

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGG [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is PGG [REDACTED]. My date of birth is known to the inquiry. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Glasgow in the Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital, which was known as the Rottenrow. My mother was called [REDACTED] and her maiden name was [REDACTED]. My father was called [REDACTED]. I had three brothers and a sister. My sister, [REDACTED], was the eldest and she was eleven years older than me. My brother [REDACTED] was five years older than me. My brother, [REDACTED], was two years older than me and my brother, [REDACTED], was three years younger than me.
3. We lived in Dennistoun in a tenement flat. My father was self-employed and he did all sorts of things. My mother looked after us. I attended primary school in Dennistoun which was [REDACTED] from where we lived. I liked school. I enjoyed Art and Greek mythology and English literature. I remember playing with balls against the wall and playing peever.
4. My mother was a lapsed Catholic and my father had been sent to St Joseph's in Tranent where he was abused by monks and he was a communist so he hated Catholicism and called it the opium of the masses. [REDACTED] attended a Catholic primary school but then my father decided we weren't going to be brought up as Catholics so that was the end of that. No more Catholicism.

5. There was violence in the home. My mother left home when I was seven or eight because my father told her he was going to kill her. He had been beating her up and she had been hospitalised. I think he was sectioned because he was a bit of a psycho. My mother went to stay with my grandmother on her couch because there were no refuges in the seventies for women with children.
6. I have vague memories of my mother coming to see me when I was asleep in bed but I didn't realise she had come into the room until she had left. She left a wee present for me. [REDACTED] was staying somewhere with her boyfriend so she didn't live at home. It was a very difficult time because my father drank heavily and he got very aggressive and angry when he drank. He would drag us out of bed in the wee small hours to listen to him ranting and raving. He would slap us about if we cried or complained. He was quite vicious but my brothers got the worst of it.
7. My mother eventually got a single end in Dennistoun. Her flat was one room with an outside toilet. [REDACTED] and I stayed with her at the weekends. She was a Valium addict when she was living at home. She was one of the seventies housewives that were medicated to keep quiet about domestic abuse and then she became an alcoholic when she got her own flat. A lot of the time we saw her she was drunk. The topic of sex was taboo at home. My mother was very prudish so I could never tell her anything that happened.
8. It was quite a lonely, isolated childhood, living in fear of my father. There was no social work involvement and he got no support for his mental health. He hated psychiatrists because he had been sectioned.
9. My life was split into two parts, from birth to my mother leaving and me going to Fornethy, and then the aftermath. I think there was a connection between my mother leaving and me going to Fornethy and I think I was eight when I went. I was pulling my hair out in primary school and they took me to a doctor so I don't know if it was something to do with that plus my father being a single parent. I don't know the

something to do with that plus my father being a single parent. I don't know the process of being identified as a child that should go to Fornethy. I was told I was going on a nice holiday in the country and that I was going for a few weeks.

Fornethy House, Kilry, Angus

10. Fornethy was all girls. If there were girls younger than me they weren't much younger. I don't remember seeing the older girls very much so I'm not sure if they came at a different time. I think there was an older girl that told me to stop crying when I was in bed because she said I would get into trouble. There was a girl who was very funny, like the class clown. I think now this was a diversionary tactic to deflect anger because I remember the teachers laughing with her.
11. Fornethy had lots of rooms and corridors. It was in the countryside and that was the only thing about it that I loved. The smells were incredible with the pine trees round about it. It was beautiful and I have never seen anything like it. I loved seeing all the rabbits running around the fields and the sheep.
12. The whole thing was a lie because they told us we were going on holiday. Every day was very much a routine. It was like you were being punished. I think I was there for six weeks.

Routine at Fornethy House

First day

13. I went on my own. I was excited about going and it was a nice sunny day although I'm not sure what time of year it was. I got a coach somewhere in Glasgow city centre. I think the coach was pretty full. I didn't know any of the other children who were going. When we arrived I was overawed because Fornethy was huge and really grand looking. It was like a big mansion. I couldn't believe how big it was.

