

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PNA

Support person present: Yes

1. My name at birth was PNA. My date of birth is 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life at home

2. I was born in in Springburn on my mother's birthday. My mother and father were and . There were seven of us. I am the youngest. My siblings are , , , , , and me. There's about two years between us all. My oldest brother, , was twelve years older than me. My brother and sisters, and are the only ones still alive.
3. I had a normal, happy childhood. I was probably a bit spoiled because I was the youngest. My father worked for a tiling company and my mother worked in the schools and then the railway. I had good friends and a close family. My mother and father both lost their mothers shortly after I was born so I didn't have grandparents around.
4. We had three rooms in the house. My brothers shared a room and my sisters and I shared another room. We always had fights but we had a very happy childhood. There were no issues or any involvement with social work.

5. I moved to [REDACTED] when I was about five. I think I had been at school for about a year before we moved there. I didn't have any problems at school. I enjoyed it.
6. When we moved to [REDACTED], there was a family called the [REDACTED] in our close. They went to Fornethy House every year. They used to talk about it and tell my sisters and me stories about all the fun things they did there. The [REDACTED] family told us that there were pillow fights at night. They told us that we should go too. It sounded like it was going to be great place.
7. My older sister, [REDACTED], asked my mother if we could go, but my mother kept saying that we wouldn't like it. After a while, my mother agreed to let us go. It was a choice for us to go. I think we had to get a form from the school which had to be completed and sent away. I thought it was going to be an adventure.

#### **Fornethy House Residential School, Angus**

8. I went to Fornethy with my sister, [REDACTED]. My other sister, [REDACTED], went to another place in Rothesay. I can't remember the name of it. I think it was 1973 because the song 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree' was played while we were there. I had always thought that I was seven but I could have been eight. It was either 1972 or 1973. I thought I was going to have fun. The others had said it was great fun.
9. We got on a coach in Royston which was about ten minutes away from our house. My sister [REDACTED] and I had a suitcase each with our own clothes. The bus was full of kids going to Fornethy. I can remember feeling so excited to be going to this place. Everyone was really excited on the bus. I'm not sure but I don't think anyone on the bus had been there before.

*First impressions*

10. When the bus arrived at Fornethy, I could see a big, white building that looked like a castle. I can't remember who met me but I can remember going through a door. When we got into the building, I realised how regimented it was, for example, the teachers were telling us where to stand and put us into rows based on our age. I think my heart sank because the reality of being away from home set in. There was a cloakroom when you first went in the door.

"Miss RHZ [REDACTED]"

11. There was one teacher who was really strict from the start. She looked wicked, even her face was wicked looking. I always thought her name was Miss RHZ [REDACTED] but my sister, [REDACTED], told me that's isn't correct. The teacher had sharp features, she wore glasses and had brown curly hair. She had something on her face like a mole or a wart with hairs coming out of it. I used to look at it all the time.
12. I remember just looking at her and thinking how much I hated her. She had an accent so I think she might have been from the area. She used to wear a long tartan skirt, tan tights and brown laced shoes like brogues. She was quite thin and always took big strides when she walked and it seemed like it only took her a couple and she was right at me.
13. The dormitories were upstairs. There were around ten single beds in the dorm, but it could have been more. They were on each side of the room. There was a small locker beside each bed. I think there might have been a small wardrobe beside that too. My dormitory was upstairs. There were toilets right outside our dormitory. I was in the same dormitory as my sister, [REDACTED]. I knew of two sisters who were on the bus with us. They were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were in our dormitory too. There was a girl called [REDACTED] and another girl called [REDACTED]
14. It was just girls. I think there were up to eighty to 100 children there. I don't know where all the girls came from. I don't know if there were girls who had been there for longer

than us. I just remember there being a lot of kids. There were quite a lot of staff. I saw about five or six teachers.

15. [REDACTED] was older, possibly eleven and used to sit at the same table as me. She used to eat my dinner if I passed it to her. She was like my knight in shining armour. I think she knew I was very unhappy and struggling there, especially at meal times. I think she used to try to take that burden off of me and help me by eating it for me.
16. There were children who were younger than us. I think the age range was between five to eleven or twelve. In my family, my mother didn't believe in hitting us. She used to say hitting wasn't the answer. I think I got away with a lot at home, probably, because I was the youngest child. It was such a shock to my system.

