

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGP [REDACTED]

Support person present: No.

1. My full name is PGP [REDACTED] or PGP [REDACTED] and my date of birth is [REDACTED] 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum and dad were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and I was the youngest of seven children. The oldest two were twins, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], then there was [REDACTED], then [REDACTED], then [REDACTED], then [REDACTED] and then myself.
3. We were all brought up in Barlanark and I would say our life was good. My dad worked on the shipyards and my mum was an auxiliary nurse. It was a busy family as there was only about eight years between all of us. It was a good respectful environment and we lived in a four bedroom house with a sitting room, so there was plenty room for all of us. I do remember it always felt cold and we were always bunched up to keep warm.
4. My mum and dad did have to work quite hard but it was happy and we were never hungry and we were always dressed warm. I don't have any bad memories, I only have good memories from my childhood at home.
5. I went to Barlanark Primary School and I didn't particularly like it but I don't think there was anything wrong with it, it was probably just me. I remember I ran home at play time on my very first day at primary school and that seemed to be how it was, I just didn't particularly like school. I liked to be at home with my mum, having a cup of tea

and a wee cookie. It might have been anxiety but I pretty much didn't want to go to school and I don't even remember much about it. I just didn't like being away from my mum.

6. I had a friend at school called [REDACTED], who told me that residential schools were really good as her and her older brother used to go to them. That's the main reason I wanted to go but it was also to give my mum a bit of respite. I told my mum and dad that I wanted to go and they were reluctant and my dad wasn't very keen at all, but eventually they relented and let me go.
7. It was when I was nine year old and my friend, who told me about it and was to be going with me, ended up going at a different time from me. In fact she maybe even went somewhere else, I'm not sure. My older brother also went away but he went to Castle Toward when I went to Fornethy.
8. I think we got a form from the school for my parents to complete for me to go to Fornethy House. I think that went back to the school and on to the Glasgow Corporation. I don't remember much about the school involvement.

Fornethy House, Alyth, Perth

9. I remember I had to go for a medical first at a place in the town, in Glasgow, as I went on the bus with my mum. I had some nits and I had to get them taken away before I could go. I had to go back into town to the same place again, to make sure my head was clean.
10. I didn't go there for any visit and there weren't any meetings with staff before I went. I don't know how it was paid for but I think it was the Glasgow Corporation, as it would be at that time, that ran the place.

11. I went there on the first week of [REDACTED] 1973 and I stayed there for six weeks. I think that was the period of time everyone went for, I don't think there was any option on how long you went for.

Routine at Fornethy House

First day

12. I remember me and my mum went to Bothwell Street in Glasgow in the bus and we met my dad there, as he was just off his nightshift. All the kids met there and then we got on a bus that took us all to Fornethy. It was freezing, I remember that.
13. I didn't know any of the other kids on the bus. I know there was the three [REDACTED] sisters from the Gorbals, because my mum was speaking to their mum, but I didn't really know anyone. The sisters were [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I can't remember the wee one's name but she was only four. I didn't talk to any other children at all.
14. When we arrived there we went to a sort of reception area and there were two people there who took all our bags and money and possessions. We were then given clothes and we were taken to our rooms where we got changed into the stuff we'd just been given. It was all girls at Fornethy there were no boys.
15. We were the first group to arrive after the [REDACTED] holidays so when we arrived, there were no other children there. There were children that arrived after that.

General

16. I don't remember much about the layout but I think the school and classrooms were all on the ground floor, and the toilets and shower area was down there as well. I remember that, as we had to go down stairs in the morning to get washed.

17. There was a big spiral staircase that took you up to the dormitories, they were on the first floor. The dining room and kitchens were on the ground floor from what I remember.
18. I remember some names and faces but I don't know who was in charge at Fornethy House. Mrs Fletcher, Mrs RHB and Mrs LBD are the three names I do remember but there's a lot of other faces as well. My perception as a nine year old was that they were wee old women with grey hair but that could have been light hair, as everyone looks older when you're so young. I think Mrs RHB was the night person and the other two worked during the day. There were other staff but I can't remember any names.
19. I think all the girls were primary school children, I don't remember anyone any older than that. There were two older girls who came later on when I was there, but they would only have been ten or eleven.

