

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PJE

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is PJE. My date of birth is 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow. My mum's name was and my dad was. We lived in Springburn when I was very young. They broke up when I was a baby and my mum re-married to a man called. We moved to Possilpark. Then my two half-sisters were born. is nine years younger and is three years younger than me. We all grew up in the same house in Possilpark.
3. I started school in Albert primary in Springburn in P1. I've seen my school admission records in the archives. Then I went to Hawthorn primary school in Possilpark and I think I was going from P2 and about to go into P3 when I was placed in Fornethy House. I know I was in Hawthorn primary school when I went to Fornethy.
4. I don't know why I was placed in Fornethy House and I can't remember anyone telling me I was going. My step-dad was an alcoholic and that could be part of the reason I was sent to Fornethy. There wasn't any social work involvement with the family. I've tried looking for any social work records in the archives and there wasn't anything. I've tried everything to find a reason for me going to Fornethy House. I think I was there for six weeks and it was one trip only.

## **Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus**

5. I think I went to Fornethy House in 1972 and it was [REDACTED] as the weather was sunny. It's hard for me to get the exact year I was in Fornethy. I think I was aged seven. My sister [REDACTED] wasn't there and she wasn't at school then. I was old enough to be at school, but [REDACTED] wasn't there as she wasn't of school age.
6. I can't remember being told I was going to Fornethy. I don't know if I was there for the school [REDACTED] holidays or if it was in term-time.
7. There was a gardener. He had grey hair and he was medium build. He wasn't really big or really thin. I think now that he might have been called [REDACTED] PWK [REDACTED].
8. I think the adults were all teachers, except the gardener. There was a woman called Robertson who was in charge. She was tall with glasses and had dark hair in a bun. I don't know how old she was. She always looked angry. I called her 'Miss'. I don't know what she called us. There was another woman with grey hair and I can't see her face. She was around quite a lot. There was also a female teacher with blonde hair.
9. There was also a younger woman. I don't think she was a teacher and I remember she smiled when we pushed past her. I think we weren't allowed to speak to her. I wonder if she was a cook.

## **Routine at Fornethy House**

### *First day*

10. I remember going there on the bus with a lot of girls. It was all girls on the bus. I don't remember any of their names. I think they were a similar age to me and we were all just kids. To me it was a big bus and it seemed full. There wasn't anyone I knew

already. My mum waved me off and she gave me sweets and crisps for the journey. I had feelings of happiness as if I was going on holiday. When we arrived, the things parents had given to us to take on the bus were taken away. I remember the woman with grey hair being there, but I can't remember her face. I can't remember if she said why she was taking the treats off us.

11. Fornethy was a big, massive building that looked like a castle to me. I remember going in through an archway and into a courtyard. Then going upstairs to the dorms. There was a bathroom on the left and through a different door into the dorms.
12. We weren't allowed to speak to each other. I just remember us all being so quiet. We were in a straight line and going straight into the building. It felt frightening and I wanted to go home. It was a frightening atmosphere on arrival and I didn't want to be there.
13. There were girls already in Fornethy when I arrived. I think there were girls in there who were older than me. I think the other girls were in there for the same amount of time as me and they weren't there long term. There were maybe seventy or eighty girls there in total. It wasn't just made up of the girls who went there on the bus with me. I remember being in the dining room and it was quite busy.

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

14. In my dorm there were maybe eight to ten beds. There were two lines of beds in my room and mine was on the left near the door.
15. I can't remember who woke us up in the mornings. We got dressed and then went to get breakfast.
16. I can't remember who got us ready for bed at night. We weren't allowed to make noise at night and there'd be someone shouting to say stop making a noise and get to sleep. I was scared to speak and it made it hard to make friends.

17. I remember seeing the gardener lift a wee girl out of her bed during the night. I was in my bed in the dorm and her bed was near mine and on the left. I saw him lifting her out of bed from under the sheet. That was a flashback I had as an adult watching me as a child. He took her out of the room. That's all I can recall.

#### *Mealtimes/Food*

18. The dining room was busy at mealtimes with girls. Robertson, the woman in charge was always there at mealtimes and monitoring us. I remember her leaning over us. I always sat at the same table in the dining room and I could see the door from where I sat.
19. When we had pudding we had to use a fork to scrape custard off the bottom of the spoon so it wouldn't drip before we ate it. You'd get skelped by Robertson if you didn't.
20. I don't know what we did in between meal times.

