

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PRJ [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PRJ [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. I am 57 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I wish to tell you about the abuse that I suffered at the Red House Children's Home, Musselburgh. I was resident there between 1969 and 1971. I cannot be a hundred per cent accurate with the dates but estimate that these are correct.

Life before going into care

3. I was brought up in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED], Glasgow. I was part of a big family. My siblings were [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I remember our house was [REDACTED] from the local school.
4. We were a big family and, unfortunately, my mother was unable to cope as my father had left us. My mother was sending us to school but we were not going.
5. As a family we all moved to [REDACTED] in Glasgow. Again my poor mother was unable to cope on her own with the large family. Most of my brothers and sisters were put into some sort of care set-up. Some of them were fostered out

to other families. We were not attending school and so we were brought up before the children's panel.

6. I have a vague memory of being at the children's panel. I remember it was like a court set-up. After they had made the decision about us I remember my mother screaming and [REDACTED] and I being pulled by the arms and taken away.

7. [REDACTED] and me were taken to the Catherine Mary Home in Dunoon. I think that I was there for about six few months. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later I think this was in 1968 or [REDACTED] 1969. We were taken there by the social worker. [REDACTED] Secondary

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

8. My older brothers and sisters were put into different homes. [REDACTED] was in two different homes. [REDACTED] was also in care. [REDACTED] was fostered out to family members on my father's side. I am not sure about the others as I didn't see them for a number of years.

The Catherine Mary Home, Dunoon

9. I remember being taken on the boat to the home in Dunoon. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Secondary Instituti I would be aged about eight or nine and it was probably in 1969.

10. My mother didn't come to visit us while we were there. She was going through a lot in her own life . My youngest sister had died aged eighteen months and my mother wasn't coping very well with things. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

11. One day the staff came and told [REDACTED] and I to go and pack our stuff. I remember being really excited as I thought that we were going home. We were taken on the boat and then into a car. I remember the feeling of dismay when we passed Anderson in Glasgow and realised that we were not being taken home. We ended up going to the Red House in Musselburgh. We were never told in advance or consulted about where we were going.

The Red House, Musselburgh

12. The Red House Children's Home was for boys only and was situated behind the High Street in Musselburgh, East Lothian. It was a large house in its own grounds and was surrounded by a red brick wall. You were able to play in the grounds surrounding the house. There was also a shed that had goalposts painted on it. They also gave us bikes to use which we had never had before.
13. There were four dormitories and I think that the home would have about twenty boys at any one time. There was a communal dining room where we would eat. There were four members of staff. Mr FSK [REDACTED] was SNR [REDACTED] the home with his wife Mrs FSE [REDACTED]. I would say they were in their 60's. There were two assistants, Mr HEZ [REDACTED] who I would guess was about 40, and Mr HEX [REDACTED] who was 50. I think that Mrs FSE [REDACTED] did the cooking. They were the only staff we saw in two and a half years. There was no love handed out from the staff. We had to call them "Sir" and "Ma'am". I don't remember seeing other staff but they may have been there when we were at school.
14. I recall the first day being shown our beds where we were to sleep. We were then introduced to the other boys. The first week at the Red House was great. We were shown around and everything seemed to be fine. Then the violence started.

Routine at the Red House

Mornings and bedtime

15. Every morning we would be woken up at seven thirty. You would brush your teeth and then go down for breakfast. After breakfast you would be lined up and inspected. You had to be properly turned out for school. You had to have your shoes brushed and polished before school. All your clothes and towels were hung on the peg with your number on it. You were then given a sixpence and sent off to school. The sixpence you could use to spend in the local shop. After school we would go back to the home. I had friends that lived in Goose Green in Musselburgh and I used to play with them in the evening. I recall one boy who I was friendly with called [REDACTED] who lived in Musselburgh.
16. The boys under eight year old had to be in bed at eight, while the older boys got to stay up until nine o'clock. You were allowed to read your book in bed in the summertime when there was still light.
17. You were also required to do cleaning jobs in the home. You did dusting and sweeping up. You had to do some cleaning every day. It was more like a borstal than a care home.