Mornings and bedtime

20. There wasn't so many children at Fornethy during the first week and I slept in a dormitory, with another five girls, but there were between eight and ten beds in there. I don't remember anyone else in our dorm. There was the three sisters, another two girls and myself.
21. We had single beds and a wee cabinet at the side of the bed where we kept our underwear, our uniform and our soft shoes. We didn't have any of our own possessions in the dormitory. There was also a cloakroom downstairs where we kept out coats, wellie boots and shoes, for changing into when we were going outside. That room had rows of long benches and we had a wee box where we kept our shoes.
22. During the night there was blue emergency lights on and in the morning the real lights came on and that was your cue to get up. We got up and went downstairs with our toothbrush and wee tin of tooth powder, to get washed. We just had our pants on and we had to walk through the building, I remember it was absolutely freezing. I don't

remember any heating in the place, I just remember being freezing all the time. After we got washed it was back upstairs to get dressed and we went for breakfast.

23. We went to bed about seven or eight o'clock, not that late, because there wasn't much time between having your tea and actually going to bed.

Mealtimes/Food

24. We had our breakfast, lunch and tea in the dining room. We had porridge, toast and tea for breakfast and I remember the tea was really sweet and milky. We didn't have any choice and I didn't like porridge but you just had to eat it. The food was always brought to the table for us.
25. I think lunch was three courses but my memory is just of all the food being mixed up on the plate. There was really sweet apple crumble and it was horrible and not very nice to eat.
26. In the evening we had like a high tea and I remember there was actually one thing I liked, and it was black pudding spaghetti. We also had bread and butter or toast and that's all I remember.
27. If you didn't eat your food you were force fed to eat it. A member of staff would hold your head and try to shovel the food in. I do remember an incident when someone was force fed and was then sick into the bowl, and dragged away. It was just horrible. I have a feeling I may have been force fed once as I can remember the feeling of a spoon hitting my teeth when I was trying not to eat, but I daren't not to do it again because I knew the consequences. I was almost self-force feeding to prevent those consequences.
28. I don't know the names of any of the staff who force fed the children. It wasn't dining room staff, it was staff who looked after us, maybe even teachers. As the weeks went on more people arrived so you would see the children being force fed quite regularly. If a child didn't eat their dinner they were force fed.

Washing/bathing

29. In the morning it was just a quick wash and then at night time we did have a shower or a bath but that was only about once a week. The showers were just open and there was staff there supervising them. It was embarrassing as there were girls eleven and twelve there and when you're that age you want your privacy. I had that at home so I expected to see it somewhere else.

Clothing/uniform

30. We had the uniform we were all given and that's what we wore all the time. I remember I had a dress and we were always wearing tights, we never wore trousers. I also had a wee flowery pinafore which went over whatever else I was wearing and I think we changed that every few days.

Leisure time

31. Every day we were out walking and that's my main memory for what we did at Fornethy. I remember the smell of the silage when we were out on these walks in the country, and whenever I smell it now I hate it and it reminds me of all the walking. We seemed to walk for long periods of time, and I don't know if it was morning or afternoon but we certainly seemed to do it every single day.
32. I don't actually remember ever playing or doing any activities. There were swings there, but I've no memory of ever playing on them. It was just schooling, walking and eating meals in the dining room, but lots of walking.
33. We just wore wellies for all the walks we did and I would have a wee dress on as well. I also wore a duffle coat I had with me from home. I remember being so sore and cold on those walks and just being desperate to get back and get the wellies off.

34. There was a recreational room and they used to put records on and you would get a cup of milk and a Rich Tea biscuit. After that we went to bed, that's all I remember.

Healthcare

35. I don't remember a doctor coming to Fornethy House to see anyone who had been hurt or had been ill during the time I was there.

Possessions

36. My dad gave me money when I went away, and I also got postal orders from him and money and stuff sent in from other family members, who were really good to me. We were allegedly supposed to get pocket money from that and I remember going to a tuck shop but I can only remember buying aniseed flavoured toothpaste which was in a tin and a packet of Parma-violets maybe once a week.

37. My mum has told me she sent me a comic, like a 'Bunty' or a 'Mandy' every week and I've got it in my head that I had something wrapped up with brown paper and Sellotape but I don't actually remember getting any comic, or reading a comic and getting any enjoyment out of that.

Schooling

38. We did do some schooling but I don't have a lot of memory about that. My main memory is just being out walking all the time.

