

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PRH

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PRH My date of birth is 1961. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going to Fornethy House

2. My mother's name is She is still alive and is ninety two. She worked in the Southern General in Glasgow. My father's name was He has now passed away. I was born in Castlemilk in Glasgow. I have five brothers and sisters. In age order it went , myself then . There is about a year or two between all of us. is just over a year younger than me.
3. We were all brought up in the Castlemilk area in Glasgow. We had a brilliant upbringing. I remember us all being happy and it being normal. Our mother was old school and cooked us all brilliant dinners on Sundays. Our father was the one who looked after us. He was brilliant too. He would get us up in the mornings because our mother did night shifts. I remember him warming our clothes by the coal fire and having bowls of porridge ready for us in the mornings. I remember the family going on holidays to Saltcoats and Ayr for sometimes as long as six weeks. I went to Castleton Primary School in Castlemilk. We lived just two minutes up the road from it. I can't really remember a lot about primary school.

4. Our father [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Whilst we were growing up he was often in Phillipshill Hospital near East Kilbride for months at a time. We used to have to walk there from Castlemilk. It took about two hours to get there and we would do that twice a day. We did that for years in the dark. Most of our Christmases he was in hospital. All that meant it was hard money wise for our mother but we never did without. We still got everything. There was never any external involvement from social services, a doctor or anything like that. It was a really happy upbringing in that respect.
5. It was [REDACTED] and I who were the ones who went on about going to Fornethy rather than our parents. We must have heard about it from somebody at school. Because we kept on going on about it they ultimately agreed to try and get us places to go. In the end, I think my mother spoke to her doctor because our dad wasn't well at that time. I think that was how it all came about. It allowed our mother a wee break. That was the reason behind how we got places to go but to [REDACTED] and I we were just going on our holidays.
6. I remember on the day that we first went to Fornethy we went to some of the Glasgow Corporation's offices. At that time they were located above a pub called 'The Square Peg' on St Enoch's Square in Glasgow. Our mum had packed us a wee bag to take with us. We sat in that wee office swinging our legs waiting for the bus to collect us. I remember it all being exciting. The bus then came to collect us.

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

7. I haven't a clue what organisation ran Fornethy House but I know us going there was all arranged through the Glasgow Corporation. At the time of going to Fornethy all I knew about it was that it was at the top of Scotland and it was somewhere that was really far away. I now know that it was near the village of Kilry in Angus.

8. I was either eight or nine years old when I was at Fornethy. [REDACTED] would have been between seven and eight years old. That means we would have been there at some point between 1969 and 1971. We went to Fornethy for six weeks. I can't remember what time of the year we were there but I remember it being dull, dreary and kicking [REDACTED] on the ground. That would suggest to me that we were there during [REDACTED] time. I think it was during term time rather than during a school holiday.

#### *Layout of Fornethy House*

9. Fornethy consisted of a big old massive house set in its own grounds. There wasn't anything nice about it at all. It was a dingy place with cold walls everywhere. Inside, there was a big massive staircase that went through the building, a bathroom, a number of dorms, a classroom and a hall. The house was surrounded by woods and grassy areas. There was a roundabout in the grounds that we could play on in one of the grassy areas. I don't remember there being anything else to play on or with.

#### *Staff*

10. I don't remember how many staff members there were there but I think there were a lot. I remember there was an incident involving four members of staff so there must have been at least that many working there at any one time. I couldn't describe what the staff members looked like but I think they were all women. I can't remember there being any men there. I couldn't say whether the women who worked there were either young or old. I now know there was someone in charge who acted like a headmistress. I had forgotten who she was but have discovered later on in adult life that she was a woman called Mrs Fletcher.

#### *Siblings / the children at Fornethy House*

11. It was just me and [REDACTED] who went to Fornethy. None of my other brothers or sisters went. Although we were placed in separate dorms we were able to see each other during the day. I remember getting to play with [REDACTED] outside on the grass and on the roundabout.