14. I was taken upstairs to a dorm which was called Reekie Linn. It was a big, bright room with six to eight beds. There were other dorms on the same level as mine. I think one of the other dorms was called Ailsa. There was a locker or wardrobe beside each bed. My bed was near the door on the left hand side. I shared with four or six other girls who were roughly the same age as me. My next memory is being in the dorm and two women going through my bags, taking stuff out and separating it. There was some money in it and they said 'That won't get you very far.' They took the money from me. I think the women that went through my bags were domestic staff and they wore blue overalls. They were cold and dismissive towards me and I felt that they didn't like me.

15. My next memory is being taken for a bath. I remember being in the bathroom with lots of other little girls and being told to take off all my clothes. Then we were lined up and scrubbed using hot water and brushes. There was one other girl in the bath with me. I'm not sure if it was the same women who did this. Having to stand there naked was horrendous. I was never naked in front of anybody, even my family. This ended after a certain age and these were strangers. I tried to hide behind one of the other girls but I was shouted at and yanked out.

16. There was a man there standing watching us. I think he made a joke about us being the new arrivals. I think he was quite tall and maybe in his thirties. I felt utter shame. I felt embarrassed and totally humiliated, ashamed and dirty. It was appalling to be naked in front of strangers. There was a feeling of shame from the other girls because we were all in the same boat and we were all frightened. They scrubbed us with a really strong soap, maybe carbolic, and wooden brushes. We were then sent to get dressed and that's when we got a pinny which was floral.

17. We were taken to the dining room and we were all standing around a big table beside a chair. I think we were told where to sit. I sat down and I was yanked by the arm out of the chair really hard and shouted at because you had to wait before you sat down. Then we had to say Grace, which was a religious one. Some of the

teachers and the headmistress, Mrs Fletcher, were in the dining room when we ate. They ate at the same time as us but they had their own table.

18. On the first day in the dining hall it was Mrs Robertson, who was one of the teachers, and another woman with reddish, blond hair. Mrs Robertson was thick set with dark thick hair and a mean mouth. There was a boiled egg which I was supposed to eat and I didn't want to eat it so I put it underneath the table. When we all stood up to leave it was found and another little girl was made to eat it by one of the teachers because it was beside her chair. I was too frightened to say anything.
19. I have a feeling my hair was cut at some point.

Mornings and bedtime

20. In the morning the lights went on and we had to get up.
21. We had to put our underpants at the bottom of the bed when we were getting ready for bed. We had fifteen minutes where we could read or something and then the lights went out. I remember reading Bunty in bed at night. Nobody was allowed to talk or get out of bed. If you were caught going to the bathroom you were made to stand outside the dorm.

Mealtimes / Food

22. There were staff who served the food. There were several tables and there might have been a table for every dorm. Everyone ate at the same time. We had dinner and then later on a biscuit and a cup of milk. There was nothing in between meal times and we didn't have access to food or drinks so I remember being quite thirsty. I don't think breakfast was very early and I remember getting eggs and porridge. They took us for a lot of walks but I don't know if these were after breakfast or after lunch. We said Grace before every meal.

Washing / bathing

23. The toilet was across from the dorm and there was a room where the bath was. There were showers near the back door and it reminded me of a locker room in a film. There was a rail with boxes underneath it to put wellies in. I remember going for showers but I don't remember at what time that happened. The shower was communal and when we were in the showers we weren't allowed to hide ourselves or turn our backs. A teacher was there when we showered and I remember my hand being slapped away when I tried to hide myself. I think it was Mrs Robertson who did this but I can't say for certain. There was a girl who had pubic hair and all the other wee girls were looking at her. I had never seen this and it was disgusting. She was humiliated and she was hanging her head.
24. The man was there on a couple more occasions at bath time. The bathroom was on the ground floor and there was a window which I remember being open. We were standing there naked and he was outside leaning in talking to the women but staring at us.