Religious instruction

39. We went to church on a Sunday in a minibus. It must have been in the local village. We didn't all go and I don't think we went every week.

Work

40. We weren't involved in any kind of work, not that I remember. We did learn to make our bed, and do hospital corners but I don't remember anything else.

Birthdays and Christmas

41. There was a wee girl had her fifth birthday when I was there and there wasn't any celebration or anything for that wee girl.

Family Contact

42. We wrote letters to our parents once a week. I remember my dad had said to me that if I didn't like it he would come and get me but I couldn't write that as we had to copy a standard letter from the blackboard. We had to say the ladies there were nice and that we were having a lovely time and we were happy. We weren't allowed to write anything that we actually wanted to.
43. I remember a girl once wrote a letter the way she wanted to write it and the staff just ripped it up and didn't let her write a letter at all. I think she was trying to tell he mummy and daddy to come and get her. That same girl actually threw herself [REDACTED] to try and break her leg to see if she could get home.
44. We were too far away from Glasgow to get actual visits from my parents and they would be thinking I was happy and enjoying myself anyway. Nobody visited anybody there, which does sound bizarre now, when you think we were all away for that amount of time. No one came and visited us at all, and that was just the way it was.

Running away

45. I didn't run away but I thought about it. If I could have, I probably would have but it was away in the middle of nowhere so you weren't near anywhere you could go to get any help.

46. I remember once when we were walking to church and I was thinking about running away or shouting for help. We were walking through the wee village to go to church but I think I probably knew the consequences and I didn't do anything. I do think we were too far away from anywhere to do anything like that.

Abuse at Fornethy House

47. I was assaulted by one of the staff and I think I ended up with a black eye. I was standing in the queue to go in for lunch and another girl who was only four, was standing in front of me. I don't know if the wee girl said something but one of the staff who was in charge of us, smacked the wee girl in the face with her leather handbag. The wee girls face just burst open. I stuck my head out to see what was happening and then someone punched me in the eye. It felt like my eye had broken into pieces.
48. Children were assaulted for anything at all, for the slightest wee thing. We were always getting hit on the head for talking. It happened that much it became the norm. It was usually at bedtime but it happened during the day as well.
49. We must have thought we were always doing something wrong because it seemed we were constantly being assaulted. It was such a regular occurrence and it was for absolutely nothing. Everyone was so terrified to do anything wrong and I don't ever remember anyone doing anything that actually justified anyone assaulting them.
50. I think all of the staff were involved in that hitting. The night time person, Mrs RHB, used to leather you with a slipper if you weren't sleeping, or were making a noise or asked to go to the toilet or wet the bed. It was just constant, it happened all the time and it was just the norm.
51. At night you went to the toilet before you went to your bed and that was you, you weren't allowed to move until the next morning. If you made a noise after that, you could all get leathered, it was everyone in the dormitory that would get it. You didn't

need to be running up and down laughing, although there was no laughter there anyway, it was just the slightest noise and Mrs RHB would come in to the dormitory, start with one girl and just go round slapping everyone with a slipper or her hand.

52. Mrs RHB would leather anyone who wet their bed and their sheets would be hung over a chair at the end of the bed. That happened during the night, when the kid was found to have wet the bed and Mrs RHB would leather the girl with a slipper or a hand.
53. I remember one incident when the poor wee girl in the bed next to me, the youngest sister who was only four, got slapped on her bare backside for wetting her bed. That was by Mrs RHB. I feel from memory that the wee girl just got back onto bed after that, with nothing on and the wet sheet was lying at the end of the bed over her chair.
54. I mentioned the girl that threw herself earlier. That girl was a friend of mine, . She had told me and other girls that she was going to try and escape but that wasn't very realistic and didn't happen. Then she said she was going to throw herself , because if she broke a leg, she would get sent home.
55. I don't think she actually came to much harm when she threw herself because she never got sent home and nothing ever became of that, but that shows how she was feeling at Fornethy House. She was eleven or twelve when she did that. I don't remember her being taken to the hospital or anything.
56. Humiliation for me was the worst. I remember Friday night was a chippie night and we would get chips and a sweetie and we all looked forward to that. I remember being really upset one Friday, as I had been thinking about my family and I was a bit upset. One of the staff saw me and started shouting and saying that she wasn't crying for her mummy like I was, and she just goaded me, she goaded all the children like that, for being upset. It was as if they liked to humiliate the children for being upset. There was no comfort or reassurance you were just made to feel like a big baby.