Leisure and entertainment

18. There were a number of leisure activities at the home. You had a great place to play football. There were table tennis tables. All the boys would help to make a giant jigsaw of the world which we then mounted in a frame.. You were also able to use the bikes and I remember staying a weekend, when I could have been on home leave, to sit a bicycle exam with the police. I managed to get a certificate for passing my National Cycling Proficiency Test.. We were able to watch television in the dining room.

Food

19. The food was fine. You got a breakfast of cereal and toast. Dinner was at five when you got back from school. You also got something to eat before you went to bed. There were some things I didn't like but you were forced to eat them.

School

20. We attended the local school in Musselburgh. It was great to get out of the home and into the school where the bullying would stop. There was one occasion early on when we first went to the local school. The biggest boy tried to assert himself with us. I squared up to him and kicked him between the legs. His nose started bleeding. After that there were no issues and other pupils at the school were giving me Action men toys and money. I didn't like being cast in the role as a bully and I told the other pupils just to treat me normally, and that was that. School was really good as we couldn't read or write when we first arrived and now we were learning.

21. We also went to the local church on a Sunday. I remember you would get hit for talking in church so we used to communicate by singing our conversation when the hymns were being played. You would always be dressed in your best clothes. You would then go for a walk in the Grove which was a local park.

Holidays

22. We would be allowed to go home every few months. I think that we had about six or seven periods of home leave the whole time we were there. We would be put on a train in Edinburgh by a member of the staff and we should have been met in Glasgow. As often as not no one met us and we were left on our own at the train station. We were just young boys of nine or ten.
23. I can remember strangers taking us home in a taxi. We were now living in Cowcaddens but we didn't know how to get home. My brother met me a few times but we were just expected to make our own way home. I presume we knew what the address was as we usually managed to get home.

Birthdays and Christmas

24. We never celebrated our birthdays at the home. We were lucky if we got a card from our mother. Christmas was celebrated in the home and they had a tree and special food. I can remember watching the 1970 World Cup match between England and Brazil because I was football daft.

Discipline

25. I never saw any formal punishment like a school belt or anything like that. You were just hit round the head and that was it. The best way to avoid the informal beatings you received was to avoid the staff and keep out of their way.

Visits/Inspections

26. My granny came to visit me a few times to but I don't think that there were any other family members. My granny was my on my mother's side of the family.
27. In all the time I was in Red House which was about two and a half years I never remember any sort of official inspection by the authorities. I don't even remember a visit from our social worker.

Medical care

28. We had access to doctors and dentists. I remember getting a tooth taken out at the dentist and they used gas. I was at the hospital in Edinburgh on a few occasions because of my asthma.

Abuse at the Red House

29. The first time I was hit was when we were playing table tennis with one of the other boys. He hit the ball under the net and said "underies". I hit the ball back over the net and said "overies". The next thing I knew I got this tremendous hit on my ear and head. It was Mr HEZ [REDACTED] that hit me. I was ten years old. What did I know about the other meaning of the word "ovaries"? I had no idea why I had been hit as it was not explained to me.
30. There was a time when I was being taken to hospital by Mr HEZ [REDACTED] for treatment for my asthma. Mr HEZ [REDACTED] was driving me and he asked me if I would like a shot of driving. I got onto his lap and started to steer the car. While I was on his lap I could feel his penis becoming erect. I was wide enough to know what was happening and so I leapt off his lap and onto the passenger seat.
31. I started to cry. Mr HEZ [REDACTED] told me that if I said anything to anyone at the hospital about what had happened he would kill me. When I got back to the Red House I told Mr FSK [REDACTED] who was SNR [REDACTED]. He told me that I was telling lies and never to say anything like that again. He then told me I was dismissed and to go away.
32. One of the most harrowing things for me was to have to lie in bed and listen to what was happening to [REDACTED] every morning. [REDACTED] was a bed wetter. Every morning about six thirty Mr HEX [REDACTED] would come to his bed and ask him if he was wet. [REDACTED] always said "No, Sir". But when Mr HEX [REDACTED] put his hand to check he would be wet and [REDACTED] would burst into tears. Mr HEX [REDACTED] used to hit him for being wet. He would be pulled out of bed screaming and taken downstairs where he had to wash all his bed clothes. He also had to hang them out in all weathers. He was always very upset and crying. I was in the next bed to [REDACTED] and so after about two weeks of this I got up and told Mr HEX [REDACTED] to "Fuck off" and leave [REDACTED] alone. Nothing changed and I got moved to a different dormitory. I felt helpless as there was nothing I could do. [REDACTED] got assaulted every day for two years.

