

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PKB

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PKB. I was PKB when I was in care. My date of birth is 1978. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was brought up in the south side of Glasgow. My parents were and . I have two brothers and one sister. My brothers were and . My sister is . I'm the second oldest.
3. Life wasn't good growing up. My mum didn't like me. She used to beat me. I now realise that it was because I had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I think I was a bit of a handful. I got on well with my dad. My mum used to make my dad take me out with him and she would look after the rest of my siblings.
4. When I was about ten or eleven, my mum and dad separated. They separated a few times and my mum would always take the rest of my siblings and leave me behind. They argued about me a lot. She would say that I was grounded and then my dad would let me go out.
5. School was difficult. I didn't know how to make friends. I went to Carnwadric Primary School. I was four when I went to school because I was born in . My big brother didn't go to the school as he was always being suspended. I used to get put out of the class a lot because I couldn't sit still or shut up.

6. I was always wetting myself. I started doing that when I was in primary one and I think it continued for a long time. I had a wee alarm attached to me. The other kids bullied me for that. One of the teachers was good and told me if I managed to go one day without an accident she would give me some wine gums in a cone she had made out of paper towels.
7. I went to three different high schools, Shawlands Academy, Hillpark Secondary and Craigbank. I didn't enjoy high school.
8. I'm not sure if it was the school or social workers who sent me to Fornethy. I always remember something about Perth so I thought Fornethy House was there. I don't know if I was, maybe dropped off in Perth and that's why I remember it. I asked my dad when I saw Fornethy on the TV last year. He said he can't remember.
9. I can only really remember going to Fornethy twice but I think it could have been more. I was five or six the first time. The second time I was in primary six or seven. It was all before I started high school. I was there for over a month each time.

Fornethy House

Routine at Fornethy

First day

10. I'm not sure if I got the train or if a social worker took me. I can remember the building; it had big double main doors. When you got inside, there was a big hall. The dormitory was upstairs to the right, it was called Glen Esk or Glenogle. I think there were two or three dormitories on the side I was in. There were more on the left hand side too.

11. It was all girls. I think they were all of primary school age. I think there were ten other girls in my dormitory. You weren't allowed to go near any of the other dormitories. If you even attempted to you were in trouble.
12. I think we arrived there in the morning. Our clothes were changed. They gave you a pinafore and skirts to wear. I think they gave us black trainers too. I remember mine was hanging off me because I was so skinny.
13. The staff came out with the nit comb. They ripped my hair with the brush first. I think we were given a bath. We were made to put our clothes away but half of them weren't even mine. They got our clothes mixed up. There was a long, light pine wardrobe at each bed in the dormitory. I didn't have any of my things with me. I didn't have any at home either.

Staff

14. I can't remember being introduced to any of the staff. It was strict. There was a woman called Mrs Fletcher. She was a big woman and she seemed tall. She looked like she was in her late thirties or early forties. There was a teacher called Miss Robertson or Miss Robinson. She was small. She was mentally abusive. She was like Mrs Fletcher's sidekick.

Mornings and bedtime

15. I'm not sure how we were woken up but it was very early about 6:00 am or 7:00 am. I can't remember if we had a bath or just got dressed. We had breakfast, brushed our teeth and went into the classroom. I was thrown out of the classroom all the time for talking.
16. We went to bed at 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm. When they closed the big shutters, the blue light came on. A member of staff sat outside the dormitory at night time. The girl next to me used to tell Mrs Fletcher that it was me who was speaking when it was actually her who would be carrying on giggling. I would tell her to shut up and then it would be

me dragged by Mrs Fletcher by the hair on my head into the corridor or the games room. She would scream at me in my face, and slap me and strangle me. I can remember being strangled in the hall when the blue light was on. I was made to stand out in the hall all night. I wasn't allowed to sit down. It could be all night and until the girls were getting up. I can remember being so tired that I was falling over.

Bed-wetting

17. Bed-wetting was a massive problem at night. I used to hide my wet clothes in my wardrobe. The girl on one side of me used to tell Mrs Fletcher or another teacher that I'd had an accident. There were about three smaller teachers but I can't remember their names. Some of the other smaller teachers took me into the games room and threatened to put me in the fire where the ghosts were. Mrs Fletcher used to lock me in the cupboard with my smelly clothes. I can't remember if I had my wee alarm when I was there. I don't know if they took it off me. I can't remember being made to wash the bed sheets. The beds were like hospital beds. I can't remember if it was the children or the staff who made the beds.

Washing/bathing

18. I think we were bathed every day. I remember having some in the afternoon if you had been on a walk. The water was always cold. I think there were two baths in one room. There was two or three of us in the bath each time. There had always been someone in the water before you went in. Sometimes when you went in the water was clean, it depended where you were in the queue.
19. I can remember before every meal and when we were stood at the side of our beds, we had to say a prayer.

Mealtimes/Food

20. We ate in the dining hall. The food was vile. There were salads but you didn't get the choice. We were all given the same. I used to hide the tomatoes because when I ate

them I used to come out in a rash. I don't know if the staff knew I had an allergy but the staff didn't care. I think the children with the red bands on told us where to sit.

