

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGT

Support person present: No

1. My name is PGT and my maiden name is PGT. I prefer to be called PGT. My date of birth is 1930 and my contact details are known to the Inquiry. My statement is in respect of my daughter PGS who went to Fornethy House in 1965 for six weeks.

Life before going into care

2. My daughter PGS was born on 1958 and at the time I was married to , her dad, who was a Merchant Seaman. She has a brother called who is almost two years older than her.
3. I was first married in 1953 and at the time I was a in a lab in Maryhill, Glasgow. It was a firm called Cooper McDougall and Robertson who specialised in agriculture chemicals. I stopped working there in January 1954 and went to work in the Sick Kid's Hospital in Glasgow where I did the chemistry for a research doctor. I did this for a year but the firm I had previously worked for kept asking me to go back which I did in 1955.
4. I worked there until shortly before our son was born in 1956 and shortly thereafter my husband went back to sea on a long voyage and didn't return for almost a year. When he returned I was pregnant almost immediately again and PGS was born in 1958.

5. My husband would be at home for a short while then go back to sea for long spells but it turned out that he was an alcoholic. This made things at home very difficult financially as well as in other ways. By 1963 I had had enough and told him to leave and by that time he was working for a South African company. He was first-mate with one of the company's liners so moved to South Africa and that was it.
6. He did send financial support for the first few months but it wasn't much and was typical of how he had been with financial support throughout our marriage. At the time PGS was just starting school but I found it difficult to get back into the industry I had worked in prior to getting married. In those days a woman with two kids was never going to be taken back into the work I had previously worked in as a single woman.

Arrangements for daughter going to Fornethy

7. I decided that I would apply for a teaching course in Jordanhill College, Glasgow. I got accepted on to the course and started my studies there in September 1964. I was due to be sitting my first exams the following spring and the children's head teacher, Mrs Fisher of Annette Street Primary in Govanhill, called me in to see her.
8. She knew that I was studying to be a teacher and said that she knew I had exams coming up and understood the sort of stress I would be going through between the exams and taking care of my children, all on a student grant. She suggested that the children should go to these residential schools to allow me the necessary time to study for my exams.
9. I wasn't very happy with the idea of the kids going away for that length of time but thought it over for a couple of weeks before agreeing with the suggestion. As it turned out [redacted] didn't go. He was supposed to go somewhere down the Clyde Coast, Seamill, but developed tonsillitis so stayed at home with me.
10. Miss Fisher spoke about PGS going to Fornethy House in Perth which was a place I had never heard of, in fact I hadn't heard of residential schools at all. As far as I was

aware it was only PGS who was going to go there from her primary school. From it first being suggested to when PGS actually went would have been at least a month.

11. The only information I was given was from Miss Fisher and that was that, although it was a school, most of the children's time would be taken up with recreation and would involve walks and things like that but that they would keep her up to date with reading and writing and such things. There was no social work involvement and PGS was in good health at the time.
12. Although things were difficult financially at home the children had a good life though PGS had become very quiet after her dad had left and seemed to think his leaving had somehow been her fault. It's difficult to explain but she didn't really know her dad as he was at home so seldom during her early life and was away at sea most of the time. I think the longest she saw him was when he was sitting his master's certificate and was home for about three months.

Fornethy House, Perth

13. PGS went to Fornethy House in Perth at about the start of 1965 and I remember that before she went there one of my friends had to take her for a medical examination to make sure she was well enough to go. I assume that that was something that those at Fornethy House insisted on happening. I was unable to get away that day which is why my friend took her. The results of the examination was that PGS was perfectly fit as I had expected she would be.
14. I took PGS to Queen Street Station on the day she went to Fornethy and PGS told me that a very nice lady met her and several other girls at Queen Street Station and that they went by train from there to Perth and then out to Fornethy. After being dropped off there PGS says she never saw that nice lady again. That was the last time I saw PGS for the next six weeks.
15. PGS sent me a letter every week saying what she had been doing up in the hills and how they had been snowboarding and doing other things and she seemed perfectly

happy. The letters from her arrived like clockwork every Friday though the strange thing was that the letters were all very similar which I found unusual as PGS was a great writer with a good imagination who used to love writing wee stories and making up wee plays. I just thought the letters I received from her were a bit stilted.

16. Many years later I learned from PGS that she had been told what to write in these letters. I also wrote to her and sent her a postal order every week which she would be able to spend in the tuck shop that they had in the school. During the six weeks PGS was away these letters were the only form of communication between us and nobody else spoke to me with regards to how she was getting on.

Returning home from Fornethy House

17. Six weeks later I then received a letter from Fornethy saying that PGS would be arriving back at Queen Street Station at about 7:00 pm on a Thursday. I can still vividly picture meeting PGS that day in my head. This wee creature with her wee scarlet winter coat came rushing through the gates. I just thought to myself "What's wrong with her?" Her face and her hands were the same colour as her coat.
18. When she got up to me she was red-raw, her skin was weather-beaten like a man who had been out working in the field. Her skin was so red and was coming off her face and hands and she had a cut just under her right ear. She looked to me as if she had been exposed to the cold on a regular basis. Her skin was scarlet, it was awful and her wee hands looked so painful.
19. Her brother was at a friend's house who had just had a new baby and my intention was to take PGS there to see the new baby. After we left Queen Street I took PGS to my friend's house as previously arranged and they were absolutely shocked at her appearance.
20. When I was putting her to bed that night she had the beginnings of chill-blains on her feet which I thought had gone away with children of my generation. She actually slept

well that night, probably because she was in her own bed, but her skin still looked awful in the morning and it stayed that way for weeks.

