

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PGL

Support person present: No

1. My full name is PGL. My name at birth and as a child was PGL. My date of birth is 1962. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before care

2. I was born in the Gorbals area of Glasgow. My mum's name was and she had nine kids. The oldest was, then, me, and. There wasn't a big age gap between us. There was about twelve years between the oldest and youngest. My mum also adopted a child called, who we called and she became the second oldest after.
3. There had been social work involvement with my family only when my mum adopted. The man who dealt with the adoption was a man called Mr Black and he was a very nice man. He would come to the house to speak to my mother.
4. came from, Catholic and we were Protestant but it didn't make much of a difference to us. She came to my mum one night as an emergency placement. stayed with us. Samuel Carr who was put into Smyllum Children's Home. He died while he was there.

5. I went to Lambhill Street Primary School as a child. I have good memories of life at home and I would go back to my childhood if I could. We lived in a small house that had a room, kitchen and a tiny indoor toilet. We didn't have much as a family but we didn't go without either. My mum did a good job considering she had ten of us to look after. I don't think she worked. My dad was not in the picture and we had no association with him.

Going into care

6. When I was about five or six years old, me and some of my siblings were put into care in Fornethy Residential School in Angus.
7. I don't know why that decision was made. I don't remember there being any social worker involved with us. I am surmising but I remember there being something wrong with my mum's back and she went into hospital. I think she must have needed respite when she came out, so me and some of my siblings were put into a home to give her a rest. That is the only reason I can think for us going into Fornethy.
8. It was [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and myself who were sent to Fornethy. I remember being taken to a big warehouse in Glasgow with my siblings and we all got a given a set of brand new clothes including underwear and shoes. We were being kitted out before being sent away. Maybe that was one of the reasons my mum decided to send us there, so that we could get new clothes.
9. We were taken for a medical in town as well. Bothwell Street rings a bell so it was maybe around there somewhere.
10. My mum must have spoken to us about going because I knew it was just for a short while and that we would be back. We went for six weeks.
11. I went to Fornethy a second time as well. I am not sure what age I was but I remember falling in the fire at home and getting burned when I was seven years old. I stayed in

Southern General Hospital for a time, and I still have scars from the incident. We moved out of our small house and into a bigger one soon after that, and that is where we lived when I went to Fornethy House a second time. I think I was seven, nearly eight years old when I went there the second time. That time it was [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who went with me

12. Not much changed between the two visits and I think I sometimes confuse the first and second visits.

Fornethy Residential School, Angus

13. I remember both times I went, we got on a big private coach from the town centre in Glasgow. That was the meeting point and set off point. There were about forty or fifty girls on the bus all going to Fornethy House. There were no boys. These were the same girls who all came back on the bus six weeks later as well.
14. It felt like going on holiday the first time I went and I had never been on a holiday so it was quite exciting and felt like an adventure. The first time must have been in [REDACTED] because I remember it was in the period leading up to Christmas. The second time was in [REDACTED] because I remember it still being quite cold.
15. When I arrived at Fornethy, the building looked like a big castle type house in the country. It had lots of wood panelling inside. It was lovely. There were big grounds around the place and a little play park outside the house which had swings in it. It was in quite a remote place.
16. We were met at the door by a lady called Mrs [REDACTED] who was like [REDACTED] [REDACTED] there.
17. We slept in dormitories and all the dormitories had names that were named after glens in the local area. I remember being in one called Prosen. There were about eight beds

in my dorm. I was in one with my sisters and some other girls. There may have been more than eight girls in the dorm.

18. There wasn't much to the rooms. We had a bed, a wee cabinet at the side of it for our clothes, and a chair.
19. I think there were about fifty girls in Fornethy. I was amongst the youngest there the first time I went, aged five or six, and was considered one of the babies. The girls were all different ages, going up to about thirteen or fourteen years old.

Staff

20. The staff who I remember were Mrs LBD, who was SNR, and then the teachers who were Miss RBZ, Mrs Robertson and Mrs Fletcher who had a dog. We called them "Miss" or "Mrs" followed by their surname like you would speak to a teacher. I don't know what they called us. I don't remember them saying my name or speaking to us much.
21. I think the teachers lived in on the premises. Mrs Fletcher had a room near our dormitory. There were also staff who cooked and brought us our dinner but we didn't really know them. I don't remember ever seeing any men.