Clothing / uniform

25. They gave us a floral pinny to wear which had a number on it.

School

26. We had classes but I don't know if the all-female staff were actual teachers. They were held in the main building. There was also an annex and I remember looking in and seeing lots of arts materials but I don't remember actually being in it. I remember writing and drawing and one of the teachers asking us if we knew what suicide was. None of the others girls knew but I knew so I answered.
27. I think we moved classrooms and I distinctly remember at least two different teachers. It didn't feel like I was learning anything or like it was a structured lesson. The teacher would talk and then we would have to write a little bit and that was it. I

was afraid of making a mistake and then something would happen. There was an atmosphere of tension and fear amongst the girls. I think we finished in the classroom around 4pm and shortly after that was dinner.

Leisure Time

28. We went for a walk every day. I remember being hot when they took us on walks but that could just have been because they took us on long walks. I always remember being thirsty on them. We wore wellies all the time when we were outside and we walked even when it was raining. The wellies would cut into our bare legs. They took us to a reservoir, through the fields, which might have been called Blackwater. I remember looking at the reservoir and being really thirsty but we couldn't get anything to drink.
29. We cut through the fields on walks. One had a bull in it which came towards us and we were all screaming. A girl threw a stone at what she thought was a ball in a tree but it was a wasps' nest and the wasps went crazy. So many of us were stung. I ran towards a gate and was climbing over it and was stung in the back of each calf. The staff came outside from the home when we got back and dabbed vinegar on our stings.
30. We saw films sometimes at night in a big room downstairs and a teacher stayed in the room with us. This was maybe one night a week. There was a film called Mandy about a wee girl who was deaf and it was sad. There were singing sessions.
31. We were allowed to go into the playground which had swings, a seesaw and a roundabout. I think it was lunchtime when we were allowed to play in the playground. It was very time limited and there was a teacher present.
32. One of the teachers had guinea pigs and one of the girls had to clean their cages out. I think one of the older girls did this. The older girls were in their early teens. I think we were taken to a church but I don't remember being inside it. Just before I went home they took me swimming.

Family contact

33. We had to write home regularly, maybe once a week. The teachers wrote everything on the board and we had to copy it down word for word. The teacher would read it over to make sure you hadn't put anything else in it. A girl once wrote something else in her letter and she was taken out of the class but I don't know what happened to her.

Visits / Inspections

34. I think a man and a woman inspected once and only a select number of girls, including me, were allowed to be present when they were there. I think they came into the classroom and asked some questions but our answers were very short although I don't recall being told not to say anything. If somebody had been coming out to inspect Fornethy we would all have been polished up nice and shiny to say what a great place it was.

Healthcare

35. I was sick once and they let me stay in bed.

Bed Wetting

36. I don't recall being a bed wetter before I went to Fornethy. I got up during the night to go to the toilet. I think it was fear and anxiety that made me want to go to the toilet during the night. I was inside the toilet and a teacher came in and caught me. I think I was slapped across the legs because I remember something violent happening but I don't remember what exactly. Then I was made to stand outside the dorm. This happened not long after I went to Fornethy.
37. After that I couldn't get up to go to the toilet so I wet the bed. There were rubber sheets on the bed and I remember lying on them when they were cold and wet and

knowing I was going to get into trouble for it. The girls who wet the bed were shamed. Some girls were made to sit on the floor and I remember doing that too.

38. They inspected the beds when they came round in the morning. I remember being yanked out of bed by the arm. I was grabbed by the hair, pulled about and whoever it was was very angry. We were made to take the sheets off the bed and take them somewhere to be washed. They bunched up my pants and stuffed them in my mouth on one occasion after I wet the bed.
39. There was another time during the night someone checked the bed and pulled me out because I had wet it. They took their slipper off and hit me across the legs with it and they were really angry. They also yanked my hair and made me sit on the floor.
40. I wet the bed quite a few times and then they started withholding fluid from me. They would give me half the amount to drink that the other girls got so I would be thirsty and then I got caught going to the toilet to drink water from the tap so I was made to stand outside the dorm again. Being punished for wetting the bed just compounded the feelings of shame I had already. I was already feeling dirty and then they crucified me in front of the other girls. I can't remember specifically what the staff said but it was along the lines of that it was disgusting and that you were dirty.