12. I only remember there being girls there. We were all primary school age. To me everybody who was sent to Fornethy were there for their holidays because their parents were poorly. I remember a girl by the name of [REDACTED]. She left Fornethy just before we left. There was a large family of girls called [REDACTED]. One of them was called [REDACTED].

### **Routine at Fornethy House**

#### *First day / daily routine*

13. I can't remember the bus journey up to Fornethy. I can't remember much about the first day we were there. As soon as we went into the house we realised that the place was really strict. The routine was all regimental. I think it was the same routine every day. Beyond that I don't remember anything further.

#### *Sleeping arrangements*

14. We all slept in dormitories. I can't remember how many girls were in each one. [REDACTED] was placed in one room and I was placed in another. We all had a bed each. You would get punished if you shared your bed. There was a big rug on the floor of the dormitory I was in where you were placed before you were disciplined.

#### *Washing / bathing*

15. There were showers in Fornethy. Girls were put into the shower together and everyone could see each other without anything on. I remember having a bath there. I don't know whether I might have had a bath because I wet the bed. When I had a bath I was in it with another child at the same time. I don't know whether that was [REDACTED] but I'm sure I wasn't on my own.

16. We all had to queue up to get washed and to brush our teeth in the evenings before bedtime. The toothpaste was powdery stuff in a wee tub. I can't remember what it was called. The staff would put that onto your toothbrush. I remember being terrified standing in the queue on an occasion when I had forgotten my toothbrush. I thought that I might get battered by the staff because of that.

*Mealtimes / food*

17. I can't remember anything about mealtimes but I am aware that there were issues from speaking to my sister and hearing from other people who went to Fornethy. I can't remember the food being bad or anything like that. I can't remember whether there was enough food or not but I know that [REDACTED] lost weight over the time that we were there. The only thing I remember is that you got milk, an orange and, I think, a biscuit on a Friday night. That wasn't something I was given because I wet the bed.

*Chores*

18. I don't remember having chores to do. The only things I did like that was being made to carry down my sheets after wetting the bed and having to wash my wellies after we went out for walks.

*Clothing / uniform*

19. I don't know whether we wore our own clothes. I know that we all had to wear flowery pinnies. We always had them on. I don't know whether they were bought by our parents or whether they were provided by Fornethy House.

*Possessions / pocket money*

20. We took a suitcase with us when we went to Fornethy. You were only allowed to take so much. It was just wee bits like nightwear and things for the morning. There was a tuck shop in the house. The staff would give you whatever your parents had sent in when that was on. It was all wee things. It was really special to receive stuff from our

mother. I think that was because we obviously wanted to see her. I don't think that we got pocket money. I think they just gave you whatever your parents had sent in.

#### *Schooling*

21. We had lessons in a classroom during the day but I can't remember much about them. I remember sitting in the classroom and receiving letters from our parents. The letters would all be opened before we received them. The staff took whatever you had been sent and went through it all before it got to you. We would then have to write letters in reply, however, we couldn't write what we wanted to write. We would have to write what had been already been written out on the blackboard. You would have to sit there and copy it out. It was all a load of rubbish about how wonderful the place was.

#### *Leisure time*

22. Our leisure time consisted of either going out for walks or playing outside. On a Friday they showed a film using a projector in the hall. I remember that they segregated the girls when watching those films between the girls who wet their beds and those that didn't. The girls who wet their beds were made to sit separately lower down on the carpet. The girls who didn't wet their beds, which included [REDACTED] were all given milk, an orange and a biscuit. The girls who wet their beds didn't receive anything.

#### *Religious instruction*

23. I don't think Fornethy was a religious place. I don't remember praying, going to a church or anything like that.

#### *Trips*

24. We used to go on walks for miles in the woods. I can't remember whether we were taken anywhere else but the walks were all outside of Fornethy's grounds. The staff used to frighten us by saying there was a witch. When you are wee you are terrified

by that sort of thing. I remember that after we returned from the walks we all had to wash the wellies we were wearing.

#### *Birthdays / Christmas*

25. I wasn't there when it was my birthday and don't remember any other children having a birthday whilst I was there. I don't think we were there at Christmas time.

