

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GIU

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is GIU. My date of birth is 1979. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. Before I went into care I lived in Priesthill, Glasgow with my family. My mum and dad were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They were both from Oban and moved to Glasgow before they had children. I have six siblings and their names are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and my twin brother [REDACTED]. I am the youngest out of everyone.
3. From a very young age I was aware of my family being outsiders in the neighbourhood and it wasn't a good environment for us to grow up in. As a wee boy I can remember lit fireworks being posted through our door. We'd go outside to play and bigger boys would grab me and rip my trousers off me. There was generally bullying behaviour towards us. From what my sisters have told me it was a neighbourhood problem and not just a few individuals. I can remember there being lots of people standing outside of the property and shouting about us. I feel my younger life was quite traumatic and I was aware that my mum was drinking a lot of alcohol as a way of coping with the environment she was in.
4. My dad had been in the army and then became unwell and was unable to work. He spent time in hospital with mental health issues. My mum worked in Glasgow in an art

gallery. It meant us children were often indoors in the house with my dad being unwell and my mum would be out at work while there was anti-social behaviour going on outside. This was a lot to deal with and the things we were seeing and hearing had an impact on our behaviour. I can remember seeing my mum crying and drinking. I think we went into care because the things that were happening were too hard for her to deal with. I can remember I was going to primary school at Burnbrae School in Priesthill and I wasn't going very often and was falling behind.

5. There were Children's Panels held about us and I can remember some of them. There was talk of a lack of parental control over the weans. I think that the way that people in the neighbourhood behaved to us meant it was hard for my mum to cope. I can remember some stuff but no detail as I was so young at the time. I can remember walking down the street with my mum and people were saying things to her. I can remember my dad running out of the house because of the behaviour of other men, but I can't recall detail. I believe people in the neighbourhood did abusive things to one of my sisters and other weans. There were gangs too.
6. There were children's meetings, and I sat in on some, I can recall the focus was on the parents and not on us. That suggests to me that my mum was finding it hard to deal with her life and the things that people around her were doing. I can recall at some stage we moved from one address to another in Priesthill. I believe I was aged eight when I was put into residential care as I can picture a birthday cake with a nine on it and I was in a children's home.

#### **Park Lodge Children's Home, Shawlands, Glasgow**

7. I was placed in residential care with my twin brother [REDACTED] and we had a social worker called Margaret Gray. We were placed in Park Lodge and I think it was a local authority home or may have been run by the Church of Scotland. Once me and my brother went into care I was in a different world from where I had come from and I had no idea what was happening with my siblings.

8. Children came in and went away from the home and I would estimate there were ten children at any one time. Me and [REDACTED] were split up and put into different bedrooms. They didn't have a room available for two people. I think in the time we were there we moved rooms a couple of times. I shared with other boys and there were a lot of other children. I remember there were another three sets of siblings. I think there were three or four rooms up the stairs and three or four rooms down stairs. I always shared a room with other people.
  
9. Me and [REDACTED] were the youngest children or almost the youngest and we did our own thing. The staff wore their own clothes and not a uniform. There were a number of older children too and they were doing more adult orientated things. We younger ones shouldn't have known about those things. There was a staff member called GIV [REDACTED] who was a bully, both physically and mentally, to the children and to me in particular. As a wee boy I went swimming at the pool at Silverburn one night at 9pm. It was an organised activity. There was a minor disagreement in the car between me and him. On the way home he put me out of the car and made me walk in the dark to Newlands. This was on a long dark country road with no houses. I didn't know where I was. It was a dark night and I just starting walking and it was a scary environment for me. I managed to walk back to Park Lodge and the home was in darkness. GIV [REDACTED] wasn't even on duty anymore and the night staff were in charge, the door was locked. No-one was walking about. I can't remember how I got in the building. The staff didn't even know I was gone and weren't looking for me.
  
10. The staff were ok, but they were not really in control of things or dealt with it in the way they should have. I liked my key worker who was called Norman and he was interested in me. I can remember thinking at the time that I felt I could speak to him and we had a good relationship. He would take me out for haircuts and to buy new clothes. He was a good key worker. There was a woman on staff called Edna who would put me down and look down on me. I remember she told me I was disgusting for having mud on my trousers. I remember there was a manager or an assistant manager who came in to see us sometimes and she appeared to be strict and I didn't think she was very nice. The staff underneath her were people you could talk to. I thought that there was enough staff members for the number of weans in the home.

## **Routine at Park Lodge**

### *Mornings and bedtimes*

11. I don't remember what time we got up in the morning. The bed time was probably at a set time. A member of the night staff would come in and the lights on the landings outside the bedrooms went out. I don't think there was much time difference between the children and their bedtimes, if any. There was a man who came on to do the night shift and I think he had an office.
12. I didn't get to see him very often, but on the occasions when I was up in the night the landing would be empty. I would see other children going from one room to another. There was just the one staff member at night, but children were still moving between rooms and I can imagine him in the office drinking tea and watching telly not checking on the children. They would do what they wanted to when he was away.