#### *Washing/bathing*

21. We went for showers. I remember there was a bench against the wall with my clothes on it. We were all in together and there was a row of showerheads along the wall. There wasn't a cubicle so there was no privacy. There was always someone in there with us. I can't visualise who that was.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

22. I remember us getting these wee apron things to wear over our clothes. The aprons were different colours depending on which dorm you were in. I remember a blue apron and a red apron. I didn't like them because I was always a kid who wore jeans with a t-shirt and I was a tomboy.

### *Leisure time*

23. The gardener drove the minibus that was at Fornethy House and I remember being in the minibus, but I don't remember where we went.
24. In the evenings I just remember us getting a drink and a biscuit. There was no tv to watch. I don't remember us getting to play like children. I can't remember any toys.
25. I can't remember if weekends felt different to weekdays. I can't remember weekends but I remember walking to church. We went out of the door with an archway to the courtyard and followed a path that went on for a while. Then there was a stream. One time we had to strip down to our knickers to get in the stream. We didn't have bathing costumes. We were told to do that. It was Robertson who took us there. I remember a girl fell in fully clothed and she got hit for it.

### *Schooling*

26. We were in a classroom in what were called classes. We had to write letters home and we had to write down in the letters what the staff wrote on the blackboard. We couldn't write anything different from what was on the blackboard. We couldn't write what we wanted to or say anything negative about Fornethy. If you'd written one word different to what was on the blackboard you had to re-do the work. You weren't allowed to send the letter unless you'd written down word for word what they'd told you. You couldn't write 'come and get me' or anything like that.
27. There was a teacher in the classroom who wasn't Robertson. She had short cropped-in hair that was light or blonde coloured. She was telling us 'you will write this'. I know one of the girls got hit for writing 'I want to come home'. I remember one girl getting shouted at and then we all got shouted at and told you're not going to go home.

28. I think one of the women who I know from the Fornethy [REDACTED] Group has said she still has a couple of letters that she sent home. I don't have any. I can't remember my mum ever saying she got a letter from me.
29. The teacher would write a word on the blackboard and we had to write it down and keep on saying the same word. Then we made the word into a sentence.

#### *Healthcare*

30. I didn't get any medical attention in Fornethy House. I don't remember seeing a doctor when I was there.

#### *Religious instruction*

31. We all had to walk through fields to get to church on Sundays. Robertson was at the front. We climbed over a bit with a fence and some wire and when I went over that, I cut the back of my knee on the wire. I had to keep walking and nobody checked on me until it was noticed by the woman with grey hair.
32. We had wellies on our feet and there were red welts on our legs where the welly rubbed the skin. I don't know if I had socks on or if the socks had fallen down.
33. We had to kneel at bedtime by our beds and say a prayer. Robertson made us do that. She seemed to be there all the time.

#### *Work*

34. I can't remember doing any chores.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

35. I didn't have a birthday when I was in Fornethy. I think I would have gone there after my birthday. I don't remember anyone having a birthday in there.

### *Bed Wetting*

36. I never wet the bed until I went to Fornethy. After I wet the bed at Fornethy, I wasn't allowed an under sheet. I was given a sheet to lie on, for on top of a cold rubber mat. I don't know if that was my first night or not.
37. When I had an accident a bigger girl, who was maybe two years older, came to help me and we got caught. I got knocked about by Robertson for that. Whoever came in the room checked the beds in the morning by lifting the covers. You'd get hit if your bed was wet. It wasn't always Robertson who did that.

### *Visitors*

38. Parents weren't allowed to visit us at Fornethy. No family visited. No-one from outside came in. I still remember my dad sent me a comic and getting that with a letter. I remember they gave me a postal order and that stuck in my head because my dad would give that to my mum every month, and because I was away he sent it to me at Fornethy instead. I still remember saying 'my dad's coming to visit'. They were taken away from me and my dad got a phone call to say parents weren't allowed to visit.
39. I wasn't able to speak on the phone at Fornethy to anyone.
40. I don't remember seeing anyone from outside coming in to Fornethy.

### *Running away*

41. I didn't run away, but some girls did.

### *Discipline*

42. I can't remember getting any treats, so they couldn't take them away as punishment. I can't remember getting any sweets. I never got to keep my dad's postal order.