21. There was a long table like a head table for the staff. There would be one or two members of staff going round to make sure we were eating. If you didn't eat the meal you were forced fed first. Then you were given castor oil or you were sent to the library/games room.
22. One time, I had hidden the tomatoes underneath my plate. Mrs Fletcher swiped the plate out of my hand and it smashed on the ground. I was forced to eat what I had left. I would be sick and taken to the bathroom.
23. Another teacher would make me brush my teeth and they would ram the toothbrush into my mouth and the brush handle would be forced into my mouth and could cause me to have cuts on the back of my throat. It happened to a lot of the girls.
24. We weren't allowed to put our elbows on the table or our wrists. You would get hit with whatever was in their hands or you would be pulled by the hair on your head with their hands. I can remember when I was there they did not like the fact I was left handed. They refused to allow me to eat with my dominant hand
25. I was force fed first, the staff would hold your head and put it in your mouth. I didn't really see the other girls getting the same treatment. I was given the castor oil in the games room.
26. If you were sick when they force fed you they saw that as not completing your meal so you were made to do other things like clean wellies or not allowed any treats. I can't remember what other chores I had to do.

Leisure time / clubs / groups

27. There was a side door and there were steps out the side door. We had to put our wellies on there. We went out the back, and there were logs on the ground. The swings

were made of logs. There was a hut, which we weren't allowed to sit in even when it was raining. We mainly went in there for singing.

28. We were made to go on very long walks every day. I think they made us walk to a place called Mount Blair. It could be in the afternoons or the evenings. We played a game called 'Beetle Drive'. You got to go to church if you won.

Trips and holidays

29. I can't remember going anywhere apart from the walks. I can remember being on the minibus but I can't remember where we went. I don't know if I've blanked it out. The people in Fornethy told me it was a holiday.

Schooling

30. School was just the same as primary school. I did Maths, English and Geography. I'm sure the teachers were part of the staff. I didn't last long enough in the classroom to really find out. One of the smaller teachers used to take us to Mrs Fletcher if we did anything wrong and that's when she did what she wanted.

Healthcare / medication

31. I can't remember being in an accident. There were two wee old ladies who used the nit comb on us.

Religious instruction

32. We went to church every Sunday. The church was down the road. You were only allowed to go if you had won the game. So I didn't get to go very often. If you didn't go to church you would be made to sit in the TV room all day with Mrs Fletcher. We were made to sit on a big row of chairs. I loved going. Sometimes we were made to say prayers and sing church songs like Kumbaya.

Birthdays and Christmas

33. At Christmas time, we danced in the TV room to the Little Birdy song. I remember watching Annie the film too. Santa would come and we would see him sitting in the room. You were given a present but I can't remember if we were allowed to keep it because I can't remember taking anything home.
34. I can't remember celebrating birthdays. We were given pocket money. Three of the girls used to steal mine so I wouldn't be able to get anything out of the tuck shop. I can't remember any of their names. I think the tuck shop was on a Saturday but there was maybe some during the week as well. I think the tuck lady had the money written down in a book. They always took my money off me. I didn't tell anyone because the girl would have been beaten up. I was scared to tell because I thought it was only who was being properly hurt.
35. I remember being on the minibus but I can't remember where we went. I kept asking why I was there so long. They told me it was a holiday.
36. There used to be visitors but we would be made to sit in the TV room while they were shown around and be on our best behaviour. They sat at the top table with the teachers during mealtimes. They left again after the meal.

Abuse at Fornethy

37. Mrs Fletcher used to suffocate me until I was going blue. Mrs Fletcher used to put her hand over my mouth because I had wet the bed. It just depended what mood she was in. I was used to being picked on at home too. They made us put books on the top of my head at the dining table. We had to sit with our backs straight.
38. When I was made to go out of the class, I was strangled. They used to take me to the games room and strangled me a lot on a regular basis. It was because I wouldn't sit

still or be quiet. I don't even remember what the classroom was like because I was out in the cold corridor most of the time. It was a smaller woman who used to take me out the classroom and take me to Mrs Fletcher. She would be pulling my hair, slapping me, kicking me and strangling me. It was nearly every day. I thought at the time that it was just me.

39. The staff screamed at quite a lot of the children. They would let the vice-captain deal with the children as well. There was a vice captain who was slightly older. There were three bands, a red band, a blue and white. The captain wore the red band. The captain made sure you brushed your teeth properly. The staff picked the children to be captains. It would be those who were good or intelligent.
40. The other staff were more verbally abusive. They would put me down and degrade me. They said things like, my mum and dad didn't love me because I was skinny. They said my mum and dad loved my brothers and sister more. I don't know how they knew I had brothers and a sister. They seemed to know I had brothers and a sister.
41. On the walks, if you stood on sheep's poo, it was usually because I had been pushed on it by the other girls. There was one girl who did that to me. The wellies were scrubbed when we got back. The hills seemed to go on forever. They took us on the walks in the snow, rain and wind. We would still be wearing the skirt and pinafores. I think the odd time we wore a coat. My legs were like ice. I had blisters on the backs of my legs from the wellies rubbing against my skin. I was so skinny that the rubber would hit against the bone at the front. If I complained about it, someone would shove me down the hill. It was in the winter because I remember Santa being there once.