### *Washing/bathing*

13. In the morning we would get a wash and a shower in the morning. I can't remember if the showers were individual.

### *Mealtimes/ food*

14. I remember on my first day in the home I didn't know where the bread and butter was when I wanted to eat a piece. A male staff member was telling me I was a daftie when I didn't know where they were, even though I'd just come into the home. I remember big breakfasts of sausages and eggs. I got up to look and was impressed by the breakfast and thought it was good. I got told off for it and told to sit on my arse and just eat my breakfast. I can remember we had to set the tables for meals in the big dining room and put plates out. The food for dinner was set out in the middle of the tables and we could help ourselves. We could sit where we wanted to. The food was

good and there was a variety available and we were encouraged to eat healthily. The chef was called Tommy or Tam and we got to know him and we could talk to him about the meals. He always had a story for us or he'd have something good to say.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

15. There was a school uniform that was always clean and with regard to clothes, the staff took us to buy new clothes and shoes and to get haircuts.

#### *School*

16. I went to Merrylee Primary school with my brother and we walked from Park Lodge to the school. At the time I felt different when I was in school as I was now in care. They put me and [REDACTED] in different classes. I felt very different to the others and got into fights. Before I went into the home there was a lot of disruption and I'd missed a lot of school. I was behind with learning when I first started at Merrylee and had to do some catching up.

#### *Trips/holidays*

17. I went on trips with the children's home and we went on holiday to do camping and canoeing. When we were in the home, staff took us to the park and took us swimming. They had a minibus. The staff took us away. I can't remember their names but I think there was a very short woman who was called Margaret and she would always talk to us. There was also a big guy, I don't remember his name, who was nice and good at offering guidance and had something to say to me. Another boy told me the big guy was gay and I think the boy just made it up because he was being told off for doing something he shouldn't have. There was an incident where the staff member sat on me, not to restrain me, and stroked my hair and was behaving in a camp manner. I remember I felt uncomfortable.

#### *Chores/work*

18. With regard to any chores or work, I think we were expected to do the dishes maybe or make our own beds and put our clothes away. My space was always tidy and I would put things away.

*Personal possessions*

19. I had personal possessions that I could keep in my room, but some things got stolen or thrown out by older children. Staff knew that sort of thing happened and would not do anything or show any sympathy.

*Religion*

20. With regard to religion, we didn't have to go to church and we didn't have to say prayers before meals. We were not told anything about church.

*Healthcare*

21. With regard to healthcare, the staff would take me to the dentist or doctor if required. I think they were on top of healthcare issues. I never had any health issues that required hospital treatment.

*Visits*

22. My mum came for two or three visits. One visit was for a short time and she brought a bag of sweets. The second visit was to tell me that my dad had passed away. Nobody spoke to me about it after she left. One time she came with one of my sisters and another time with two sisters. I didn't get contact with my siblings otherwise. I saw my social worker who continued to be Margaret Gray, and she was also [REDACTED]'s social worker. I remember many years later when I was seventeen and I had a job in a shop she came in to buy something and recognised me.

*Christmas/birthdays*

23. I can remember having a birthday cake when I was nine and when I was eleven at Park Lodge. The staff gave presents to the children at Christmas as well. I believe the staff got an allowance for each wean to buy presents. I got to keep my presents. There were decorations up for Christmas too and we could help put them up.

#### *Bedwetting*

24. I can remember there were plastic sheets on the beds, on top of the mattresses. I can't remember bed wetting myself. I wasn't aware of anyone else wetting the bed. I didn't think about running away from the home. I'd come in from a bad situation with my family and didn't think about running away.

#### *Discipline*

25. With regard to discipline I don't feel this was done in an appropriate way. If a child persisted they would have a treat or pocket money withdrawn. Looking back I think the staff should have had some training on how to manage relationships between the children. Minor physical punishment was common such as a clip round the ear and pushing and shoving. There was verbal abuse and I was told I was stupid and dirty. There were physical restraints used and the staff sat on you. I was picked up by a staff member by one arm and dropped. That was a common thing. The staff member called GIV was very forceful.

#### **Abuse at Park Lodge**

26. I was aged ten or eleven and the older children were twelve and thirteen and were involved in more adult things. One of the older children would be going into another person's bedroom. Somehow that was common knowledge in the unit and I heard it being talked about. An older boy came into my room who was about two years older than me and was asking me to touch him and touch me back and do other things for his own self-gratification. I was too young to be aroused. He got frustrated and took me into the other bedroom where there were other boys and girls.