Routine at Fornethy

22. We got up early in the morning. We were woken up at about 7.30 or 8:00 am. Whichever teacher was on duty would come in to the dorms and just pull everyone's covers off to get them up.
23. We got up, got washed and dressed, then went to the dining room for breakfast. After breakfast, we would put on jackets and wellies. I think the staff maybe provided them for us. All of the girls would then be taken out for the hike of the century, supervised by two or three teachers. The teachers I remember taking us were Miss RBZ, Mrs

Robertson and sometimes Mrs Fletcher with her dog. I don't remember Mrs LBD ever coming on the walks.

24. The girls all walked in twos in a long line. It was nice to be in the countryside but the walks were just too long and it wasn't comfy in welly boots. It was not an enjoyable experience at all. I hated them and I think everybody else did as well but we had to do it every day from Monday to Saturday.
25. We would get back from the hike in time for our lunch and have our lunch in the dining room.
26. I don't recall what we did in the afternoon but I know we had to stay inside. There was a big room that had a television on a stand and chairs laid out in front of it in rows facing the telly. We would sit on the chairs with the teachers at the sides, and either watch telly or sing some songs.
27. We were never allowed to play outside. I was dying to get out and play in the play park and on the swings but we were never allowed out. That was the case both times I was there.
28. In the evenings, we had a shower and got into our pyjamas. I can't remember what time bed time actually was, but it was dark when we went to bed. The teachers would put the big light out and a blue, night light would come on.
29. Girls would sometimes talk amongst themselves about the day, have a giggle or even be consoling each other if someone was upset. You would get in trouble if you were caught talking after lights out. There would be a teacher on duty at night. It would be one of the same ones who worked during the day.
30. The only time anything was different was at the weekends. On a Saturday evening, we sometimes watched a film. On Sundays, instead of going for a long hike, we walked to and went to church instead.

31. We didn't have to do any chores as far as I can remember, but we had to keep our bedroom area tidy.

Mealtimes / Food

32. We ate in a dining room with big, circular tables. I think there were about six or seven tables with about eight girls at each. We weren't allowed to talk at the table.
33. Your meals were served to you and everybody got the same. There was no choice about what you ate. It was like being in hospital and you would sometimes get things you didn't like. You had to eat what was on your plate even if you didn't like it. You were made to sit at the dining table until you ate it all. I would see some girls being made to stay back to finish their food while all the rest of the girls left the room.
34. I heard from other girls that if you were kept back in the dining room for not finishing your food, you were forced to eat it. It happened to my sister [REDACTED] the first time I was there and to [REDACTED] the second time I was there. I don't know which teachers did it but they told me they had been force fed after everyone else had left the room.
35. There was a tuck shop that we got to go to every day after dinner. Mrs LBD [REDACTED] would be in charge of it and the girls would line up waiting to go in. When you went in, she would tell you how much you could spend, which was something like two pence, and you got to get something to that value. We didn't actually see or have any money, but just got to spend the value of it. I don't know how it was decided how much you got to spend.

Washing / bathing

36. The shower room was like an alcove with eight showers in it. I think there may have been two shower rooms.

37. We had showers every night. We would take our toilet bag with our own soap and toothbrush in it, as well as our own towel, and queue for the shower. We had to wait in line until it was our turn, standing in our towels.
38. Then when it was your turn to shower, you would have to do it in front of other girls in the showers at the same time. There was no privacy. It didn't bother me because I was only wee both times I went, but I could see that it bothered some of the other, older girls who were going through puberty. I was only young but even I could tell that they were uncomfortable.
39. There would be a teacher supervising us. This would be whoever happened to be on duty.

Visits and family contact

40. We didn't have any visits from anybody or go home at all during both stays, but maybe that was because we were only there for six weeks on both occasions. We weren't allowed to phone home or anything either.
41. We were encouraged to write home, but we had to write what the teachers told us to. They would write a letter on the board and we had to copy it onto paper, and that was what was sent home to our families. If we were allowed to write what we wanted, we probably would have told our families about what was going on in there.
42. During the second time I was there, my mum came to pick my sister, [REDACTED], up. To this day I don't know the whole story but something had previously happened in Glasgow, which had led to a court case in which [REDACTED] was needed, probably as a witness or something, so my mum had come to get her from Fornethy.
43. We were not told that our mum was coming and only found out after [REDACTED] had gone, that our mum had come to get her. I don't know if the teachers maybe didn't want us seeing our mum in case we told her what was going on.