#### *Visits / Inspections*

26. We had no contact with our parents whilst we were there. The only contact you had were the letters they made you write and the letters that you received. I remember there being other adults in the hall area where we were shown films on Fridays. I couldn't say whether they were staff or not but there seemed to be a lot. I don't remember there being any inspections.

#### *Healthcare*

27. I can't remember whether there was a nurse or doctor. It could be that I am imagining things but I seem to remember that we all got our heads checked for beasties and nits. I don't know who did that. I might be mixing that up with a time when that happened at school.

#### *Running away*

28. I remember planning to run away but I didn't do it. I remember looking out of the window and thinking that. In the end I think I was too scared to do it. We were too wee anyway. I don't remember any of the other girls running away.

#### *Bed-wetting*

29. The first time I started wetting the bed was when I was at Fornethy. I had never done that before going there. I wet the bed every single night that I was there because I

was scared. I remember in the mornings having to carry my wet covers down a massive great corridor then down the stairs to the laundry. It was a big distance for a child of the age I was. I had to do that every day. I hated how I felt when I was doing that. I probably would have been crying. I can't remember having to wash the sheets when I got to the laundry. After the first time I wet the bed I wasn't allowed to wear knickers. I just did as they said and didn't ask why that was.

30. I can't remember whether other girls received the same treatment as I did when it came to bed-wetting. I have heard in adult life through social media that I wasn't alone. There were loads of people saying that they experienced the same thing as me.

### **Abuse at Fornethy House**

31. Fornethy was a horrible place. I don't have a single good memory from my time there. I can't think of anything nice that I could say about it. All [REDACTED] and I did was cry when we were there because we were scared all of the time. I think all the girls did that. I remember hating it and it seeming to last forever.
32. It was really strict and was like hell. It wasn't like when your parents were strict with you. It was far worse than that. You were scared not to do what you were told. We were shouted at all the time by the staff. You had to do as you were told. You got told to shut up if you were crying. I wish I could name the staff members who were abusers at Fornethy but I can't.
33. If you did anything wrong the staff members would lift up your skirt or nightdress and whack you on your backside with the palm of their hands. That was the way they always physically punished you. That and shouting were the main ways in which they disciplined you. When they smacked you they only used their hands. It was onto my bare skin because I never wore knickers whilst I was there. I can't exactly remember how many times on each occasion the staff members would be slapping you but it would have been at least three times. I remember I would be balling my eyes out. I was hit loads of times in that way when I was there. It was mostly for wetting the bed.

It was as if I had a big sign above my head. They would call me things like a "dirty bitch", or something like that, whilst they were doing it. [REDACTED] got hit a lot more times than me.

34. I remember a family by the name of [REDACTED] arriving after we arrived. They were all excited when they arrived and one of them, [REDACTED], decided to jump up and down on one of the beds. Like us she thought it was a holiday. She got smacked on her backside by a staff member for doing that. She had only just got there and almost immediately she was battered by the staff.
35. There were monitors amongst the girls who wore bands. They were similar to prefects like you would get in school. They were all older girls. I don't think the monitors used to hit you but they did shout and ball at you. Looking back, I hated them more than the staff members. I remember that the monitors would come into the bedrooms in the mornings. If you were bad, had done something wrong or had wet your bed you were physically dragged out of your bed by the monitors and made to sit on a rug. I don't think there were any staff members around when the monitors did these things because I think the purpose of you being placed on the rug was to keep you in a place until the staff came. I was placed on that rug a few times. I can't remember how long we were made to sit on the rug before the staff members came in.
36. When the staff came into the room they saw the girls on the rug and hit them all on their backsides. There was one occasion when [REDACTED] and I decided to share a bed. Our parents only had a three bedroom house so we always shared a bed. However, you weren't allowed to do that at Fornethy. We fell asleep together. Because we were found by one of the monitors in the morning to be sharing the same bed we were both physically pulled out of our bed and made to sit on the rug. We were then both smacked on our backsides by the staff.
37. Although [REDACTED] was a wee skinny thing she was a tough child. I remember an occasion when we were playing on the roundabout with a girl called [REDACTED]. Whilst we were doing that [REDACTED] was cheeky to [REDACTED]. I can't remember what she said or what that was about. [REDACTED] ended up battering [REDACTED] as a result. She jammed her head

against the roundabout. The next thing we knew two staff members got hold of my sister and dragged her away. Two of them were holding her even though she was a wee puny skinny thing. She was screaming as she was getting taken away. I was being held onto by two other members of staff. I remember screaming things like "that's my wee sister, leave her alone." The staff dragged her into the house through two big doors.