43. The teachers told us to be quiet when we were in the corridor going from the dorm to the dining room.

### **Abuse at Fornethy House**

44. I remember there was a girl sitting right across from me in the dining room. I remember she said 'I can't eat it'. She was told by Robertson to eat it. The girl coughed and vomited over her plate and Robertson grabbed her by her hair and forced the vomit back in her mouth. It was chicken and I still can't eat that now myself. I can't remember anything else about the food or seeing anyone else being forced to eat food. I was scared not to eat. I thought I need to eat or I'm next. Nobody stepped in to try stop Robertson.
45. I went to Fornethy House more recently for a visit with other women from the Fornethy House [REDACTED] Group that I'm part of. That's when I remembered back to when I was a little girl there and seeing two naked girls on the swings outside. I could say where I was sitting to be able to see them. The two girls were standing on the swings and one of them had started puberty. I also remembered that I'd had a shower and Robertson had taken me outside, naked, to the garden to get dry. It happened once.
46. The gardener was standing there by the bushes to the right hand side and staring at the girls on the swings. The sun was up and timewise I don't know any more than that. I was trying to cover myself. Then Robertson started beating me round the head with her hands for that. I can still remember seeing Robertson's teeth clenched in anger at me. She told me to stand up and get dried. She was only selecting some girls to go outside and we were too scared to speak out.

## **Leaving**

47. I don't know how long I was at Fornethy and no-one told me how long I would be there for. It was a relief to be going home. We were just told one day to get ready for the bus and then we went away in the direction we came in. I think I went with the same group of girls I came in with.
48. I went back to Glasgow and my mum picked me up. I didn't go to any other institution after Fornethy and I didn't stay at Fornethy at any other time. My cousin told me recently that she remembers I was away for a few weeks. My cousin used to babysit me at weekends.

## **Life after being in care**

49. I went back to Hawthorn primary school and then went to Possilpark secondary school. I was quiet at school and I was bullied. I left school at sixteen.
50. After I left school I worked at Greggs as my first job. Then I did different youth work schemes. I did a full time job at a bakery. Then I worked mainly in restaurants and hotels. After that I had my two kids. I started cleaning part-time at school at night. Then I started working as a carer in a care home. That was my last job before I had to stop working because of my health about fifteen years ago.
51. I didn't talk to my mum about what happened at Fornethy as back then children should be 'seen and not heard'. I was taught to listen to my teachers and the teachers were in charge and I didn't question anything. I never got any answers about Fornethy. I think my mum saw something in the news or she read something. When I asked her what year I was at Fornethy she couldn't tell me and she tried denying I was there. I think she knew something from the way she denied it. She's passed away now. My two sisters didn't ever get sent away like I was.



We're also short-listed for a debate of the issues in chambers. Shona Robison has said no other country is better than us. I did some research and there has been an apology in Ireland and I've got a copy of their public statement of apology, so why can't we do that? It would be an acknowledgement of what happened to us.

57. The girls from [REDACTED] group told me to contact solicitors and we needed a test case. I saw a lawyer last year and I told them I didn't want the redress money. The lawyer just wanted the money. The money won't bring back my childhood and to me it's blood money, and it's paying me off. I don't want money, I want a public apology. The lawyers are writing letters to try to get more information from Glasgow City Council about Fornethy House.

### **Impact**

58. I remembered I was in Fornethy after I saw the Glasgow group on-line. I started thinking about when I was eight or nine and I was waking up in the night. I'd be screaming and going through to my mum's bedroom. I told her there were eyes in the dark. My mum said it was only the dog. When I think about it now, the dog slept down at my feet, so why would I be seeing eyes.
59. I wasn't a quiet child before I went to Fornethy. I was always out with the boys climbing trees and playing football. I'd go to my dad's at weekends and he'd get me new trainers, new jeans and a new denim jacket and I was out climbing trees. After I came back from Fornethy I had to be told to go outside by my parents in the way that kids are told to go outside to play, and half the time I wasn't even leaving the close.
60. I was so protective of my own kids, even as teenagers. The local church had a community café and I met a woman in there who set up a club for the kids and she asked if my son would like to go to it. I agreed as long as I was there as well. Other parents would just put their kids in it. I was there for twelve years as a volunteer. I was there if my children were.

61. Even if my son was with my own mum I'd phone her three times to check on him even though I hadn't left Glasgow, and he wasn't far away from me. I think now why was I doing that. There's nothing else in my life I'd think of causing that. It was the same with the youth work. I told them I'd come in to help and I was told I needed to be vetted to be a volunteer and that was fine. My children weren't allowed to go to that group until it was sorted out for me to be there too. There was a club in the evenings at their school and I volunteered for that too. Every opportunity I had I'd make sure I was there at the same time as my kids.
  