Schooling

44. I don't remember any classes or being taught anything while I was there. The place didn't have a school system as far as I recall, even though I remember being there during normal school term on both occasions.
45. The first time I went when I was five or six, I remember being there in the period leading up to Christmas so it must have been during normal school term time. The second time I went, I remember being at school and telling my friends I was going. Then going back after six weeks and seeing my friends at school, and being happy to see them and to be back at normal school.
46. We thought of the staff in Fornethy as teachers but I don't know why because they didn't teach us. I remember there being a blackboard in the dining room, which was where we wrote letters home, copying from the board.

Birthdays and Christmas

47. The first time I was there, it must have been during the period leading up to Christmas because I remember singing Christmas songs in the telly room, and I am sure there was a Christmas tree up.
48. We didn't stay there for Christmas day and returned home before then.

Abuse at Fornethy

49. The teachers would regularly smack girl over the head using their hands for little things. When we went on the daily walks, we were all expected to keep up a certain pace, no matter how old we were. When someone fell behind or wasn't keeping up, they would get booted or shoved by the staff to make them move faster. Miss RBZ and Mrs Robertson would do this. I can't name any specific girls this happened to but

I saw it happening to girls all the time. I don't even remember the names of any of the girls in there apart from my sisters.

50. One day, during my second time there, we were all in the dining room having our dinner and I was sitting at the table with my sister [REDACTED]. You weren't allowed to talk at the dinner table and one of us said "pass the salt, please" in a really posh voice. I can't remember which one of us said it but for some reason we both found this really funny and were giggling.
51. The next thing we knew, Mrs Robertson and Miss ^{RBZ} [REDACTED] came marching up to us, grabbed us from our seats, and dragged us into the telly room. I remember seeing my older sister's face and she looked so helpless knowing that we were going to get it. We knew it too but we just didn't know how bad it would be.
52. Once they got us in the telly room, they leathered into the backs of our legs and bums with their open hands. I remember them being smacked in a frenzy as I was cowering down. I could see the same happening to my sister. It lasted a few minutes and we were left with marks on our body from the attack. I cannot understand how they both did that and not one of them questioned the other or didn't stop it.
53. I was seven years old when this happened and [REDACTED] would have been a year or so older than me. I witnessed other girls being hit in the same way too by Miss ^{RBZ} [REDACTED], Mrs Robertson and other teachers whose names I don't remember.
54. Mrs Robertson was quite a tall woman with an average build. She was Scottish and would have been in her late twenties or early thirties. She was the most horrible woman I ever met. Mrs ^{RBZ} [REDACTED] was average height and build with short, dirty fair hair. They always wore skirts and jumpers or blouses.
55. You were not allowed to talk after lights out at bed time, but sometimes girls would. My sister, [REDACTED], was caught talking and she got a slap from the teacher who was on duty. That would have been during the second time there. Other girls were dragged

out their bed and out the room for talking or giggling in bed. They would be upset when they came back and would say they had been hit.

56. Mrs Fletcher had blonde, wavy hair and a wee dog. She had a local accent, had a medium build and a good height. She must have been in her late thirties or early forties and dressed quite nicely. She slept in a room near to my dormitory. I would also see her taking girls out of rooms if they were thought to be misbehaving by her. I assume she was hitting them but I didn't see it, and the girls would be upset when they came back and tell us that Mrs Fletcher had hit them.

Bed Wetting

57. I don't remember if we could get up and go to the toilet if we needed to at night, but if you wet the bed, the chair by your bed would be placed at the bottom of your bed before you went to sleep. This was so that the staff knew who was a bed wetter and could get them up to take them to the toilet in the middle of the night. It didn't make a difference. The bed wetters still wet the bed.
58. The kids who wet the bed were ridiculed by whichever teacher was working, and would be shouted at. I think the bed wetting was probably made worse by people being scared because I think quite a few kids were doing it.
59. I don't remember if I wet the bed but my sister did. Her wet sheet was put over the bannister so that all the other girls knew that she had wet the bed. I think the teachers wanted the other girls to ridicule the bed wetters, but that didn't happen. We were all in the same boat and none of us ridiculed each other.
60. Sometimes, when girls went to the tuck shop, Mrs LBD would tell girls how much they had to spend but then say they weren't allowed it because they had wet the bed, and send them away without being allowed anything. She didn't do this to all the bed wetters though, only some. I don't know how and why she decided to punish some girls and not others for bed wetting.