57. I do think all of the staff were equally capable of that kind of behaviour and the abuse that was dealt out to all the children. I don't actually think there was anybody there that I could say was nice, or even okay. Everyone was equally as bad as each other.
58. When we were out on our walks, girls would get slapped and smacked for not walking fast enough or for chatting with one another, the smacking just seemed to be a regular occurrence and it was the norm that people were getting hurt.
59. I remember two girls getting their heads banged together once, for not walking fast enough and other times you could get slapped on the head, it didn't take very much for the abuse to be given out and nobody was being wild or disobedient or doing anything bad, it was the least wee thing.
60. You couldn't be a kid as there was no laughter and no enjoyment and I actually thought I wasn't going to see my family ever again. Six weeks is a long time when you're that age and I really was thoroughly miserable for the whole six weeks. It was a horrible situation and I genuinely thought I was never going to get home.

Reporting of abuse at Fornethy House

61. I didn't say anything to anyone about the things that happened at Fornethy. We didn't talk about it there and I didn't say anything to my mum and dad when I got home.
62. I felt I had let my parents down, that's what I think when I reflect on it. I had sent a letter to them saying I was enjoying myself and was happy and my dad had said he would come and collect me if I wasn't happy or wasn't liking it.
63. My parents were the type that would always ask me what it was I had done if I ever got into trouble at school. It would only be for talking in class, as I never got into trouble for anything I hadn't done, so if I was moaning about the teacher, they would ask what I'd done, I'd tell them and they would say well that's why you got into trouble.

64. I have often wondered why I never said anything to my parents but I do think that it's because I was thinking back then that I would have deserved what I got and if I had told my parents then they would just have thought I must have been doing something wrong, for that to happen.
65. I know now that it wasn't my fault and my parents wouldn't have thought that but as a child back then, that's how I was thinking and that's why I didn't say anything.

Leaving Fornethy House

66. After my six weeks were up I went home to Glasgow from Fornethy. I think I knew for about a week that I was to be leaving and I went back with the same group I had gone there with, in the same bus. I only remember getting on that bus and getting off it and my mum was there.

Life after being in care

67. I went on to Cranhill Secondary School which I didn't like. There was an incident in one of the cookery classes that put me off teachers. We had to wear an apron and it had to be ironed and pristine and white. This girl, [REDACTED], was in class with food on her apron from the week before and her hair was sticking up and the cookery teacher, Mrs [REDACTED], humiliated her in front of the whole class.
68. She said the girl looked like she'd been dragged through a hedge backwards and she got the belt and I remember sitting looking at everyone laughing in the class and wondering why they were doing that. The girl was about twelve or thirteen and her mum had just died and her dad was a pensioner. Her and her big sister were running their family, keeping it together, and that incident put me off teachers for life. I despised that teacher for doing that.

69. Mrs [REDACTED] was just horrendous, she would belt girls for bursting the yoke of an egg, while you were trying to separate the yolk from the egg white. When you knew that was the punishment, the harder it was week after week, not to break the yolk.
70. My sister once made a cloutie dumpling with my apron and she burnt the apron, so I never went back to that class after that. I made up an excuse that I was sick or I'd just wander about the streets, but I never went back to that class as I knew I'd get into trouble. That was actually about the end of my school days and I left school with no exams or anything.
71. I went on to work in a dry cleaners from school. I worked in there for two years then I got married at eighteen and had my wee girl. I continued working there for a few years and I was divorced by the time I was twenty three. I then got a job working in the halls of residence at Glasgow University. I loved that job , the people were nice and it was lovely working with the students and staff there. I was there for twelve years.
72. While I was working at the university I also worked for Alzheimer's Scotland and I worked in after school care picking children up from school and taking them back to the centre.
73. I did feel as if I wasn't worth anything, I felt stupid having left school with nothing. When I was working in after school care I had a great boss, she was lovely, what I would call a children's champion, and she sent me on my road to where I am now. This was around 1996 and she told me to make a plan for the next six months.
74. I said I'd love to learn to drive but when I heard the theory tests were coming out in 1997 I thought I'd never be able to do that. I then went out and learnt to drive in five days, I drove my first car on the Monday and passed my test on the Friday.
75. That made me realise I wasn't so stupid and I then went on to work full time in the after school care and I started to work with younger children as well. My boss asked if I wanted to try going to college and I wasn't sure but she said the only failure in life was no trying so I did it. I ended up getting my NCA and HNC in Childcare and Education.