38. I could hear [REDACTED] screaming whilst they were battering the hell out of her inside. Although I could hear [REDACTED] screaming I couldn't get to her. That was hard because I was always there for her. I didn't see what the staff did to [REDACTED] in the house because they shut the doors and I was being held by the two staff members the entire time. I was told later on by [REDACTED] what happened. She was hit by the staff members with something whilst she was bent over a gymnastics vaulting horse. I don't know what it was they used to hit her with or how they did that. I can't remember what happened after the incident. It could be that I have blocked all of that out.

#### **Reporting of abuse whilst at Fornethy House**

39. I never thought about reporting what was going on whilst I was at Fornethy. I was too scared and didn't know what was going on. I was only a kid and I was doing as I was told. There wasn't anyone there that I could have spoken to. Even if there had been I wouldn't have done that because I was too scared.

#### **Leaving Fornethy House**

40. I can't remember leaving Fornethy or the journey back. I remember getting off the bus and our mum going mad when she saw [REDACTED] because she could see that she had lost loads of weight. She was even skinnier than she was before. She had always been puny but there had never been any problems with her weight before Fornethy. Our mother later on took [REDACTED] to the doctors because of her weight and she was put on some sort of tonic thing.

## **Life after leaving Fornethy House**

41. Sometime after leaving Fornethy I attended Glenwood Secondary School. That school was quite far away from where we lived. I hated it there because I didn't fit in and was bullied. I was like a mouse. I was quiet but I was cheeky at the same time. There wasn't anything that was happening at the school. I think it was all more down to me. I left school when I was sixteen and got a job working in a machinery place for a couple of years. I had loads of jobs after that.
42. I lived in Castlemilk until I was twenty five. I was the second last one of my siblings to leave our mother's house. I got married and bought a house in Crofffoot to the southeast of Glasgow. I thought I was a toff doing that because I was one of the few people I knew who could buy a house. After getting married I had my son. I got divorced from my husband after two years because of domestic violence. He was a tiler who was brilliant at his job but unfortunately a drinker. My life was terrible with him. In total we were together for about five years.
43. After I separated from my husband for good I moved back to Castlemilk but unfortunately he wouldn't stay away. Because of that my son and I ended up moving down to Yorkshire. It was paradise when I moved down there. The house was beautiful and I loved it for years. When my son started school I went to college. I had already done some national certificates whilst I had been in Glasgow. I also volunteered for the domestic violence forum in Yorkshire. I loved doing that and was really good at what I did.
44. My ambition was to go to university so I could get a paid job working to help people suffering domestic violence so I continued studying towards that. I studied for about six years but felt I wasn't good enough to move on to university. I had great references and my teachers pushed me to go. I ended up getting a place on a course studying a BA honours degree in applied social studies and also a social work diploma at Bradford University. I absolutely loved the course. Sadly, about six months before I was due to finish the course I couldn't make it work financially and was forced to leave.

45. I always thought I would go back to finish the course but I then met my current partner and fell pregnant with my daughter. I had a stroke ten days after she was born. That was about nineteen years ago. There was nothing wrong with me at the time. I was skinny, fit and everything so it came out of the blue. The stroke was because of eclampsia which the hospital hadn't picked up on. I was in hospital for months being rehabilitated. My sister took time off from her work to look after my daughter. I ultimately got my daughter back when she was about four months old. It was difficult to begin with because when you have a brain injury you don't have a clue how to do some things. I couldn't work after I had my stroke which I hate.