#### *Daily Routine*

17. We got up early in the morning. I think you made your own bed first. They were quite regimented with your bed. They showed you how to make it perfectly by tucking the corners in. If it wasn't done properly, they pulled the covers off and made you do it again until you got it right. The horrible teacher used to put her hand under and feel the bed sheets to check if they were wet. If they weren't, you were then allowed to make your bed. I think the wet sheets were taken away to a lady who washed them.
18. We used to wear a wee yellow pinafore with white daisies on it over our clothes. I don't know if we wore that so our own clothes didn't need to be washed as much. Everyone had to wear one. I remember our clothes were taken away every day and put in a wee net bag.
19. We got washed, brushed our teeth and went downstairs for breakfast. You had to sit at the same table every day. We would be brought down in a line, wash our hands in the sink and then go into the dining room for breakfast.

20. There was a big dining room which was huge and had big round tables in it. There were maybe eight to a table at meal times. They said prayers before meals. We would stand to say a prayer and then sit down at the table.
21. I hated the food. I had always been a fussy, picky eater. However, my sister told me that I wasn't as bad as that until I came home from Fornethy. I was always crying at the breakfast or lunch table. The teacher who used to pick on me, who I call Miss **RHZ**, knew that I hated mealtimes. She used to make me eat porridge. She used to hold my head and try to force the spoon into my mouth. I had a wee fringe and bits of porridge would go in it. She used to tell me that I was "a scunner" and yank me from the table off my chair and I can't remember what happened after that.
22. The girl, **████████**, from my dormitory used to help me, she would say "hurry up, push it over to me" and push her plate to me. She sat across from and could see the teachers coming. There was a blonde teacher there sometimes. I don't know if she saw us doing it but I was yanked by Miss **RHZ** from the table and taken outside.
23. The mealtimes were just a struggle. I probably ate the odd thing they gave me but I don't remember enjoying anything. We got a cup of milk and a biscuit every night which was alright.
24. We went to lessons every day but I think it was only in the mornings. It was separate staff who came to do the teaching. I have a feeling that we went there around **████████** time because I can remember being cold there all the time. I'm not sure if I was aware there would be lessons before I went.
25. I think there was a class teacher and there might have been different teachers who came in. I was alright when I was in the class. I don't think we were given as much work as we were given at school. We weren't given homework. They made us write a letter to our parents which they had written on the blackboard. You had to write it out and write your address on an envelope and give it over to the staff. They would check it and put it in an envelope. I think we did that once every week. I didn't have any visits from my family while I was there.

26. It was the same staff all the time. Lunchtime was just as tough. I can't really remember but I just remember mealtimes were horrendous and I used to dread them. However, breakfast sticks in my mind the most.
27. In the afternoons, they used to take us long walks. We would go out with certain teachers. We had to stand in a long line in twos. They would just lead us wherever we were going on the walk. It was usually to a wooded area. I hated the walks. I can remember always being tired because they were so long. It felt like we were away for ages and ages. I can remember being cold. Miss **RHZ** would shout on us to hurry up so we weren't able to lag behind.
28. There was nowhere to play there like a playground. There were no toys or dolls. There was a big hall. I think they used to play music in the hall on a Saturday. I don't remember it being the usual teachers. I think it would be different teachers there. They would try to get us up to dance. I think they let us watch a film sometimes too. We weren't taken on any trips or away for the day. It was just the long walks. I don't remember playing at all. I don't remember playing with my sister. We would come back from the walk, hang our jackets up and put our wellies away. I think we came back about tea time. I just remember it being dark all the time. I can't remember any sunny days.
29. There was a tuck shop where you lined up to get sweets. I think you were allowed to spend five pence or something like that. I didn't get them often because I was always crying and being punished. You would maybe get sweets and then go in and watch a film. I can remember my mum sending us a parcel with sweets in it but I don't remember getting the sweets. I think I was being punished constantly.
30. The staff selected a number of girls to go to church in the minibus, which was on a Sunday. I only went once, maybe because I was being punished again.