27. There was sexual stuff going on in the bedroom between the older boy and one of the girls. The boy touched the girl in a sexual way and she touched him. He thought he needed to demonstrate something to me. From what I knew it was an ongoing thing and consensual but I was worried about the girl. There were other boys and girls involved. I didn't understand it at the time, but knew I wanted to be out of the room. I prefer not to name any of the boys or girls involved in the incident and there were other children in the room. One of the girls in the room drew sexual pictures at some time afterwards and staff threw away what she had drawn and dismissed it. I feel that the staff knew about it and should have done something about it. One of the female members of staff tried talking to me about it, and she called me a dirty bastard and said something was wrong with me.
28. The end result of that conversation with the staff was me and my brother going to the park and playing on the swings and not talking about it again. Once I was out of the situation I went back to being a boy and playing with toys and on the swings with [REDACTED].
29. I didn't report it formally to staff. I think they knew a lot of what was going on. There were consensual sexual things between boys and girls that staff knew about, but didn't deal with. I feel the older boys and girls of fifteen and sixteen in the home had filtered their more natural behaviour down to the boy who wanted me to go into the bedroom with him, and who was aged about twelve.
30. I think the staff knew a lot about what was happening in the home. I think they should have separated the boys and girls better than they did. There were rooms on both the ground floor and on the first floor. The older children could have gone up the stair and the younger ones would not be allowed up there at certain times.

### **Leaving Park Lodge**

31. When I was old enough to go to secondary school I went to school in an area that was either Hillwood or Househillwood. It was next door to the Park Lodge home. I was a bit different at school and was struggling to settle in. I still felt I was behind with school work because of the disruption to my education when I lived in Priesthill.
32. There was a wee guy in the school who was the popular one in the class and felt he was the top man and I didn't like that for some reason. I thought he was a bully and we had a fight and I won and put him in his place. After a couple of weeks it was decided that school wasn't right for me and I was sent to a residential school instead.
33. There was a uniform for this school in Hillwood or Househillwood, but on my last day there I was wearing my own casual clothes so I was not wearing school uniform. It meant I stood out and I felt uncomfortable. I knew at the time I was going to a new school.

### **Balikinrain Residential School, Balfron, Near Stirling**

34. I started to attend school at Balikinrain during the week and then returning to Park Lodge at weekends. My twin brother [REDACTED] went to a different residential school in Airdrie. I don't know why he went to a residential school. From that point that was us split up and I was by myself.
35. It was made up of two units and the top unit had the older kids and the bottom one had the younger ones. I was put in the top unit, despite being younger than the others. I think there were thirty children to a unit, there were multiple rooms and four to six people in each bedroom. There were a couple of rooms for two boys, some for four people and some more for up to six boys. I was younger than other boys in my unit and I don't remember anyone younger than me in that unit. I think the older ones in my unit could have been aged up to sixteen. I feel now that for most of my time there I suppressed my feelings and was quiet. I felt like nobody talked to me, not staff or

other boys. I just kept my head down. I would do my own thing and not have much interaction with others. I had pals through the woodwork classes, but mostly I kept myself to myself.

36. The school was all-boys. There was maybe thirty boys in total. There was a lot of older boys and two or three staff members on duty at a time. The staff were doing whatever they had to do just to keep things under control. The boys were teenagers from Glasgow and they were always fighting and winding each other up.

### **Routine at Balikinrain**

#### *First day*

37. I was shown around the school on my first day. I remember being shown where the classes took place and where we would get our dinner. Then I was left alone to walk about myself. There were older boys and I can remember one of them was questioning me about what I was doing in the top unit as I was younger than the others..

#### *Mornings and bedtime*

38. I moved bedrooms through my time in the school. My bedroom changed every few months when the staff moved people about. The staff would change it whenever they wanted to. There were a lot of boys and there were maybe two or three staff on at one time. I think the staff struggled to be in control. I think we were up in the morning at a set time. That was probably something like 7:30 am and then we'd go off to get a wash and shower and eat breakfast.
39. Bedtime was when the lights were turned off. After that we weren't allowed out of our bedrooms. There was a male member of staff at night that we called Jimmy Eyebrows and he'd shout at you to get back in your bed if he saw you outside of your bedroom.

### *Mealtimes / Food*

40. We went to the middle landing for meals, then it was changed and they made a kitchen upstairs and we went there for meals. The food was edible and was just about alright. I would describe it as industrial cooking and not home cooking. There were a lot of boys to cook for and I can remember food like veg, totties, beans, chops and fish.
41. If you didn't want to eat the food that was ok and I never saw anyone being forced to eat it. I do remember seeing food flying through the air between the boys and staff shouting at them. By the time of the end of my stay I was working in the kitchens to help with putting the meals out.

