

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ERV

Support person present: No

1. My name is ERV My date of birth is 1991. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. My mother's name is The person I call my father is He lived with us since I was seven or eight months old, so he deserves the title of being my father. My biological father is I just found him two and a half years ago. Someone at the funeral told me that my father drank in the Wetherspools as you get off the train at Paisley. So I went down and within twenty-four hours I found out his sister had a shop. He had been up in Inverness for ten years when he met my mother.
3. From there I found out I had a brother seven months older than me, who was lying in the cemetery, and another brother who was seven months younger than me. He lives two schemes across from me. They were my father's children. My brother apparently knew about me, but never told me. I have another brother and sister who live away from Geilsland Residential School, where I was in care. My dad stayed there, and he knew I was there. So when I was in care someone was feeding him information about where I was.
4. I grew up in Inverness. My mother is the longest occupant in the seventy flats there. I went to Crown Primary School, which was a

school in the posh area of Inverness. All the old Victorian houses are around there. I came from a rough area, with a traveller's surname. It made things quite interesting to say the least. I got on okay at school. I wasn't the smartest out of that bunch, but I didn't do too bad. They were the children of doctors and things like that.

5. I had a little sister called [REDACTED] who is eight years younger than me. We lived in a two bedroomed house, which was too small. I had my bedroom and my mum had hers, then I had bunk beds in mine for six years. I was turning twelve and I understood what was going on.
6. I was in first year at Millburn Academy when I went into care. My resentment built towards [REDACTED] as I was told he wasn't my dad when I was five years old even though I had a gut feeling about it. He is from Chesterfield and I remember my granny telling me I don't have any English blood in me. I began to rebel and told [REDACTED] to stop telling me what to do. It came to a head when I went to school one day with a carpet burn across my face. [REDACTED] had been restraining me. The school told me that my uncle [REDACTED] was picking me up from school, then I was told to go back to the offices and that it would be a social worker coming to get me and I was going to McDonald's.
7. I'd had multiple support workers over the years. I believe this was for respite for my mother. They would pick me up and take me out for the day. My mother was in the system as she had been abused in the past. [REDACTED] worked in [REDACTED] a factory bakery, which is where I got my first Saturday job. There were lots of arguments between my mum, [REDACTED] and myself. I would be the trigger sometimes, even though I didn't know the concept of what I was doing wrong.
8. I had a support worker for as long as I can remember. Every member of staff from Ashton Road Children's Home had been my support worker. I went to multiple children's panels over the years. They were my 'Get out of jail free' card, because I'd have to come up to Inverness for the panels. I'd also been in a number of respite places for a couple of weeks at a time before I actually went into care. I remember staying with this really Catholic woman when I was about eight, and I remember

being somewhere else before that for three or four nights. These were all organised by the social work.

9. I was about twelve years old when the incident with the carpet burn happened. Everybody noticed I as it was hard to miss. Teachers asked a couple of questions about it, but I didn't go into the specifics. I was taken by social work to a house in Dalneigh, which is a scheme in Inverness. I was told I was going to McDonald's. I can't remember names of social workers. In my last year in care I had nine different social workers. I believe it was a doctor's house I was taken to. I had to strip naked and I was examined. They had a diagram of a person on a piece of paper and another with the back of a person and they made notes on all the marks on me. I had bruises where I had been grabbed and things like that. I told them I was throwing punches back. I believe there were three people there. I felt ashamed because I had no choice. They thought it wasn't safe for me to go back home even though my dad told them he was only restraining me. The police were involved and he got community service I believe. I didn't give evidence as I was in care and wasn't allowed.

The [REDACTED] foster care, Invergordon

10. After the incident and the examination I went to my first foster home. The social work took me to a go-kart track and they explained that I would be staying with a family for a couple of nights, then they took me to Invergordon. I had the feeling that it would be longer than that, because of the circumstances involved.
11. The couple were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They had [REDACTED] terriers. They stayed in Invergordon but I can't remember their exact address. They stayed in a cottage next to [REDACTED]. I don't know their ages, but they were getting on. They were strict, but they treated me very well. I don't know if they worked, but I do remember one of them being out of the house for a period of time during the day. I can't remember which one.

12. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had a son who stayed up a set of creaky stairs in an extension room they had put on to the house. He was about fifteen or sixteen. I can't remember his name. I remember he had a lot of freedom. He could come and go. They had another foster boy there. He came three to four weeks after I got there. I can't remember his name.
13. I was there for about four months. I spent my thirteenth birthday there. We went to a [REDACTED] in Edinburgh on my birthday. I think there were four bedrooms in the house. I had my own bedroom, then they promoted me up the creaky stairs, because their son, I think he was adopted, had left.

Schooling

14. While I was there I carried on going to Millburn Academy. It cost eighty pounds a day in a taxi, there and back. [REDACTED] would waken me in the morning, but I would argue as I hated getting up, but basically I played ball. When I was at my mother's she stayed [REDACTED] from the school and I was regularly late.