Leaving Fornethy

42. I was just told suddenly that I was going home. There was no organisation. I just remember something about Perth.

Life after being in care

43. I didn't tell my mum or dad what happened. I started soiling myself when I went back to my primary school. I used to run out of the school back to my house to get changed because the teacher used to put trousers on me. I was so skinny that they had to put braces and a snake belt on me to keep them up. I'd had my hair cut short at Fornethy because of nits. I looked like a boy. I used to get picked on all the way through primary. I know I only had accidents with wetting myself before I went to Fornethy. I was just seen as a bad kid by the other teachers. That's what they put my behaviours down to.
44. I was fantastic at Maths and Art. I liked playing musical instruments. When I went to high school, my dad would put me in one gate and I would go straight out the other. So I was sent to a children's panel. They told me I was going to a List D school. I begged them to let me stay with gran and grandad. They had to be assessed because they were older. I went to stay with my grandparents in [REDACTED] 1993. I told them I didn't want to go back to school.
45. I applied to the Central College of Commerce when I was fifteen and went to do hairdressing and beauty therapy. I met an older man who I got into a relationship with and I didn't finish the course. He used to beat me up. Every relationship I've been in since I have let them beat me up. I stopped going to college before I turned sixteen because of the relationship I was in.
46. I have taken any job I could, I worked as a hairdresser and a cleaner. I had two catering businesses. I had a very small takeaway food shop and a sit in café so that people in wheelchairs could sit in. I am a keen gardener and grow my own fruit and vegetables.
47. I met my partner in Rothesay. We lived in Glasgow together for five years before moving to Oban. I lived there for fifteen years. I live in Falkirk now. I was with my partner for 26 years. We are separated now but still remain close. We have seven children between us. I haven't seen my two youngest children for three years. They aren't in my care.

Impact

48. I struggle with patience and like to have everything in place. I don't have any friends because I can't keep them.
49. My time in care has affected my relationship with my own children. I wouldn't let them stay overnight with anyone. I was very regimented with them. I didn't like being strict with my children. I wish I had been softer with them. I wouldn't let anyone help me with them with things like doing their homework. I'm too independent. I like everything to be done in my way. I blame the staff in Fornethy for that. My children have told me how they feel now that they're older. My kids don't know that I was in Fornethy.
50. I have problems sleeping because I'm scared which stems from what happened at Fornethy. I have nightmares and my brain won't stop. I take melatonin but it doesn't make much difference.
51. I have lots of physical health problems from Fornethy. I have problems with dysfunctional breathing. I was told by doctors that I don't breathe from my stomach. I feel like I'm dying. I have a nebuliser and can't use a mask because it reminds me of being suffocated. So I have to have a tube. I would ask them to stop but I couldn't get the words out.
52. I'm one of the fussiest eaters. I can't eat fat. It caused problems at home. I can't swallow properly. I can't gargle mouthwash because of the problems with my throat. I've had problems my whole life because I was force fed. I have ended up with Barrett's Oesophagus I was told I used to make myself sick and was told I was Bulimic until I was 22 or 24. I also have severe Irritable Bowel Syndrome.
53. I get pins and needles in my legs and fingers when I go out in cold weather which is as a result of the long walks in all weather. I love long hair but I can't have my hair down around my neck because of the strangling. I hate having it short because I look like a boy.

54. I have struggled with my behaviour since the start of the pandemic. I was doing mischievous things like making prank phone calls to my son. I wasn't ready to speak about it but I feel ready now. I always thought that I wasn't important. I need to concentrate on myself in order to try to understand why I behaved the way I have.

Treatment/support

55. I have suicidal thoughts and attempted to take my own life two years ago. I'm going to join the sensory group in Forth Valley. I have recently been diagnosed with ADHD and ASD. I am in contact with Future Pathways who are hopefully providing me with practical support.

Reporting of Abuse

56. I haven't reported any of the abuse to the police. I have only recently felt ready to talk about what happened to me. I saw a news item on television last year about Fornethy so I wanted to come forward to try to help other women. I haven't told my doctor about the abuse I suffered at Fornethy.

Records

57. I have been struggling to get my records from Glasgow City Council since June 2021. I received some of the paperwork but a lot of it was missing. My solicitor noticed that paragraphs were blacked out.
58. I have tried to get an advocacy worker. I have instructed a firm of solicitors in a civil action against the council. I wanted to speak to them to help support other women. I wasn't interested in money. I thought at the time that it was only me that it happened apart from the small things I saw.

Lessons to be Learned

59. I think what they did to me was disgusting and vile. They shouldn't have been allowed to do that to children. I find it difficult to put it into words. I would like the people involved to be punished with prison sentences but most of them will probably be dead now. I would like those who abused me to experience what I did. Mental abuse is much worse than physical. It happened in the time that people had the attitude that 'children should be seen and not heard' but there should still be some kind of justice.

Other information

60. 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... 01/12/22