### *Washing / bathing*

42. There were no locks. You could go and get washed when you wanted to, but you were at the mercies of other people. The toilet and the bath were next to each other. I remember there was a boy using the toilet and I heard him shouting there was no toilet roll. He dragged another wee boy in to get his socks off him to use instead. I remember a boy throwing faeces at me while I was in the bath. I stayed out of his way. He was bad and the boy had no morals. The staff did nothing.
43. There was no staff supervision in the toilet area. There was no teaching of how to take care of yourself and a lot of that was because there was not enough staff for the boys to do that sort of supervision. I don't remember being told to brush my teeth and I don't remember there even being any toothbrushes.

### *Clothing / uniform*

44. I was wearing my own clothes when I came into Balikinrain on a Monday and then they'd go into a wash and I'd get them back on the Friday. At the start of the week you could chose clothes from a big shared box of jogging bottoms, t-shirts, sweatshirts, socks and underwear that the school provided. I can't remember if we got fresh

underwear later in the week. The clothes often didn't fit as it was first come first served. I don't think there was any pride in appearance.

45. I think if your clothes were soiled during the week and you'd spilt a drink down them you'd have to ask to get a replacement from a smaller collection of clothes in a cupboard. To get what you wanted to wear on a Monday you had to be there first. There was no sense of trying to look good and there was no pride in anyone's appearance or anyone trying to look their best.

### *School*

46. There was no schooling. There was a timetable for each day for first period, second period, third and fourth. Any class we walked into the teacher would offer tea and coffee and biscuits and then we sat watching films for the whole of the class. These films included Rambo, Top Gun, Rocky and Predator. I feel I've seen these films a million times. This could happen in any one of the four periods of lessons each day.
47. I was in what was meant to be the science class one day and it was the same thing, there was no work to do. I always felt I was a person who wanted to do work. I walked into the room and asked do we actually do work here? There was a male teacher who took the class and didn't teach anything. He'd talk to us and then he'd put a film on the TV. I asked him for work to do as I would like to do some learning and he gave me a wee beaker and told me to light it. I got the beaker and a work sheet and asked him what I should do next. He then started shouting at me. He swore at me and took the work away from me. He threw things. I burned myself with the Bunsen burner, but I was too scared to tell him. That was the closest to doing school work I got.
48. When I went to class, I'd try to find something to do rather than watch a film. There were educational items around the place and I'd look at what I else could find to do. In all of the learning classes like English and maths there were no learning materials. No books, pencils, pens or paper. These were the classes where we ended up watching TV and drinking tea.

49. There were some practical classes. There was a woodwork unit and an art unit and a clay unit. There was a man called GPB who took woodwork classes and he was brilliant. I'd make stuff with him and learn practical things. In the art class we had a teacher called GOQ and he was really good at making Airfix models and showing them to us. He got me in to doing the same. I could take a wooden bowl from woodwork into art class to paint it. There was also a pottery class and we could make bowls. Those three were classes where we could do things that were practical and learn skills.
50. I was in the pottery class one time and the teacher walked in and said there was something we all needed to do and I felt it was a big thing. He had pieces of paper with exams for O grades in maths and English and science and I filled them in. I felt it was important but the teacher was quite casual and told us to just fill them in. I felt it was something I should be able to do. A few weeks later I got a piece of paper telling me I'd got grades at 6, 7 and 6. I think they were the worst you could get at the time.

#### *Religion*

51. It was a Church of Scotland school, but I'm not aware of religion being part of our daily routine. There were religious items around about the building but it was never introduced or enforced or taught.

#### *Work/chores*

52. We didn't have to do any cleaning. I made my own bed in the morning in the way I'd learned in Park Lodge. I wanted my own space to look alright. The staff were not bothered if a boy had not made his bed. There was no sense of encouraging boys to take care of themselves.

#### *Trips / Holidays*

53. I didn't go on holiday with the school. Some boys went on a school trip to Spain and the school went at least twice. I was never picked to go. Maybe that was because I

was going home or to Park Lodge at weekends and they would take me on holiday. In the school holidays I stayed at Park Lodge and returned to Balikinrain at the end of the holidays. If you were bad you'd go to Balikinrain at weekend or for a few days in the week during the summer holidays.

#### *Leisure time*

54. There was a pool table on the big landing. There was a wee sitting room and rooms around the landing. I remember there was one board game but no one ever played it. Everyone could go and sit in the sitting room. I never went into the sitting room as everything was happening in there. It was full of bullies and there was stuff going on like fights. There was a telly in there and there was also a telly outside of the room with a games console. These were free for anyone to use but that was normally the two loudest bossiest boys and if they weren't on the console they were playing pool. I think I spent most of my time standing and watching other people.
55. There were game nights on a Tuesday evening when you could play football on their own pitch or you could go down to one of the classrooms to use their computers. There was a staff member called **zHVC** who had a house inside the grounds and he was brilliant, one of the good guys and he would talk to you. The other boys made fun of him and he would shut himself off and not talk to anyone. He was just doing his job. I got on well with him and he took me out of the school to a local gym.
56. There were some good things there, but the other boys didn't seem interested in anything but fighting with each other. Sometimes the school would organise football against another school, but that was rare. Sometimes school discos were arranged with girls' schools. About once a month the staff would pick a group of boys to go swimming.