62. I had some disastrous relationships. I don't know how much that was impacted by my time in Fornethy House. My children's dad was brilliant but I had trust issues and I couldn't keep it going and we split up. We were trying to get back together when he died.
  
63. For the last couple of years, since I started thinking about my time in Fornethy, I scream in my sleep. I don't know what I'm dreaming about. My daughter says I sound terrified. I don't know why. I can't sleep in my bed in my own room. It doesn't feel like a safe space. I've tried making various changes to try to improve that and they haven't worked. Now I sleep on the couch or in a chair and I feel much better there.
  
64. Last year I went to visit Fornethy House with other women who were placed there. We came down the stairs and I saw the swings and that was when I remembered as a child seeing two girls standing naked on the swings. I started getting upset and someone pulled me away. I could point to where exactly I was sitting as a child. I needed to get outside to the swings and I needed to face up to this memory to see if it would help me. If you don't face things you don't get any closure. I want to go back to Fornethy for another visit as I started doubting my own memories. I want to see the things I've been seeing in my mind to see if that gives me a bit more closure.

## **Treatment/support**

65. I don't trust counsellors. When my kid's dad passed away, I had his ashes in my house and the children were aged seven and ten. I got counselling for the children. When I walked in there with the children there were two counsellors chatting away to each other and the woman said she knew exactly how the kids felt as she'd lost both parents at a young age. The kids had a choice of who to go with and thought she was brilliant, because she'd been there herself.
66. I started talking to the male counsellor and I asked him how to deal with my kids as I was struggling. He started telling me he knew exactly how I felt. I looked at him and noticed his wedding ring and when I asked him about his wife he told me she was alive, so how would he know how I felt? I can't take that first step to counselling now, having had bad experiences.

## **Reporting of Abuse**

67. I contacted police in Dundee in October 2021 and I told them I wanted to report what happened to me. I was told they were dealing with Fornethy. I gave a statement over the telephone and I didn't see a police officer in person. I told the police what I've told the Inquiry in this statement. I've not heard anything more from the police. I felt from their tone of voice like they didn't want to know and I had no voice. At the time, I was constantly second guessing myself and arguing with myself because deep down I don't want these things to have happened.
68. There was a hearing in court in Forfar against a woman with the surname Baxter who was a member of staff at Fornethy. I think that was last year. I can't remember anyone called Baxter at Fornethy. Someone said to me that they thought she was Robertson, but I don't know if she was or not. Apparently she's not made a plea yet. At least one person has been found and that's something. I didn't expect the authorities to find anybody after all this time.

## Records

69. I've seen the archives and the archives said children went to Fornethy through their schools, but I don't know if that's right. Kenneth McDonald from Glasgow City Council's legal department offered me a meeting to discuss Fornethy. This was after I'd sent emails to the council with Freedom Of Information requests (FOIs) about Fornethy.
70. I got copies of my medical records from the age of 25 onwards and that was the first lot I got. Then I applied again to get my earlier medical records from birth. I did this because Shona Robison was saying we needed evidence that we were at Fornethy House and other records had been destroyed. We still needed to prove we were there even after she said Fornethy didn't count for the redress scheme.
71. The fact I was bed wetting was written in my medical records and this was after I believe I'd been in Fornethy. Then, after that, in my medical records I can see I was put on liquid amitriptyline. There was no mention in the medical records of me being in Fornethy House. There was also a letter saying some third party information had been removed from my medical records.
72. I've been in touch with Glasgow City Council to try to find any information about being at Fornethy. Kenneth McDonald from their legal department agreed to meet up with me when I had someone with me as I'd struggle in a meeting on my own. Then he retracted the offer to meet, so I've not been able to meet him. But, since the issues about Fornethy have come out in parliament, he's now agreed we can see the archives that have been locked away. They may or may not have information that helps us. Up to now we've had to conduct searches by ourselves. We asked about Fornethy and were told there were some records, but that was it and we've not had access to them.
73. At the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, there are some archives that can only be accessed with the consent of the head librarian, [REDACTED]. She said no to releasing them to us. At that time the survivor's group were doing the research

ourselves and didn't accept that. I was working on the research with Diane McCadie, who is a professor at Edinburgh University. Then [REDACTED] told us she was part of the Child Abuse Inquiry. That made us wonder even more why she wouldn't help us. I don't know if she means she's doing research for it.