31. I think bed time was quite early, maybe 7:00 pm. While we were in the dormitory the door would be left open and Miss **RHZ** used to sit outside our dormitory on a chair. I think she was there until we fell asleep. She used to say that you weren't allowed to get back up once you were in bed.
32. I think I was just concerned with myself when I was there. I was too young to notice some of the other teachers. The horrible teacher seemed to be in charge. It was like she was running the place. It felt like she was the boss.
33. There was a man who came into the school. He had big, black, thick glasses and wore a white coat with a stethoscope. He had dark hair. I can't remember going to him for anything but I can remember him being there. I think he was quite gawky looking. I can't remember anybody being unwell but someone must have been.

#### **Abuse at Fornethy House**

34. I can remember one of the girls, **[REDACTED]**, said no one else in the dorm was getting any tuck shop because of me. One day she told me it was all my fault that no one was getting any tuck. She got into a fight with my sister about it. My sister bit her on the leg. I was terrified of Miss **RHZ** finding out. I don't think the girl told anyone. Looking back, it was like she was trying to turn everyone in the dormitory against me. I think she hated me with a passion.
35. The teacher, Miss **RHZ**, used to pick on me a lot and lash out at me and hit me. I wasn't used to that. I used to cry a lot and I think that got to her more. I was still young and I couldn't help it. I have a granddaughter the same age and I find myself wondering how someone could do that to a child of that age. I can remember her saying there would be no nonsense. It was regimental from the start. She would say not to do this or that or tell me "you're nothing but a scunner" every time she passed me. She used to say "if you keep that crying up, you won't be going home after your six weeks".

36. When the teacher was lashing out at me, ██████ would try to get involved. Miss RHZ ██████ used to walk around with a rolled up newspaper and hit people. I wouldn't even be doing anything wrong. There was a toilet downstairs which I think they used to take you to after lunch. She used to say that we weren't allowed to close the toilet door. I remember feeling like it wasn't right. I used to try to dodge her to avoid her but she always managed to get me.
37. One day, I was standing there, just in my vest and pants waiting in the line for the bath, and she just lashed out and hit me on the bare legs. It was stinging. I don't think I had been doing anything wrong.
38. We had a bath twice a week. We had to stand in a room, everybody would be in a line with no clothes on. You had to go into the bath with the person who was standing beside you in the line. It could be anyone. I absolutely hated that. There were two ladies there who washed us in the bath. I can't remember seeing them at any other time. I can't remember ██████ being beside me during bath time.
39. One night, I was in bed asleep. I don't know if there was a carry on in the dormitory because I was asleep. The teacher pulled me and my sister out of our beds by the wrists and took me downstairs to the library and put my sister in the toilet. Miss RHZ ██████ always pulled me by the wrists, she never took my hand. I remember as she was taking me out, ██████ was sitting up in bed looking bewildered.
40. On this night, I had only vest and pants on. I don't remember her telling me to take my pyjamas off. I just remember standing in the library. I was shaking, I don't know if it was with fear or with the cold. She told me to face the wall and not to turn around. I didn't know where my sister had gone. It felt like hours before the teacher came back. It was dark standing there apart from a blue light in the distance. I can remember hearing her shoes coming. It felt like hours had passed before she came back. Eventually she came and got me.

41. She always lashed out at the kids. At the time, I felt like it was always me. I saw her hitting other people. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] used to cry all the time as well. The girl, [REDACTED], used to cry at the table because of what was happening to me. The tears would be streaming down her face. My sister and I would always try to hold hands and it would drive the teacher mad.
42. Miss RHZ [REDACTED] was rough and was always shouting at me. It felt like she shouted at me every time she looked at me. I was always aware she was there and that I could get it at any time. If she had the newspaper, she would hit you with that otherwise she would use her hand. It could be anywhere on your body, wherever she caught you including your head and I remember having her hand print on the back of my leg. You would be able to see it coming most of the time. The other staff never comforted us. I think the girls would talk about it amongst themselves but it was only really to say how nasty that teacher was to us. We didn't have in depth conversations.
43. There was another teacher who had white hair. She was heavy built. She always seemed to be shouting. I think that was just her way. I was frightened of her too and felt nervous around her.
44. I would have loved to run away. Our beds were at a window in the dorm. My sister used to look out the window in the dark and say it would be great if we could go back home. She would do a countdown every week and say to me, "We've got five weeks to go". We were too scared to run away.