### **Impact**

46. It's only in adult life that I have come to realise that there were things that happened because of my experiences at Fornethy. I never really thought about Fornethy until I saw it one time being reported on in a newspaper. It's weird how I've never thought it affected me but I now realise that it did. I couldn't believe it when I realised how much it had impacted on me.
47. I wet my bed until the age of eleven or twelve. That was something that I never did before I went to Fornethy. My mother just dealt with it. I used to scream and everything because I was scared. I had to sleep at night with my bedroom light on. I don't remember having to do that before going to Fornethy. My mother also had to leave the living room door open and turn the television up a bit so I could hear it. I remember my mother saying that she would give me half a crown if she could turn the light off. I just couldn't do it though. All that went on for years and years.
48. When I think of Fornethy I think of my sister. I think of her as this wee puny thing. Most of the time I can talk about my experiences at Fornethy and it just doesn't bother me. However, if I think back to the way my sister was treated it does. The one thing that kills me even to this day are those staff members battering my wee sister. It makes my blood boil to even think about that incident. It's the worst memory I have when I think back to my time at Fornethy.

49. After Fornethy my sister and I used to fight. I used to go after her for everything and sometimes she would respond. We hadn't been like that before we went. It was terrible really. However, even with that if anyone did anything towards my sister I would fight them. All my life I did that. I was obsessed with protecting her. In adult life things changed between my sister and I and she became the one who protected me. Since my stroke she's been my rock and is there for everything. If I need help with anything she's there and if she wants me to do anything I just do it. She's the only person in the world I 100% believe in everything they say. If it wasn't for her God knows where I would be.
50. The way I looked after children has been impacted by what I experienced at Fornethy. It's all things to do with making sure that they have all the things that comforted me after I returned from Fornethy. I became obsessed where children either wet themselves or soiled themselves in my care. During a time in Castlemilk I used to look after a wee girl who used to wet herself. I was obsessed with taking her knickers off and washing and drying them before she went back to her mother. I was the same way with my granddaughter when she soiled herself. Even though I knew her father wouldn't have a problem I was obsessed and made sure she was comfortable and clean before she was picked up. I am similarly obsessed when children want to sleep leaving their light on. I need to make sure that they can do that if they want to.

### **Treatment and support**

51. I have had loads of support in adult life but none of it has been to do with my experiences at Fornethy.

### **Reporting of abuse after leaving Fornethy House**

52. I didn't speak to anyone immediately after leaving. I can't remember whether I told my mother what had happened. I presume I would have told her. She must have been

aware something had been wrong because she noticed [REDACTED]'s weight loss. She would also have seen that I started wetting the bed after arriving back home.

53. I have never reported what happened at Fornethy to anyone later on in life. It was only after reading the newspaper articles on Fornethy that I came to realise the impact it had had on me and truly how bad it had been. Those articles made me realise that it really was terrible and what I experienced was abuse. I now know we were abused and that is partly why I came forward to speak to the Inquiry.

### **Records**

54. I haven't attempted to recover any records from my time at Fornethy. I'm not sure that I would be able to do that.

### **Lessons to be learned / Hopes for the Inquiry**

55. There shouldn't have been, and shouldn't be now, big homes like Fornethy. I hate the use of the word 'care' when describing the arrangement we were under at Fornethy. I've never looked upon our time in Fornethy as being in care. At the time we were there I viewed it as us being away on our holidays. Looking back it was probably more of a respite type of arrangement.
56. I didn't come forward to the Inquiry for myself. I came forward to help other people who went to Fornethy. Although I had my experiences I now know through reading about Fornethy elsewhere what other things happened. A lot of the people who went to Fornethy went on to have terrible lives because of what happened. Nobody should have had to go through what happened then lived with those things afterwards.
57. The people who worked at Fornethy are probably no longer here. However, the things that happened still need to be put out there for everybody to see. People like Mrs Fletcher, who I understand was made out after her death to be a hero, shouldn't be

remembered the way she is. Something needs to be done about it. There has to be justice for everybody who went there.

58. 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. PRH [Redacted Signature] .....

Dated. 5-8-22. ....