Abuse at Fornethy House

41. There was a lot of food I didn't like to eat like really fatty meat but you couldn't leave anything. If you didn't eat it you were forced to eat it. The meat was stuffed into my mouth and a hand clamped over my nose and mouth until I swallowed it. This happened not long after I had arrived. After a few occasions of that it was clear that everything had to be eaten. You weren't allowed to leave the table unless it was eaten. I have vague recollections of another girl being force fed porridge. I think I was forced to swallow food at least twice. I remember somebody being sick.

42. There was a tuck shop. Somebody sat inside with a big book and we had to line up. You went in and asked for something and they would do something in the book. You had to line up even if you didn't have any money so that was mortifying because whoever it was would be nasty about it. I remember being told to write home to ask for more money.
43. I remember being in bed at night, being frightened and wanting to go home. I was crying and I got taken out of bed. I was made to stand outside the dorm. I think it was Mrs Robertson but I am not one hundred percent sure. She was angry. I think she was hovering outside which she tended to do. There were a few of us crying. I think I was made to stand outside the dorm for about an hour then she came and told me to go back to bed. The other girls who were crying quietened down when they saw that I was taken out to the hall and made to stand.
44. I was assaulted by Mrs Robertson when we went out for a walk. This happened when we were on our way somewhere. The girls were really afraid of Mrs Robertson. There were two teachers and the headmistress that we were really afraid of. It had been raining and there were lots of puddles. We were made to walk in silence and I turned round to say something to the girl behind me so I was walking backwards. I stood in a puddle which splashed and Mrs Robertson saw it.
45. She always wore wooden shoes, either clogs or Scholl's. She took them off and hit me really hard repeatedly across the back of my legs with them. I knew she wanted me to cry so I wouldn't. She said that she would make me cry so she thrashed me even harder until I did. I was shocked by another adult who was meant to be a teacher slapping me. My legs were really sore afterwards but I didn't have any medical treatment.
46. I remember once being taken out of bed during the night and being taken downstairs but I don't know why.

47. I have images of adults lashing out at girls and being really angry. We were only allowed to talk when we were in the playground or the fifteen minutes in bed. We weren't allowed to talk to other staff like dining room staff.
48. We were out one day and the girls had to pee behind a bush and Mrs Robertson was joking and called me Fat Arse PGG. There were wee digs like that about how you looked.

Leaving Fornethy House

49. The week before I went home they were nicer to me and they weren't as strict as they had been previously. There was less shouting and there was less drama if I did something wrong which was usually treated as outrageous.
50. When we were leaving it was just a case of the coach is coming and you are going home now. The coach took me back to Glasgow city centre and we were singing on the coach going back. I had conflicted emotions about leaving because it was very different to my home life and I was becoming a little bit institutionalised. I wasn't looking forward to going home to my father who was drinking and violent and aggressive. I liked structure. There is a lot of autism in my family and I was told I was on the spectrum so maybe that fitted in with me liking the structure.
51. I felt comfortable knowing how the day was going to be and knowing what was going to happen but I felt relieved to be leaving at the same time. I felt I was going away from feeling bad and dirty but I carried it with me, I didn't leave it behind. My sister's boyfriend picked me up from the coach in Glasgow and took me home.

Life after being in care

52. Fornethy was pretty brutal and you were in a constant atmosphere of fear. I didn't trust that not to happen again when I came back. The bedwetting stopped when I got

home but it was hard being in the family home and being around all men. My brothers and I were all damaged because of my father. It was a dysfunctional family home and I didn't have any friends. Because I was a solitary child I was out on my own a lot and I was a target of a lot of men who would expose themselves to me and try to get me into their cars. I couldn't tell anybody because I felt I was dirty already so I felt it was my fault.