### **Leaving Fornethy House**

45. A few days before we went home, Miss RHZ [REDACTED] kept saying to me "if you don't behave you won't be going home". I didn't know if she was allowed to keep me there. It terrified me. By that time, I had stopped crying all the time. I think I was focussing on the fact that I was nearly going home.

46. They weighed us before we went home, I had lost four pounds and my sister had gained four pounds.
47. I think my sister, [REDACTED], would've been alright if she hadn't tried to help me and intervene.
48. I was so excited to be finally leaving. I don't think I could believe it until the coach actually pulled away from the place.
49. When we got off the bus, I ran to my mum and cuddled her. My sister has since told me that it was really emotional. After I got home, I found out that my other sister, [REDACTED], who had been at a different residential school had managed to send a letter home to my mother telling her she was being treated badly. My mother went to Rothesay and brought her home. I can remember feeling quite resentful that she managed to get away and we didn't. As an adult, I realise that we were writing letters telling my mother that we were fine. She didn't know what was really happening there.
50. I told my mother what happened at Fornethy. I can remember her being absolutely furious. She wrote a letter to the Education Department at Bath Street about how we had been treated. I don't know what the outcome of it was but no one spoke to me or my sister about it.

### **Life back at home**

51. I had problems eating for years after I came home. My mother was worried about it. I would always get my own way because she was so concerned about it.
52. When I came back, I started having dizzy turns. I would be lying in bed and waken up and the room was spinning. My mum took me to the doctors but they couldn't get to the bottom of it. They actually put sweets in a tablet bottle and they were telling me that the tablets would help with the dizziness. I think they wanted to find out if it was psychological. The dizzy spells continued until I was nineteen or twenty.

53. I have known my husband since I was young. I have had a great life. He has been an amazing father and grandfather. He would do anything for any of us. I have two children, a daughter who is 36 and a son at 29.
54. I have always worked. I have worked in bars and doing cleaning in the university. I have also worked in a hairdresser.

### **Impact**

55. When I came back, my eating got out of control. I became very thin and my mother was worried about me. My sister mentioned to me that she couldn't remember my eating being as bad before we went to Fornethy.
56. After being at Fornethy, I wouldn't stay at friends' houses. It would always get to a certain time at night and I would say that I had to go home. I used to want to stay overnight at my brother's house after he had a little girl, but I couldn't bring myself to even stay over at his. I was weary of going anywhere out of fear that it would be like Fornethy.
57. In terms of impact, I have been very overprotective of my own children. I wouldn't let them out to play without me being there. I used to always sit them down and warn them that if anyone ever harmed them or mistreated them in some way that they had to tell me. I always tried to keep my children safe. I needed them to know that they would always be believed. I don't think I would have been like that had it not been for Fornethy. I still worry about my daughter now if she is out. I worry about my granddaughter too. I think it's an impact of my time at Fornethy.
58. I have always tried to get on with my life and have thought there is nothing I can do about it. However, sometimes it just creeps into my head. I think the dizziness was panic attacks and it was a way of it all coming out.

### **Treatment/support**

59. I haven't seen a counsellor or health care professional about any of my experiences at Fornethy.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

60. I reported the abuse to the police in 2019. A female and male officer came to my house and interviewed me about Fornethy for several hours. The questioning was very intense. I think they were from the Child Protection Unit in Dundee. It was the first time I had had a deep conversation about any of it. I have spoken to my sisters about it. My older sister, [REDACTED], feels responsible because she started the process of us going. My husband was horrified when I told him some of what happened but I haven't gone into a lot of detail about it with him.

### **Records**

61. I haven't applied for my records. My older sister, [REDACTED], applied for hers but I don't want to see mine. I think it would bring back too many memories.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

62. I think Fornethy have been monitored more. There should have been someone checking up on the staff. I hope another child doesn't have to go through that. I hope that this will help at least one child in their lives.
63. The people who were responsible should be held accountable. I don't care what age they are because they have ruined a lot of people's lives.

64. I would like the education board to take responsibility because they are at fault. Someone should have been monitoring Fornethy. There are lessons to be learned that they must go in there unannounced and monitor the place. They should also interview people who have been in care at places and find out about their experience.
65. 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.. <sup>PNA</sup>  .....

Dated.. 22.6.2022 .....