61. I never saw Mrs LBD lift her hands to anyone but I heard from other girls that she did. She was a Scottish older lady with a blue rinse. She wore sort of tweed skirt suits. She was small compared to the other teachers.
62. You could feel that it wasn't a nice place as soon as you got there from the way the teachers spoke to the kids. I didn't know it then but I could see as I got older that the teachers used intimidation. I don't remember any of the staff being nice to us. The girls talked about running away but it was never executed.

Reporting abuse at Fornethy

63. I never told anybody what Mrs Robertson or Miss RBZ did when I was there. I couldn't tell anybody at Fornethy, like Mrs LBD, because I was scared I would get it from her if I did. I didn't see anybody else from outside while I was there so there was nobody else to tell.
64. When we were driven back to Glasgow on the bus after the second visit there, Mrs LBD came with us. My mum was standing at the pick-up point with other parents, waiting to pick us up. My sister, [REDACTED], managed to jump off the bus as soon as it stopped and told my mum about how we were treated there.
65. My mum tried to get on the bus to talk to Mrs LBD. There was a male social worker or government official there and he told my mum not to make a scene or make a fuss, or that her children would be taken away from her. He wasn't threatening her but just advising her about what might have happened if she made a fuss, so my mum didn't say anything. That was the only time I ever saw that man.
66. My mum never sent us back to Fornethy after that. If it ever came up again in relation to my younger siblings, me and my sisters would always close it down. I don't think my mum would have sent us there again after my sister had told her about what went on.

Southpark, Isle of Bute

67.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

68.

69.

Life after being in care

70. I went back to school and my normal life after coming back from the short stays in Fornethy.
71. My mother decided to move to London when I was fourteen so I went with her and went to school there. I had a boyfriend in Glasgow before I left and he followed me to London when he was sixteen. He ended up becoming my husband and still is.
72. I stayed in London, got married and worked there. We had two kids there then moved back to Glasgow as a family in 1984, and we had a third child here. Our kids are now aged 39, 37 and 35, and we have two grandchildren too.
73. I had terrible problems with my left leg when I was 26 years old, which was osteoarthritis. I have had three knee operations and an operation on the bottom of my spine. I am not as mobile as I used to be so I haven't been able to work since then. I did help look out for my older neighbour on a day to day basis, until she died two years ago.

74. I am on medication for my osteoarthritis and have seen a pain psychologist. I have also been on anti-depressants for four years, but that is due to my illness and not because of my time in care.

Impact

75. The experience in Fornethy Residential School hasn't really held me back in life. I have talked about it with my sisters and I do think about it sometimes. Every time I hear someone say "pass the salt," it triggers something in me and puts me back in that moment in Fornethy with the teachers about to come and grab us.
76. I think my experiences made me be a bit more careful about who I left my own kids with. I never liked my kids being looked after by people, other than my sisters who I trusted.

Police reporting and other action

77. I reported my experiences at Fornethy to the police last year. They were aware of things having gone on at Fornethy. As far as I know, my case is with the Procurator Fiscal Office right now, but it is taking a while because of Covid delays.
78. I have also spoken to Thompsons Solicitors in Glasgow in relation to a civil case, which is ongoing.

Records

79. I have never seen any records from my time in care. According to a Fornethy [REDACTED] group, there are no records available from the time I was there. I don't know if that is

true but I just assumed they know what they are talking about because these people have campaigned and tried to get their records.

Lessons to be Learned

- 80. I know it is a minority that abuse kids, but I don't think there will ever be a guarantee that kids in care will be safe because people will always slip through the net. Adults need to talk to kids and ask them about their experiences in care, and actually listen to what they say and do something to stop it.

- 81. 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..... PGL [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 29/11/2021