74. Diane McCadie is a professor from Edinburgh University who is a researcher. She came in to offer us support and find records. She's great and has helped me after I'd been doing the research myself for over a year on my own. I've been involved in these things to give myself something to do and it helps me with my mind as a coping mechanism. We've been digging for information for some time now.
75. We found an advert in the town clerks records in Mitchell Library that Fornethy had advertised for a headteacher in 1960, yet Fornethy wasn't meant to exist until 1961 when it took kids from Glasgow. We dug further back and found out it used to be called Hillfoot residential school in Bearsden before it transferred over to Fornethy.
76. Shona Robison was saying it wasn't a residential school, it was a convalescence home, but in 1984 Strathclyde Regional Council was advertising in the Dundee Courier for teachers for Fornethy. So if it wasn't a school, why was the education department advertising for teachers? That was a question I put to Shona Robison. She said it wasn't a school, but I've seen in the archives that they said our school records went with us, then surely it was a school. I found that out by looking through the different Glasgow Corporation log books and town clerk books. They didn't give individual names. There are no log books on education, just admission records for me going to school and leaving school and nothing about the six weeks holidays in between.
77. I found my own sister's school records. For some reason there's a red line through my name and not their names. Some of the pages have red lines through some children's names and some haven't been scored out. It was suggested to me that was done because I'd left school. If that was the case then why wasn't my sister's name scored out when she left school? When I looked through the records there was

quite a lot of names with red lines through them and other ones hadn't got that. No-one can explain that to me. I'm continuing to try to make sense of what I've seen.

78. When they were first managing Fornethy it was ex-military women that worked there. It's wee things that we're finding, but there's so much to go through. We were looking for residential schools and then looking for staff, and that's how we found the advert for the headteacher because we looked at temporary staffing and then other sections. No-one tells you where to look so you have to work that out yourself.

### **Lessons to be learned**

79. It could still happen to kids growing up now if they're put in somewhere like Fornethy House. A guy I know told me about someone who got a PVG check and he has a criminal record. Whoever was employing him hadn't done a proper check. Each company should be made, by law, to do a proper check of staff working with vulnerable people. If they fail to do that then the company gets charged along with the staff.
80. The people running Fornethy should have looked further into the backgrounds of the people who worked in the school. They do that now, but it should have been done back then. There should have been checks that the staff were suitable to work with kids and vulnerable adults.
81. I did so much with the youth work. Under legislation I had to do training for the role. I'd get a couple of teenagers who'd chap my door and I'd let their parents know they'd arrived at my door so they'd know they were ok. Their parents would ask me if they'd been drinking and I'd say yes, but I wasn't going to let them out on the street. In that way I was able to help with their kids. I was a volunteer youth worker for twelve years. That helped the kids get away from the gangs they were with and later on they became youth workers. That in itself was good and that kind of thing should have been in place back then.

82. We had one man who was upset and couldn't work with the kids any more. He told me he got caught with a can of beer on the street and they wouldn't allow him to volunteer any more. They'd explained it to him that we were working with vulnerable kids and if a child found out that you had been drinking in the street, and kids look up to adults, they might copy that behaviour. They were really strict.
83. The main thing is that the Fornethy survivors get a public apology and that means we get recognised. We go to these meetings and we come out feeling that nobody wants to know. That's how it feels when you're trying to put your case across. The government put someone called Emma Fossey in place to do some research into Fornethy. Since then, we've found out that she was supposed to be an independent researcher, but she's not, she's an ex-government employee. They told us she was independent and she told us herself she used to work for HM Constabulary. I feel like we've been lied to over and over again.

#### **Other information**

84. More recently two journalists called Lesley and David Scott spoke to the [REDACTED] group and showed us black and white photographs of Fornethy House and people they thought were involved in it. They were doing research and trying to jog memories and find out if they meant anything to us. They weren't asking any questions, they were just showing us the photographs. This was over a year ago now.
85. They showed us a photograph of a guy in a kilt and I could see him in my memory standing in the doorway of the dining room in Fornethy. I don't know if he was anywhere else. He wasn't the gardener.
86. They showed us a photograph of a different man and when I saw it I asked 'where's his dog collar?' That wasn't in the photo I saw, but I recognised him enough to say that. I've read, in the 'otherwise locked' archives, that I've recently had access to, in

the Mitchell Library, that there was a minister who came every Friday to Fornethy and the teachers had a break for an hour and the minster looked after us.

87. They also showed us a photo of a house and a garden. There was a statue. I was sure there was a maze around that, but I just couldn't see that. After she showed us all the photos Lesley said to me I was right, the man was the minister. I don't know what minister he was.

88. 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..... 14/6/24 .....