Clothing

15. The [REDACTED] were very stable people. They weren't just doing it for the money, they did care. They made me feel like I was part of the family. They took me shopping for clothes and told me to pick what I wanted as they weren't paying for it, the social work were. They were trying to not make me feel bad about it.

Chores

16. I did chores when I was there, bringing in the coal, stoking the fire, cleaning my room and walking the dogs down by [REDACTED]. I remember when I was there it snowed heavily. I loved the snow. I had a big thick jacket on, shoes that kept me warm, gloves and a hat on. I was thinking, I could just take off home and tell them how much I missed living at home, but I thought that would be betraying [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

Visits

17. I felt resentment towards my mum as she didn't come and see me on my birthday. She sent my little sister instead. This was the day before my birthday. The social work brought her through. I told them I wanted to go home so they wanted to reassure me and show me a familiar face. I got visits from the social work every three or three and a half weeks. I had a lot of social workers even before going into care, I can't remember names.

Birthdays & Christmas

18. On my birthday we went down to the [REDACTED] in Edinburgh. We just stayed the day and drove back up. They were showing their dogs. I'm sure they won a rosette. I must have been there for Christmas, but I don't remember. I must have a mental block.

Personal possessions & leisure time

19. I had my own personal possessions while I was there. I had 'Bionics', which was a brand of toy, and Lego. They had a PC and I was allowed to use it. I remember playing a game on it called 'Age of Empires'. I enjoyed taking the dogs out down to [REDACTED], just getting away from everything.

Leaving the [REDACTED] foster care, Invergordon

20. From Invergordon I went to another foster placement in Nairn, on the seafront. I was taken there to see it, but told them I would rather stay in Invergordon. However I was told that the [REDACTED] contract had expired. I believe they tried to extend their contract, but couldn't.

Foster care in Nairn

21. The house in Nairn was right on the seafront. It was a [REDACTED] house with a long front garden that looked [REDACTED] on the front. The woman's name was also [REDACTED] and her husband's name started with an [REDACTED] but I can't remember it, or their surname. I was there for about three weeks.
22. I shared a room with another boy who was in care. His name was [REDACTED]. I think there was a year between us. I can't remember if he was older or younger. We had bunk beds in our room. There were another two boys there that were fostered. They shared a room, but they got on well. I can't remember their names.
23. I was still going to Millburn Academy by taxi. It wasn't as far from Nairn as it was from Invergordon. I remember [REDACTED] got me a big snowboarders jacket and I would throw it under the stairs at school. I didn't want to be seen in it. I would go and get it at half past three when I finished school. I was acting out. I started to smoke cannabis with my friends so that I would sleep when I got back to Nairn. I had been doing okay at school, I was even going to drama class, but then I began not to care.
24. [REDACTED] continually exposed himself and masturbated. It made me feel very uncomfortable. I kept telling him to stop it or I would tell [REDACTED] but he kept doing it, so I hit him. I told [REDACTED] who told him to stop it. I got the vibe that she wasn't overly shocked about it.
25. I left that night and planned to walk from Nairn to Inverness, which is twelve or thirteen miles. I got to four miles from Inverness and saw a telephone box, so I called my granny and reversed the charges. She went mad. The police picked me up and took me back to the station. [REDACTED] and her husband came and picked me up and gave me a bollocking. I told the social work why I left. I don't think anything happened to [REDACTED] but I was moved the next day or the day after. I was moved from there to Coulpark Children's Home. I was still thirteen.

26. I didn't like the place in Nairn. [REDACTED]'s husband went to work and came home and said, 'Hello'. That was it. He made no effort to make you feel comfortable. There was me and another three foster children. I think [REDACTED] was doing it for the money, whereas the [REDACTED] weren't.

Coulpark Children's Centre, Alness, and Ashton Road Children's Home, Inverness

27. I was in Coulpark for eight to nine months, then Ashton Road when I was about fourteen. Coulpark was in Alness. It's no longer there. Ashton Road is in Inverness. I was there for nearly two years in total. I was there for over a year then I went to a respite place, Acharacle, which was non-stop activities. It's past Fort William. You have to cross Loch Shiel. You can only get there by boat. Secondary Institutions - to be published

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31. When I came back from Acharacle to Ashton Road, Secondary Institutions - to be published later me after about three to four months and sent me to Applied Care And Development, (ACAD), which is in Moniaive, Dumfriesshire. I was there for five to six months.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Applied Care And Development, Moniaive, Dumfriesshire

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Geilsland Residential School, Beith, North Ayrshire

36. I went to Geilsland for an overnight stay to begin with. On the overnight trip I did the runabout with the boys, so that you could get a smoke. The grounds were so big, so everyone would run around, out of the way of the staff, to get a smoke. The staff

would be out chasing you. They had these candlelight torches and radios, so it was a buzz as well.