33. Mr FSK used to have a wooden baton which he kept up his sleeve. He called it "Aunty Bessie". He would use the baton to hit you for any reason he saw fit. He hit me one day on my elbow so hard that it caused it to swell up. My elbow was put in a bandage and I was kept off school. When I returned to school three days later the teacher asked me how my asthma was. I said it was fine and then it dawned on me that Mr FSK had told them that I was off school because of my asthma and not through my injured elbow.
34. There was a day I was being forced to eat rhubarb and custard which I did not like. It was making me feel sick and I couldn't swallow it. Mr FSK told me that he would give me half an hour to finish it, or I would be punished and sent to bed. I opened the window and tipped my plate into the flower bed below. He came back and I was allowed to go. I was outside playing when I heard Mr FSK shout "PRJ". He took me over to the rose bed and showed me where I had emptied my plate. He then grabbed me and thrust my face into where the rhubarb and custard had come to rest amongst the roses. I was then sent straight to bed.
35. I was walking to school and eating a pie. The pie wasn't good so I threw it over my shoulder without looking where it was going. It hit a girl and I apologised to her. I got back to the home and Mr HEX told me that he wanted to see me. The girl I had hit with the pie was Mr HEX's daughter. I tried to apologise to him, but he just set about me hitting me with his hand and fist on the head, knees and bottom. I was again sent to bed after getting a doing.
36. One day I accidentally bumped into Mrs FSE at the medicine cabinet. It caused her to spill some medicine. She then pulled down my trousers and pants and hit me on the bare bottom. She had another trick where she would make a fist and then grind her knuckles into the top of your head. She would regularly do this to you for any reason she saw fit.
37. You were issued with a pair of trousers for school and a pair for church on a Sunday. My school trousers were too baggy and I was the butt of a lot of

teasing. I decided to change the school pair for the church pair as they were a better fit. Mrs FSE found out and ground her knuckles into the top of my head. I was also sent to bed with no tea. If you were punished by being sent to bed you missed out on a meal.

38. While I was off school with an injured elbow I was ordered by Mr HEX to clear the snow off the path. I did most of it but I missed a very small area of about a foot square. Mr HEX set about hitting me on the head, in the area of my ears. It was, as always, very painful.
39. I remember Mr HEX hitting me for no reason when he thought I was swearing. All the boys had an expression when someone was annoying them and they called them a "bugatizer". Mr HEX thought I was saying "bugger" and hit me again when I tried to explain this to him. He just wasn't listening.
40. You were being hit most days for very little reason. There was just violence all the time and it became part of everyday life. The only time you escaped from it was when you were at school during the day.
41. Mr HEX and Mr HEZ would give you a pair of boxing gloves and tell you to fight one another. You were not supposed to punch anyone in the face. They matched my brother and I against each other. Of course we didn't want to fight each other. Mr HEX and Mr HEZ though that this was funny. All I can remember was punching me in the face and making my nose bleed. This seemed to amuse the staff. It was pure bullying.
42. I remember witnessing one of the other boys, , being hit by Mr HEX. There was an apple tree which grew over the wall from the neighbour's. You were supposed to hand the apples in but ate one and was caught. He was beaten about the head by Mr HEX, but he just kept looking at him and refused to cry. He was only about seven years old. I think that this made Mr HEX more angry.

43. There was another boy at the home called [REDACTED]. He should not have been at the home as he was seventeen years of age and too old. I spoke to him and he told me that they had nowhere else to put him. He was sexually assaulting all the younger boys at the school. [REDACTED] used to sit in the garden shed playing with himself. I think that is how he got his nickname. If the football was kicked into the shed no one would go in to get it because you would be sexually assaulted by [REDACTED]. I think that his real name was [REDACTED]. Everyone at the home kept out of his way.
44. There were a set of twins called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were older boys of about fifteen. They were bathing all the wee boys of age six and seven, and that should not have been allowed. They were big lads who were very effeminate. They took great delight in bathing the younger boys. I suspect that they were homosexual. I sussed what was going on and kept out their way.