76. I met my husband, married in 2006 and moved to South Ayrshire and started working in a local authority nursery. I went on to get another job through a charity called [REDACTED] and I got a chance to step up to the post of childcare co-ordinator and I passed my SVQ4. In 2012 I had to get a degree as part of my job and I had to start university. I was really struggling with some of the punctuation and grammar, although the content was fine, and then I was diagnosed with dyslexia.
77. I actually took some time out then and just left the university course for a while. I then went to speak with the principal at the university and told her I was half way through my degree but I had dyslexia. She told me to come back and that I could get a note taker and they would give me all the support I needed. I did that and I graduated with my degree in Childhood Practice in 2017.

Impact

78. I don't feel worthy of anything and I have this constant problem with self-image. I like being me and I like me as a person and everything I do but there is a self-image thing. In the past thirty years I have put three stone on and three stone off, it's just a rolling thing.
79. About two years ago I was about a normal size and my husband took a photo of me and said I looked lovely. I had lost weight and I had bought nice new clothes and had my hair done, but even still I felt I looked like the ugliest person in the world in that photo. It's just that self-loathing that I've felt ever since I was at Fornethy because no one else in my life has ever made me feel like that. Not family or friends, nobody has ever made me feel useless and I think it's all down to those six weeks at Fornethy.
80. I don't think there's been any other real impact, not with my family as it wasn't their fault, I didn't think it was anyway, and my parents would have been absolutely heartbroken if they'd have known what had happened and I think that's why I didn't tell

them. Even at that young age I think I'd have known how disappointed they would have been, to think someone could have treated me like that.

81. We were never ever physically or emotionally chastised for anything in our family. We were all close and we were brought up to be kind and generous and to look after each other so I don't feel there was an impact on my family or the relationships with my family. I've never felt resentful and it's actually not something I've ever thought about.

Treatment/support

82. I am seeing a woman from Wellbeing Scotland at the moment and that's been really good, a lot better than I thought it was going to be. I had spoken to Future Pathways as well and they had said they could put me in touch with a psychologist but I didn't feel I was ready for that. I then realised that the woman from Wellbeing Scotland was a psychologist but that worked out well, as it removed the barriers. It was something I wanted to do but I didn't know how to cross that barrier and do something about it.
83. I'm about half way through speaking to the woman at Wellbeing Scotland now, I see her every two weeks for eight weeks, that's the plan and it's been very helpful.

Reporting of Abuse

84. About a year ago I was sitting in the house going through my emails and my husband was watching the news and I heard something about Fornethy House. I thought 'wow' and listened to them talking about it. I was glad my husband was there as I was able to explain to him what had happened and it was actually a feeling of relief to be able to talk about it. That was the first time I'd spoken to anyone about it.
85. I phoned the police and I met someone half way, they came down from Springburn and I gave them a statement. That was on the 29th November 2020. I haven't had any feedback on that at all yet.

Records

86. I have sent a request for records to Glasgow Council and to Perth Council. Perth Council told me they had no records for Fornethy House and that it would be Glasgow Council that would hold them, if there were any. Glasgow Council have told me that when they are able they will be in touch.

Lessons to be Learned

87. I've got two wee grandchildren, one is down syndrome and one has autism, and sooner or later they are going to need help. I need to make sure that what happened to me doesn't happen to another child. Not just my grandchildren to any children.
88. I work hard to protect children, I work with children and families every day to try and make things better for them. I also challenge any injustice I see and that's one of the things I've learned.
89. I cannot believe nobody was looking at Fornethy House back in 1973 and checking to see what was going on. How can people get away with that. I know it was in the middle of nowhere but somebody somewhere must have known what was going on in that place.

Hopes for the Inquiry

90. We have to make things better for children in care in the future. We have to make sure things like that can't happen, or shouldn't be happening, and people have to be held accountable for what goes on or for what went on in places like Fornethy.

- 91. Even if it makes a difference for one person, I'll feel good for having spoken to the Inquiry. I would be really disappointed in myself if I didn't take an opportunity like this to make things better for other people.

Other information

- 92. 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..... PGP [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 17 September 2021