Medical Treatment

21. I took her to see the doctor and he was appalled at the state of her skin. The doctor's name was Dr Glasser and while he was very concerned about PGS's condition he didn't give a diagnosis of what was wrong with her and just asked what had happened. He asked me what I was going to do about it and I told him I was going into Bath Street in Glasgow to make a complaint about PGS's physical condition.
22. After that it became one thing after another with PGS and I couldn't get her to heal. I kept having to put cream on her skin and it took about six or seven weeks before her skin and the cut below her ear healed. When PGS eventually got her records she looked at that time of her life and the records went up to [REDACTED] of that year and then there is nothing until the following year.
23. PGS herself wouldn't speak to anybody about how she had come to be in such a state. She went back to school the following week and the head teacher was very angry when she saw the state of her.

Reporting of abuse

24. I went to the Educational Offices at 129 Bath Street, Glasgow to complain about PGS's physical condition and though I spoke to somebody, I do not now recall who that was, nothing ever happened. They said that they would get back to me but nobody ever did and, as PGS started to recover, I didn't take it further as I didn't want to upset her.
25. PGS wouldn't speak about her time in Fornethy other than to say she was glad to be home but she did become very quiet and I thought that when she was ready she would tell me but she never did until recently. The only thing I recall her saying occurred a few weeks after she returned from Fornethy. She was sitting reading a book when she

suddenly said "I felt dirty at Fornethy. They would only allow us to change our pants every Friday after having a bath". She also said that the pinnies they made her wear smelled awful.

Speaking to daughter about the abuse she endured at Fornethy House

26. It was only a few months ago that PGS spoke to me about her time in Fornethy. She came in one night and I had been reading a copy of [REDACTED] and there was a picture of women at a demonstration in [REDACTED], Glasgow talking about Fornethy. There wasn't much written about it, just a sentence. PGS was standing behind me and I asked "PGS, isn't that where you were?" I thought she was having a heart attack, she just collapsed and thereafter it all came pouring out.
27. She said that the first day she arrived at Fornethy was the first time she was beaten. She then said that she got the cut below her ear because the teachers didn't just call them over, they dragged them by the ears. She told me of the beatings she received from the teachers and said that the slightest thing the children did resulted in them being put over a teacher's knee and thrashed.
28. She said that the first real beating she got was on the first Friday that she was there. The children had been put in a class to write letters home and PGS wrote out a letter to me. She evidently wrote that she wanted to come home and was thrashed for writing that.
29. She said she had gone into the classroom and there was a letter on the blackboard and she thought that that must be for those girls who didn't know how to write letters. PGS got her bit of paper and wrote her own letter and, of course, the teacher read it and immediately thrashed her and told her she was to copy the letter from the board.
30. When PGS told me about her time in Fornethy she spoke of how they would go for long walks in the snow and that after a while she and one of the other girls decided

they were going to hide and then run away. They did run away but were found and beaten within an inch of their lives and that this sort of treatment went on and on during her time there.

31. She said the only person who was kind to them was the lady who gave them their dinners but she spoke in whispers as if she was afraid of the other staff. PGS said that the minister came every Wednesday to the school at night for his dinner and she remembered on a Saturday night there was a party for the adults and said that it was funny that she couldn't recall ever seeing men at the school other than the minister.

Life after being in care

32. After PGS returned from Fornethy she became very withdrawn. On the surface she seemed fine and enjoyed school. She was very intelligent and her head teacher at one point sent her to Hutchison Grammar though tonsillitis intervened as she contracted it at the time she was supposed to go for the entrance exam. She went later on her own but wasn't able to make a good impression due to being so withdrawn.
33. I had actually taken PGS to Hutchison Grammar that day but left her on her own as she was going to be there all afternoon. She recently told me that, after I left her that day, she thought I had abandoned her to another school like Fornethy and that much of the decoration she saw within Hutchison Grammar reminded her of Fornethy.
34. She found it very difficult to make friends and I would say it was two or three years later, she was still very quiet, her teacher Mr Hamilton was talking to me and he said "PGS finds it very difficult to trust people, doesn't she?". When PGS came back from Fornethy she still played with the friends she had played with before going there but started to spend more and more time in the house. I thought PGS found it difficult to make new friends later and didn't talk much to people.
35. PGS went to Queen's Park Secondary School but didn't live up to her potential and I later discovered that in her final year she had been playing truant. She was not happy in school and I believe she was bullied.