Reporting of abuse at the Red House

45. We were never able to tell the teachers at the school what was happening to you at the Red House. No one would believe you. How could you tell an adult that another adult was doing wrong to you.
46. I did try and tell my mother on one occasion when I was home on leave. She told me not to talk about it and just to accept what was going on. This had the effect of me distrusting all people. I found forming friendships very hard.
47. When [REDACTED] told me what had happened to him when he was raped, I went to the police to report it. I found that telling the police about it started to relieve the pressure. The police told me about the Inquiry so I contacted you to give my statement. The policeman I reported it to was at Midlothian Police but he was moved. So I spoke to a Constable Kerry Burns who also works at Dalkeith Police Station. She was going to follow it up but I have not had any further contact.

Leaving the Red House

48. The first I knew that we were leaving the Red House Children's Home was when we were home on weekend leave. My mother got a phone call from the home to tell us that we didn't need to go back on Monday morning. Two men arrived at the house with some paperwork and most of our belongings. My mother signed the paperwork and that was us finished with the Red House, thank God.
49. I remember that after we left we never got back all the small personal things that we had collected during our stay there. I don't know where they went. I also remember that my mother was given a bank book for each of us with about seven pounds in it.
50. I later found out that when we were in the Catherine Mary Home in Dunoon my mother had been told to get her house sorted out and she would have us back within six months. Unfortunately she didn't manage to do this hence the reason we were kept in care and went on to the Red House.

Life after the Red House

51. I was twelve years old when I left the Red House Children's Home. I went to school at Georges Cross School in Glasgow. I was not aware of any social work involvement but there might have been. I didn't attend any meetings. I was experiencing freedom, and then the lassies came on the scene and I was busy with them.
52. I got married in 1984 to my wife [REDACTED] and now have three children. My oldest boy was eight and was at my wedding. I was engaged for thirteen years

before I got married. She is the only woman I have ever been with and I met her when my family moved to Drumchapel. My children are [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

Impact

53. At first, and for a long time after, I closed the door on what had happened to me at the Red House. I never spoke about it. I didn't want to speak about it. I think that I told my wife about it once. It was a case of "I am out now and free so forget about it".
54. It took my brother [REDACTED] 40 odd years before he could tell me that he had been raped by one of the boys who was in the home. He only told me about a year ago. I would definitely have done something at the time as I felt protective towards [REDACTED]. It is one of the things that bothers me. It happened and I did not know about it. When [REDACTED] told me I immediately said he should report it to the police. It also started to bring back memories of what had happened and I was getting flashbacks of my time there. I could hear my brother [REDACTED] screaming when he was being pulled out of his bed.
55. I have also been in touch with Sandra Toyer from ICSSF who is helping with organising counselling and trying to obtain the records of my time in care at the Red House.
56. I have an appointment to see a psychologist called Amanda Locke which is being arranged through my doctor. About a month ago I attempted suicide [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I kept thinking of all the things that had happened to me and I just couldn't cope.
57. I have been unable to sleep and have been prescribed sleeping tablets which help with this. I have been diagnosed with anxiety, stress and trauma. I take anxiety attacks and have had a few recently. I have always been a loner and find it hard to trust people and form friendships.

58. After what happened to me I found myself taking my children to school every day to make sure that they went and couldn't be put into care. I tried to tell them that it would ruin their lives if they dogged school.

Records

59. I intend to try and recover my records from my time in care at the Red House. I think that it is a group called Future Pathways who will help me with this. I also have an appointment with Jenifer Bragg at George Square to help me. It is quite tricky to remember all the names of the people that are now helping me.

Lessons to be learned

60. You need to look out for children. They shouldn't be bathed by other boys. Older boys should be moved out of care and shouldn't be exposed to younger boys. Why are you sent to an establishment which is no better than a prison for doing nothing more than missing school?

Other information

61. My father died in 1993 and I attended the funeral. I remember a boy and a girl being pointed out to me at the funeral. I thought that that they were my father's brother and sister but it turned out that they were his children to another woman. My father was a bigamist and this was the first time that we learned about it. It was very disturbing as he should have been guiding us through life.
62. I think on reflection that the Red House was a money making scheme. The owners of the house were raking in the money as the place was always full up.

The whole thing was corrupt and a very violent place where the staff neglected to show any love or care.

63. 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..... PRJ 

Dated..... 25/7/2017