53. I had to hide everything in the home that was female like my underwear and tights because I didn't want my father and brothers seeing them. These were things that marked me out as being female. I felt exposed when I wore skirts. I kept my brothers at a distance although I had to take my younger brother out a lot which was fine because he was just a wee boy.
54. I was sexually assaulted by a close family member and I couldn't tell anybody. This started when I was about nine. I spoke to a counsellor that was organised through my doctor but she shrugged it off as one of these things that happens and at the time I accepted what she said but it was wrong and she shouldn't have said that because it really deeply affected me. I was already carrying all the baggage of shame and dirtiness and I couldn't speak to anybody.
55. My relationship with my father never changed because he was always somebody to be afraid of. He continued to drink and it was more mental torture to me but to my brothers it was physical assaults.
56. I went back to the same primary school and then to secondary school. I liked being at school because it got me out of the home. It was structured and I had a friend. I did really well in English. I think that was my escape. I was very quiet in school and had questions in mind but I wasn't in a place where I could ask. In Fornethy they didn't like you asking questions, you had to accept what you were being told so if I struggled at school because I wouldn't ask the teacher how to do things. I wouldn't put myself in the position of being humiliated.

57. The flat was subject to a compulsory purchase order so we moved when I was about fifteen and I left home when I was twenty. The situation with my father continued until then.
58. At one point I wrote down all the incidents involving men that I could remember and there were about sixteen or seventeen. This happened because I was out on my own and there are so many predators out there. I have never had children and I don't know how I would have coped if I had children with the knowledge that I have of the things that happened when I was a little girl. The worst thing was I couldn't talk to anybody because it was my fault.
59. When I left home I moved into a flat with somebody I was sort of in a relationship with. I got a job shortly afterwards but I didn't have any confidence. It had been mentally beaten out of me by my father and my home environment. The fact that I was brought up in poverty and with the experiences I had and the feeling of shame that I carry to this day. I wasn't sure if this was something potentially linked to autism because I can be in a room with people and suddenly I need to get up and leave. I feel as if I have a big raw wound. It is a feeling of complete and utter exposure so I have to go and hide. I have done that all my life in different circumstances, at work, around people, with family even.
60. I have had numerous jobs. I started off at a Youth Training Programme as a hire driver receptionist and that was crap and exploitation. Then I got into the hotel and catering industry as a trainee receptionist. Then I worked as an assistant manager in a hostel for people who worked in the hotel and catering industry.
61. I joined the police when I was 29 which was a major mistake. It was a horrible environment to be in because it was really misogynistic and sexist. I worked there for two and a half years. I was made a pariah because I didn't want to go to court and lie and you have to. I was blamed for things that were nothing to do with me. They were ugly people. I had a breakdown when I left and I was put on anti-depressants.

62. After a period of time I started working in a hostel in [REDACTED] Street and I was volunteering at a soup kitchen in [REDACTED]. Then I started working with homeless people. I enjoyed this to an extent but then I started to get burnt out because so many people were damaged like myself. Some of them had drug and alcohol issues and they died which was really hard to take. I knew it wasn't healthy for me emotionally. I moved abroad to be with my partner. I was 39 then.
63. I was there for eight years and then that fell apart so I returned to Scotland. It ended badly and when I returned to Glasgow I phoned up the doctor because I knew I was going to hurt myself quite badly and I had to try to do something to stop it. He suggested I go into the Parkhead Psychiatric Hospital and I agreed. I was in for two or three months in 2013 or 2014. It was an awful place.
64. When I came back from abroad I saw a few psychiatrists because when you are discharged from a mental hospital on medication you have to have a psychiatrist. I have been on medication since then. I have had difficulties with my mental health for a large part of my adult life. The medication stops the really bad feelings that I get. The psychiatrist I was seeing did some Cognitive Behavioural Therapy last year. It helped at the time but not long term.

Impact

65. Before I went to Fornethy I didn't feel distinct to my brothers in the home environment but when I came back I was acutely aware that I was female and I felt ashamed of that and of my body. I had a feeling of dirtiness which I have had ever since then. No matter how much I scrub myself I never feel clean. I never feel I can wash it away. It is something I have struggled with for an awful long time.
66. We felt like a unit before I went to Fornethy and when I came back I wasn't part of that unit. I was the dirty one in a clean environment and I didn't like anything about my female body. I didn't like it being different from my brothers because to be female was to be dirty and shameful.

my female body. I didn't like it being different from my brothers because to be female was to be dirty and shameful.