36. She is very tall and problems with her height started at primary school. One day the teacher told all the pupils to stand and got them to draw lines around their feet. PGS had very big feet and the teacher picked up the drawing of her feet and said to the whole class "Who's is this?" That then followed her throughout her time in school and she was bullied because of it.
37. I remember when she was a teenager I was looking all over the place for shoes for her and we went in to a shoe shop in Glasgow. I asked for school shoes for her and I think she was a size 7 at the time. The fellow who was serving us burst out laughing so I got up and left the shop and later phoned his manager to complain about him.
38. When PGS left secondary school she did have some O'Grades but in no way fulfilled her potential. To me she should have been put in to the art department and would have been a brilliant artist. When she was very young I put together a collection of her drawings and sent them to the Art School as they had Saturday morning classes but she didn't go.
39. I remember her coming home from school one day when she was about fourteen and she had been in the art class. She had painted a copy of Munch's "The Scream" and put it in front of me. I now realise that at the time it was a cry for help but all I did at the time was to praise her for doing such a fantastic job of replicating the painting. Why did I not realise that that was a cry for help?
40. When PGS left school she went to Arran and worked in a hotel that a friend owned for a few months. When she came back she went to Langside College to do shorthand typing. She then went into office work and excelled at it. She continued doing secretarial work throughout her adult life and worked for a long time for BP in the law department.
41. When they moved to Aberdeen she used to fly up there on a Monday and fly back on a Friday but couldn't find anywhere up there that she could afford to buy a place and stay. When she left BP she worked for another few firms and then in 2002 she decided

to go to Saudi Arabia and work for an oil company and worked in their law department for fifteen years. Before she left there she was an office manager in one of their research departments. She married in [REDACTED] 1989 but he was a psychopath and it was over by the [REDACTED] and she never had any children.

Impact

42. I never forgot that [REDACTED] PGS had been in Fornethy and it was always in the back of my mind but I didn't ever connect it to her behaviour. When she was fourteen she tried to commit suicide and was in hospital overnight and the psychiatrist at the time put it down to her being a teenager looking for attention.
43. When [REDACTED] PGS was eighteen she admitted to me that her paternal grandfather had been interfering with her when she was very small. His name was [REDACTED] and this must have been before she was five or six as after that she didn't see her paternal grandparents.
44. When she was 24 [REDACTED] PGS attempted suicide again and she has recently admitted to me that she made two further attempts during her life, both of which occurred when she was in Saudi. The only psychiatric help that [REDACTED] PGS has ever had was when she was in Saudi Arabia. The psychiatrist there was very good and told [REDACTED] PGS to write it all down. She then started to do just that so that things could be cleared up.
45. When we were talking about this recently she said to me "Do you remember when I ran across the platform to you?" and when I said "Yes" she said "all that was going through my mind was "Please God, I promise that I won't be bad again. Please don't send me back there again. I'll never be bad again. Please God"". "
46. She said that that was what had been going over and over in her mind. Staff in Fornethy had apparently convinced her that the reason she had been sent there was because she had been so bad and that was why her father had left and that I hated her because her father had left which was why I had sent her away.

47. I feel I should have made more of an effort with PGS as I feel that our whole relationship as she was growing up was unhappy. Her brother [REDACTED] came up and stayed with her for a while after all this came out and I think it's likely that she has told him more than she has been telling me and he was a great support to her.
48. I remember when I got my first promotion teaching post in Springburn and the head teacher had arranged for one of the girl's to go to a residential school. This had nothing to do with me but I was taking the line of children into class one morning when a mother came rushing into the school, grabbed her daughter and began screaming at me "You're not sending my kid to a residential school. No way".
49. I think back on that and wonder if that girl or her mother suffered the way PGS had. She literally grabbed the girl out of the school and took her home. I don't know what residential school the girl was supposed to have been going to as I wasn't involved.
50. The fact that PGS was in Fornethy definitely affected our relationship. We were never a cuddly family, typically Scottish I suppose. We were never kissed and cuddled as kids so it wasn't a natural way for us but we were always there for each other and always had fun together. After she had been to Fornethy and endured the physical stuff she did we just didn't seem to talk so much. There were still bedtime stories and thing like that but I found we weren't talking to each other to the extent that we had before.
51. As she got older, we all know what teenage daughters can be like, but she was never one for telling me if she had a problem. She was always independent but I think she knew I was stressed and she didn't want to worry me with things. These days we might have the odd argument but we get on fine together and she tends to worry about me because of my age.

Lessons to be Learned

- 52. I can't understand the secrecy of places like Fornethy. The authorities must have known that such things were going on so why was it hidden? Why is it still being denied that it happened? What I want to know is have things changed or are such things still going on with Councils and people in authority still shutting their eyes to it.

- 53. The Head of Education in Glasgow who retired recently wrote to PGS saying that Glasgow Council had nothing to do with her being in Fornethy as they didn't own the place. So PGS took an extract from her records that said "Fornethy Residential School – Glasgow District Council" and sent it to them. Why do they continue to deny it when it is all there in black and white?

Hopes for The Inquiry

- 54. I hope the Inquiry obtains an acknowledgement of the suffering. PGS tells me that, of the group she got involved with for women who had been at Fornethy, two of them have recently committed suicide because of what they suffered there.

- 55. 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..... PGT [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 7th June 2022