#### *Personal possessions*

57. We had so little to call our own, the only things you had was the bed, the blankets and the clothes you were wearing. All your own stuff was taken away. When I arrived on

my first day I had a bag with my things in it and I had a personal stereo. Two of the staff looked at each other and one of them said to me I wouldn't be needing any of those things. I didn't expect the home to be the way that it was. They took the bag from me and said they'd look after it for me. You couldn't really have personal possessions as they'd get stolen.

58. If you got the bus into the town on a Friday you'd be given an envelope with £5 in it. I assume that's what the authorities put in the budget for the weans to have as pocket money.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

59. In the Christmas holidays I'd be expected to leave and go to Park Lodge or my family home and other boys would be expected to go home.

#### *Visits / Inspections*

60. My week in Balikinrain finished on a Friday lunchtime at either 12 noon, 1 pm or 2 pm. There would be two runs. I would get my lunch at the school and then the van arrived to take the first group of people into the town or take them to wherever they needed to go. Then the van would return for another group of people. On a Monday I would get picked up at Buchanan Street bus station at eight o'clock to go to school. After a while I started to stay with my mum on a weekend and then I would be dropped off in Glasgow city centre and got a bus myself to Balikinrain myself as I got older. The schools sorted out the transport arrangements.
61. I had one visit from my mum when she brought me a bag of sweets. I had to hide them in my drawers. One boy saw it and told other boys who grabbed all of them. A staff member saw it happen and did nothing to prevent it. I think staff expected personal possessions to be stolen.

62. I didn't see my brothers or sisters and there was no letters or cards between us or between me and my mum. You could probably get access to a phone in the school to ring home, but I never did.
63. With regard to official visits we were in the dining room having dinner one time and a man came in with staff who introduced him as Mr Kipling. I have no idea who the guy was or what he was doing there. One boy asked if he had brought any cakes. I remember a tottie was thrown across the room and hit him. No-one was questioned about it. I don't know who Mr Kipling was or why he was there and there was no conversation about his visit.

#### *Healthcare*

64. There was no nurse on duty at the school. If you asked to see a dentist the staff would take you. I don't remember getting regular check-ups. I remember I got taken to see a doctor when I had grit in my eye. If there was something wrong with your health you could go to the staff and someone would take you to get help with whatever was wrong.

#### *Running away*

65. There was a story going round the school that years ago, in the middle of nowhere, like Balikinrain, two boys ran away from a home and they froze to death. I never ran away as where would I go and what would I do? Probably boys did run away but I don't know anything about it.

#### *Bed Wetting*

66. Bed wetting was not a problem for me. There were plastic covers on all of the mattresses. I don't know how a wet bed would have been dealt with.

## *Discipline*

67. I remember seeing boys carried out of rooms by legs and arms by staff members. More staff might be called to come in to help take that boy out. I don't know where they were taken or what happened to them. I was never taken anywhere like that and I wondered where they were taken. I never asked any of the other boys about it.
68. I was told by other boys not to mess with the staff member with the surname **HHZ**, but I don't know what it was he'd done. Everyone liked him and thought he was ok as he would talk to us. I think his first name was **HHZ**, but I'm not sure. I can't recall seeing any of the boys with a black eye or bruising elsewhere.

## **Abuse at Balikinrain**

69. I never experienced a lot of abuse from the staff or witnessed anything very serious happening, other than isolated incidents. There were only three staff members on duty at a time. In my view Balikinrain needed at least one staff member for every three or four boys to make it work properly and give boys some individual attention.
70. There was physical abuse between the boys. I witnessed sexual activity between the boys, but I was not a victim. I just knew it happened to some other boys. Some of them used screwdrivers as weapons to hurt other boys. I didn't see any bad injuries. I heard it happening through the wall. I stayed out of these situations and I kept out of the way. The other boys were older than me and I was on my own. I also feel the staff kept me quiet too and they kept me out of the way. I'd try to talk to staff and engage them in conversation and they'd ignore me.
71. There would be boys fighting with other boys. There was no sense of self care or responsibility for others or concern for anyone else. There was a lot of boys fighting with each other and some of them were wild with no education, values or morals. I was aware of abuse between boys on sectarian lines. It was possibly on football team lines, but I'm not sure if it was considered to be a big deal. I'm quite sure there would

have been some boys abusing alcohol or drugs. I can remember some boasts about what they had access to.

72. I remember one staff member called [HHZ]. He was a supervisor of the staff and higher up. There was someone else called [ITK] who was Irish and he was one of very few staff who would talk to me. He was really good.