67. I didn't want to think about Fornethy because I was really struggling with my identity. I was very sexually aware from that age onwards. I don't have any recollection of anything sexual happening to me in Fornethy but when I came back I was masturbating compulsively. I did it in the classroom underneath the desk and I was doing it in front of my family. I remember my father telling me to stop but I didn't think I was doing anything wrong. My father made it clear it was unacceptable behaviour so I stopped doing it publicly.
68. It was only in the last few years looking back that I realise it wasn't right at that age to be doing that. I had never done this before I went to Fornethy so I think it is linked to my time there in some way.
69. My mental health was definitely impacted by my time in Fornethy. I was always ashamed of my body being female and felt dirty. I have never been able to have an intimate relationship with a partner unless I was drunk or the lights were out. You can't build relationships on alcohol. It doesn't work. It has affected my ability to relate to other people or to be around other people. I have struggled with that because of these feelings.
70. I still get it now and it stops me from doing things with people and being around people. I just want the ground to open up and swallow me. When I was younger I found it difficult to trust people but I trust my friend and my brother, [REDACTED] now. When I came back from Fornethy I couldn't trust adults because adults were still doing bad things to me as well and they weren't to be trusted.
71. All I have ever asked is that the doctors take my nightmares away and no one has been able to do it. I have the same recurring dreams. I am being referred for something to do with PTSD but I don't know if the recurring dreams are an indication of that. They are constant, every other day. I am on a waiting list for psychotherapy.

72. I have a dog who is a Greek shepherd. She is a rescue dog from Greece. She has made a huge difference to my life because I wasn't leaving the house before I got her. She has forced me to go out and she goes everywhere with me.

Reporting of Abuse

73. I couldn't tell my father what had happened at Fornethy because he would have got angry if I had voiced any unhappiness. If one of my brothers fell and cut themselves they would get a clip around the ear. We had to be grateful for everything and it would have rebounded on me.
74. I reported to the police around Christmas 2020. There is a [REDACTED] page for the [REDACTED] Fornethy and the woman that organised it was asking women to come forward if they had been to Fornethy and go to the police. I would like to thank the woman, [REDACTED], who kicked it all off.
75. The police officers came to my house. It was two young men. I thought it would be really difficult talking to them because I don't like the police and I don't trust them having worked as one. The one I spoke to was really professional and he didn't seem judgemental at all. I didn't tell them about the sexual stuff that happened when I returned home.
76. I gave a statement to Thompsons Solicitors around about the same time. They are representing all the woman who went to Fornethy.
77. I am staying away from the [REDACTED] group because some of the women get drunk and emotional and it is obvious they are really struggling. There is a lot of anger.

Records

78. I am now trying to recover my records because the lawyer has asked me to. I would like to know as much as possible and why I was sent to that place. Originally Fornethy was supposed to be a place for sick girls to convalesce. I want to know

about it and I want to know about the staff, who they were and what qualified them to do what they did. It was classed as a residential school but it didn't feel like a school to me. The staff didn't feel like they were qualified to be teachers.

Lessons to be Learned

- 79. There are very different circumstances for children in care today. I couldn't talk to anyone when I came back because I was mentally quite damaged. If there was someone I could have trusted who was able to make me feel I was trusted and listened to I could have maybe told them.
- 80. Fornethy seemed to function independently of any caring authority.
- 81. If there had been an evaluation at the end of the stay with the girls there maybe all those little voices could have made one big voice. Maybe if we had been facilitated by somebody who had the skills to get children to trust them it might have opened up a whole can of worms and perhaps the abuse would have stopped.
- 82. I hope all the women have a voice because it is all those little girls having a voice at long last. I hope all the women are heard. I hope they tell everything that happened to them and that they are listened to and I hope if the people who did that are still alive that they are held accountable. I hope they are exposed the way I still feel exposed as an adult. I hope they carry the shame and humiliation they dumped on me as a child with them to the end of their days. I just keep thinking of all those wee girls but it's not going to be swept under the carpet any more.
- 83. 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.....
28/6/21