 1996 (JUS-000000033)
  - c) Extract Court Minute – Glasgow High Court, date of sentence 22 April 1996. (JUS-000000031).
  - d) Copy Indictment – Her Majesty's Advocate v Peter Harley. Glasgow High Court, Preliminary Hearing 9 September 2021 (JUS-000000325).
  - e) Extract Court Minute – Glasgow High Court, date of conviction 7 July 2022 (Edinburgh High Court), date of sentence 10 August 2022. (JUS-000000326)
  - f) Extract Court Minute – Glasgow High Court, date of sentence 10 August 2022 (JUS-000000324).
230. I have been asked to list my criminal convictions relating to the abuse of children and to give details of the dates of conviction and sentence, the location and nature of the offences, the courts at which I was convicted and the sentences given. I cannot provide the exact and specific request made of my convictions as they are from 1996 and 2021 or 2022. I do however accept that I was convicted by way of a guilty plea to some allegations made against me in 1996 and I accept that I committed those offences.
231. I was able to get away with what I did as there was a lack of staff and supervision at Merkland and as far as I am aware no allegation was made against me whilst I was employed there.

232. With regards to the 2021 or 2022 conviction, I accept that I was convicted at court and sent to prison but I deny those matters and continue to maintain my innocence.
233. I have been asked whether I had any of these convictions when I started my time at Merkland. Prior to working at Merkland I had no previous convictions so had nothing to disclose to anyone.

### **Leaving Merkland Children's Home**

234. I left Merkland because it was closing down. They were opening up a new site in Dumfries and I did ask for the training I needed, to qualify me for the job of head of the new site, but it was never offered to me. I wasn't thirsty for the training but having said that, with hindsight, it should have been offered to me and I should have been able to carry on but it wasn't to be. I was ready for a move by then anyway.
235. When I was at Ashley House there wasn't any training on offer nor did I think of any, I just did the job and got on with it. When I was at Bryn y Don there was training available but it was never offered to me, so again I just got on with the job. It was more educational than social at Bryn y Don but I still wasn't offered any training. The same then happened again at Merkland.
236. I don't remember having any employment references when I left Merkland. I don't think I had to ask them for a reference after I left. I can't remember.
237. After I left Merkland, I left Scotland and only returned once to visit my son, he was maybe nineteen years old. I didn't see anyone else that I knew or previously worked with. I took a job at Axholme in Doncaster but left after twelve months. I then travelled for around twelve months before returning to the UK and was then unemployed for about eighteen months before I was able to get a job as a debt collector for a building company. This was maybe 1982 to 1983 time. I opened a care home for the elderly but I cannot remember the dates for that, in Penarth in South Wales.

**Helping the Inquiry**

- 238. I'm not aware of any other abuse being carried out at Merkland. I did not see or hear about any allegations being made. Allegations can be made for various reasons, so I would not like to say why these are being made.
  
- 239. I was not qualified to do the job, it should never have been offered to me. More checks need to be carried out on people before they are employed, more staff are needed, more social workers are needed to speak with the kids regularly and now, more CCTV within buildings.

**Other information**

- 240. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.....  .....

Dated..... 9-2-2026 .....