### **Leaving Balikinrain**

73. I was getting too old for that school and I couldn't go to the family home to live. Instead I went to Geilsland School for older weans. I think this was in 1995 when I was fifteen. [REDACTED] didn't move to Geilsland. I stopped going to Park Lodge at weekends at some stage between being at Balikinrain and moving on to Geilsland.

### **Geilsland School, Beith, Ayrshire**

74. There were different units. My unit, to my mind, had normal boys in it that were not in trouble and there was another unit for rougher boys who got into a lot more trouble plus one unit for boys with disabilities.
75. It was all boys at the school. I think the age range was fifteen and over. I had a room at first with a boy called [REDACTED] and I can't remember if there was someone else sharing the room. That was for a short while and then I was moved into a new building and I had my own bedroom from then onwards. I made sure I kept it clean and tidy. When I first moved into the unit I probably got shown round it. After the new buildings were put up and there was a new structure to Geilsland it was better, but the staff were still poor.
76. I had a key worker called Nancy and she was alright. The staff were generally bad at Geilsland but there were some good ones like Nancy and there was another one called [ERW]. Staff came from the local area of Beith and Kippen. It looked like it was just a

job to them and they didn't take any nonsense off anyone. Boys were cheeky and some of the staff punched and slapped kids.

#### *First day*

77. My first impressions of the school were that it was being done up. They were building wee houses and units all scattered about. There were different school units. Rather than one big building for the school there were several small buildings scattered about. The unit I was in at the start was not nice looking. It was quite scabby looking. I was probably shown round the place. I don't remember it.
78. On my first day I talked to another boy who was telling me he was going into the town and I went with him. The staff sent police to come looking for us after about two hours and they took us back. If boys did something like that their pocket money would be withheld and weekend leave might be withheld.

#### *Mornings and bedtimes*

79. We would have been up at 7 am or 7:30 am to get ready for the day. Then we went for breakfast. The facilities were poor when I was first there and there were holes in the walls of my first bedroom. There was a set bedtime of 9 or 10 pm.

#### *Washing and bathing*

80. There were no toothbrushes or toothpaste and staff didn't care about anything like that and they were just interested in getting you up in the morning and moving on to breakfast and school. At the beginning in the old buildings there was very little, just bars of soap. Once we got to the new units they would give you stuff. I had my own room and toilet and I could keep my own toiletries and I could lock my bedroom door. I'd not been used to doing things like that or even brushing my own teeth and having my own towels and now I had my own bedding.

81. I remember there was a bath that I could use when I wanted to. I can't remember a shower. There was no supervision of washing. The new unit had a house built inside it. It had a living room, kitchen and two bedrooms. The facilities were not being used for what they were intended for. The kitchen wasn't used as it was intended. I asked to go and make tea and was assaulted by staff for asking for milk. When I left care later on and I lived alone, I lived off toast as I didn't know how to cook. There was a row of these little houses in Geilsland. I moved into a house with maybe two other boys. We had our own sitting room. It was locked with key pads at the door. We had all the facilities we needed.

#### *Clothing/uniform*

82. I can't remember the clothes at Geilsland. I think we wore our own clothes and you could go and get them washed. I think they bought you clothes, but I can't remember going out to buy them. If you went into one of the workshops you'd put a boiler suit on.

#### *Mealtimes/food*

83. Breakfast was cereal when I was first there. I'm sure we got fed lunch and dinner. Once we moved to the new unit there was a wee dining room and kitchen attached and a woman worked in there. That was a lot better and she made the meals. The food for lunch and dinner was similar and mixed between fish, chips and sausages. It was ok.

#### *School*

84. In terms of the school, the lessons were all about practical skills. There was a place for car mechanics, woodwork and an iron works. There were a couple of classrooms for maths and computers. There was a big gym. I think the school was all about teaching weans a trade that they might pick up when they leave. I went into a woodwork class. It was more like a joinery class as a trade thing and not a school lesson.

85. It was woodwork for me and not the ironworks. The man who did the woodwork was brilliant and he would talk to you and show you stuff. There was also a handyman in the school in his own unit and he fixed furniture and broken windows in the home and that was his job. I went into his unit to help him out with the practical stuff. We got on ok. I can't remember his name now. The guy who had the joinery class was alright too and I passed a Scot tech module on the subject.
86. We were expected to go to the gym hall, but I didn't go to the gym. There was a corridor alongside the back of the gym into a wee room. The wee guy who ran the gym hall was in his forties, bald [REDACTED]. He wasn't very nice. I don't know his name. He'd walk along the corridor to the wee room and he wanted us to watch films. I asked him for physical activity to do in class and he laughed and head butted me in response. I wasn't even cheeky, I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't go back to the gym and stayed away.
87. SNR-KMJ [REDACTED] was a nasty man. In assembly I used to sit under a table at the back so they wouldn't see me. SNR-KMJ [REDACTED] used to take pocket money from the boys for things he said they had done. I challenged him and told him he wasn't allowed to take people's pocket money as it's part of the budget for each person. He told me I'd get no pocket money. The staff were taking pocket money and there was a wee pool of money and the staff were spending it on something else.
88. I avoided classes and would stay away from all of them apart from woodwork. I just helped the handyman. They had computers and I did a maths course and got a Scot tech in maths.
89. The problems with the school was all caused by the staff. I used to walk through the school behind the wall so I could avoid the staff and so no-one could see me. I was avoiding anything happening. The staff were walking about and if they saw you they'd grab you. I did that for a long time to avoid classes as I didn't want to be assaulted.

### *Leisure time*

90. I learned not to bother the staff for activities to do. I asked Nancy if I could join cadets and she got me in the cadet unit. Nancy used to take me to cadets and I loved being there and that's given me some happy memories. I had good pals in cadets. I had a uniform. If I needed anything like that she would help or if I needed toiletries she would help me. My unit staff, apart from Nancy weren't ok. A lot of my leisure time was spent avoiding staff. The boys played football and I could play with other boys from other units and some staff too.
91. I didn't go on any trips or holidays with this school. They might have taken us swimming.

### *Healthcare*

92. With regard to healthcare, I could ask Nancy. She took me to the dentist for a filling. If I asked her for something she would get it for me.

### *Religion*

93. Geilsland was run by the Church of Scotland. Everyone had to go to church occasionally.

### *Work/Chores*

94. I was living in one of the wee houses and I think that set up was to teach us how to live independently. I'd keep my own space clean and we were expected to keep our own space clean. Staff didn't help us with that sort of thing. I was comfortable with my own space and took pride in it. We didn't have to clean communal spaces. I was able to have personal items such as music tapes and I had a lock on my door to keep things safe.

95. In the first unit I was in I shared a house with a boy called [REDACTED]. He was ok. He also had his own bedroom. One of the other boys from another unit knew how to open the windows from the outside and he climbed over the roof to get to the windows and steal people's belongings. I didn't report the theft as there was no point. Nothing would get done about it.

#### *Christmas/Birthdays*

96. I can't remember having a birthday when I was at Geilsland. At Christmas I went to stay with my family.

#### *Visits*

97. I didn't see any official visitors coming to inspect the place. I remember we were out in the school van one time into the local town and it was snowing. The van was a target for the local boys who started shouting at us and throwing stones. Me and my friend threw snowballs at them. The staff sided with the local boys who threatened us and the staff threw us in the van to go home. The staff members were from Beith and were hostile to us and regarded us as scum.
98. I didn't get any visits from my family, even when I was getting prepared for going home to live. I never wrote to my siblings and I wasn't aware that I could. By the time I was placed at Geilsland I'd started going to my family home at weekend.

#### **Abuse at Geilsland**

99. There was a guy on staff called [REDACTED] ERW who was from Ayr and he was ok and someone else called Sara Cosworth who I thought was quite cool. I'd go out if [REDACTED] ERW was taking us as he was ok and he'd talk to boys as individuals. I'd stay away from the other staff as they would assault boys for no reason. Even [REDACTED] SNR would challenge you in an aggressive way if you just walked past him. The impact on me was I withdrew and avoided people and situations.

100. There was a male staff member who worked with the unit for boys with disabilities. He was a huge muscular guy and I thought he was ok and nobody was going to mess with him. I never had much to do with him. The people who worked there shouldn't have been there as they were doing it just because it was a job and they lived in the local area. The boys in the home were scum to them.
101. There was a bad staff member from one of the other units and I was warned about him by lots of boys. He battered everybody. I can't remember his name. He had no interest in playing football. I heard he used to be at the school himself as a boy before he joined the staff and he lived in Beith. He punched me when we were meant to be playing and I did nothing to provoke it. I shouted at him and staff from my unit came over and grabbed me as if I was the problem and not him. My leisure time was mainly about avoiding this member of staff and avoiding the leisure that the staff wanted to give us.
102. Nancy never assaulted me, but she knew other staff head-butted boys. She'd seen it happen and when she did she would go quiet and stand back. Maybe because she was a woman and it was the men who were doing the head-butting and she couldn't do anything about it. She didn't even give me encouraging words, like don't worry about it. She was good at buying me things I needed, but as for assaults she wouldn't stand up to it and allowed it to happen.
103. My worst injury caused me to have a bleeding nose when I was head butted by a member of staff. He grabbed my arm and restrained me to take me back to the unit. Nancy saw him and she got a bandage for me. I reported it to SNR [REDACTED] and he was worse than the attacker. There was no point in reporting anything.
104. There was an incident with a boy with learning disabilities who was bullied for something. I tried to comfort him and he attacked me. I told the staff and their response was to tell me to leave him. The staff member was aware there was a sexual element to the bullying. Boys were battered by staff members who would drag boys out of rooms and take them away. This behaviour damaged our confidence and ability to

learn and it can destroy you. I was at cadets as one person and at Geilsland I was assaulted and I was a different person there. It did nothing good for me and my personality. I witnessed abuse of other boys who were being battered and taken away.

105. There were boys smoking, taking drugs and fighting. I saw staff hitting boys, possibly with sticks, I can't say what implement they used, on the head and knees. The wee guy who attacked me when we played football used to go to the school himself and then went on to become a staff member had a bad attitude and was dismissive of the boys. The staff had the same attitude and were looking out for each other.
106. Staff had no tolerance for the boys and seemed to think the boys were from a bad background and didn't matter. I don't remember any of the boys being treated better than the others. There was never a report written of any incidents or accidents. I saw a boy getting punished by SNR [REDACTED] for having an accident. Staff just didn't care about the boys and wanted to blame them for everything they could and punish them by taking pocket money and withdrawing privileges. There was no praise for the boys.

### **Reporting of abuse at Geilsland**

107. I tried to challenge the staff taking pocket money off us. I was dismissed and sworn at. When I tried to report it to someone, SNR [REDACTED], I was treated as scum and he was dismissive of me.

### **Leaving Geilsland**

108. When it was coming to the time when I would leave the school as I was sixteen it was decided I would go to live with my mum. This was in 1995. I didn't feel I was ready for life outside of the school as I'd had so little education. I'd felt the need to hide all the time and I had nothing to show for my time in school.

109. I had been going to my mum's house for weekends, but I didn't feel I could go back to live with her. I'd also seen my siblings on those home visits. I shared my concerns with a man at Geilsland who was dismissive of me and told me to get on with things. I felt I needed some kind of counselling at this stage as I had so little confidence in myself.

### **Life after being in care**

110. When I left Geilsland an appointment was made for me to see a career's advisor at Bellahouston Academy in a mainstream school. It all felt foreign to me and I was clueless about what I was going to do next, but smart enough to see I had no education or qualifications. He had nothing for me and he agreed with me there was nothing I could do with the jobs he was telling me about.
111. By the time I went back to live with my mum she'd just got a new property in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to accommodate her boys coming home and she had decorated it. It was a new start for her. [REDACTED] came back to live there too and I'd been seeing him at weekends. It was me, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and my mum in the house. I discovered being with my mum wasn't as important to me then as it had been when I first went into care at aged eight.
112. My pal [REDACTED] had a job delivering milk and I started to do that with him for a while. I saved some money. Then I left my mum's house and got my own property. I had no guidance with how I would manage by myself. I did everything for myself. I had a lot of practical skills. Not long after I moved in with her, my mum developed cancer and had her own problems to deal with.
113. I saw an advert for joining the Marines and I joined up when I was eighteen, around 2000 to 2002, and did training with them. The staff sergeant told me if I wanted to progress I would require qualifications in maths and English and others that I didn't have. He pointed out how poor my grades were and if I wanted to be a sergeant I'd have to go to college and do my O Grades again. I spent two years in the Marines before leaving when I started a family with my partner.

114. My mum passed away and I took over her property and my big sister went away to live. I was in the house by myself with my pal. Because of my time in Geilsland I still had no confidence or education or guidance for myself. Now I am in the Reserves have been there since 2013. In the last few years I've taken as many army tests as I can and passed them. Now I have a HGV licence from the army. I have been building up qualifications that I should have had years ago as a boy at school. I'm still trying to do more and get qualifications. For the last four years I've been the sole carer for my three oldest children who are school age.

### **Impact**

115. I continue to feel the impact of being a young boy in the care system who was neglected, not educated and put down and insulted by people who were meant to care who then sent me out into the real world with no help or preparation. I still have my faith and have had a religious belief from being a youngster and it has been one constant that has always been there for me and got me through.

### **Reporting of abuse**

116. Police Scotland contacted me in 2021 as a result of my involvement with the Inquiry and asked me to give them a statement about abuse in care at Geilsland. I went to Castlemilk Police Station to meet them. I was able to have my advocate with me for support when I gave the statement and I thought they handled matters well.

### **Records**

117. I have never looked for my records. I don't know what I would do with them. when I was fighting to have the care of my children I had an independent social work

assessment. The social worker Dr Chris Robinson said my records were a mess and there was a lot missing.

**Lessons to be Learned**

- 118. People in jobs taking care of kids need to be the right people. They should be assessed working with children for two days at least and assessed in that environment before they get employed. Having the facilities in children's homes is one part of it, but the staff who take care of children need to be vetted and scrutinised before being put in a position of responsibility.
- 119. I hope that the Inquiry will change what has happened in the past and achieve a higher standard of care that is adhered to.

**Other information**

- 120. 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 GIU .....

Dated 12/07/2021 .....