37. It was a List D, borstal type place. There were three units, the mansion house and the school. It had the worst name back in the day, as a borstal, before it turned semi-secure. You could walk out the door, but there were always eyes on you, people following you. If I managed to get half way across the field they knew I was off. I would get the train to Glasgow Central, then over to Queen Street and get the train up to Inverness. I ran away a lot, almost every week. I'd be taken to the police station, put in the cells and waited on the secure drivers that would come up. The doors would have the child locks on. They would come up with food because you had been on the run and you'd be weak.
38. Geilsland can look so good, like one of these holiday parks in the brochure. But if you get a medium rate ticket, you're going to get medium rate quality care. **SNR**
KMJ He kept saying he was only there for the kids, but he never spared me more than five to ten minutes.
39. There were about forty boys there. Fifteen to twenty were on a home leave pattern, so they were only there Monday to Friday. There were loads of staff on at any one time. The music teacher was Alex Ferguson. I used to think he was a bit funny, a bit handsy. There was Agnes Walsh, who was decent, **HNL** who was old school, quality, very good, Diane McQueen and Dominic Harrogate. There was a member of staff called **HVP**. He was very authoritative. When I first went there I smashed him with a plasma lamp and he tried to room base me. He got me charged. He eventually became my key worker and over my last eight or nine months there we became very close. There were some staff members who tried to instil wisdom into you, they were good. I would be fifteen and a half when he became my key worker. I was fourteen and a half when I went there and I left when I had just turned seventeen.

Routine

40. We went to chapel every morning, then we would go to education until about half past twelve. We had lunch then back to education. If you didn't go to education you would lose the TV out of your room.
41. There were three separate units in Geilsland. Cunningham, Garnoch and Lomond. I was in Cunningham, which had all the top boys in it. There were Glaswegians there who tried to live up to their family name, then they found out what my family were like. You were likely to get a smoke or a drink there. I was there the whole time. You don't get moved unit but the boys in Garnoch came up to Cunningham after a while, as there wasn't enough boys there to keep it open. Each unit had sleeping rooms, a kitchen, dining room with five tables and a hatch. They had their own chefs. There was a laundry, staff office, staff smoking room and a recreation room with a pool table. I was in a few of the flats there. There were four boys in each flat. A couple of months before I turned seventeen I moved into flat four, which was an independent living place. Lomond was for boys with mental health issues. It's probably where that foster boy from Nairn should have been. So we always kept ourselves to ourselves.
42. Geilsland was run by Crossreach, Church of Scotland, so it was quite religious. If you didn't get up for chapel your TV was taken from your room. After chapel you got your breakfast, but if I went to Home Economics I could make cheese toasties at ten o'clock. The food was great. You couldn't want for better. We were spoilt rotten.

Clothing

43. You got a clothing allowance, toiletry allowance and a haircut allowance. You got a hundred and fifty pounds a month for clothes. You could save it for a couple of months and have three hundred pounds to spend. They took us to Braehead Shopping Centre. You could get a Lacoste tracksuit for a hundred and seventy pounds, Yves Saint Laurent tops, trainers. But this lulls you into a false sense of security, when I left there I had two tracksuits for every day of the week, so you think life is easy.

get up the road to Inverness and bolt. I think I spent Christmas in Geilsland once. I can't remember it being celebrated.

Visitors

49. My mother and my uncle were flown down once. They flew them to Glasgow and they stayed in a hotel. My uncle raided the mini fridge. They were down for two days. They took me to Braehead for a tracksuit. I was raging as I felt filthy because there was a storm and all the boys that could go home did go home and I was stuck there. The only time I could go and get a wash was when we went swimming, because there was no electricity or anything at Geilsland. The only good thing was that we got Chinese meals every night for about two to three weeks.
50. When they came down, a member of staff dropped us off at Braehead. Mum brought her new boyfriend down too. She had split up with [REDACTED]. There was bail conditions for him to stay away because of the assault charge. I couldn't be bothered going with them to Braehead and my mum said, "I've come all this way", and I said, "You didn't pay for it".
51. I got a rare visit from a social worker from Inverness. I would call up their office every now and then and ask for my social worker and told I had a new one. I had nine different social workers in my last year in care. I had lots of children's panels while I was in Geilsland. Two to three members of staff would bring me up to Inverness to attend them.

Discipline

52. If you did something wrong they would take your TV out of your room. There was also flat basing and room basing. If you were mucking about at the pool table, or demanding supper early, they would tell you to go into a flat for ten minutes to cool down. This was flat basing. If there was only a couple of staff and they felt threatened by us, they would flat base us until they got back up. If you kicked off for being flat based, you would get room based. That's where the dirty stuff happened.

them. I didn't care about ERY and ERT I hadn't built a relationship with them, but I had with her, and I was annoyed when she said, "It's alright son", as those two were saying, "Where's your mum now?". One of them had his forearm into the back of my head, my face right into the ground, arms pinned in front of me. They took my shoes off as they classed them as weapons. They then picked me up and threw me onto my bed. These guys were professionals and I could tell they had done it before.

56. I got no medical attention. I woke up feeling rough and was made to feel I was out of order because I was making a complaint about it. The unit manager at the time was a woman. I can't remember her name. She had a lot of freckles. I told her what happened. For weeks on end I complained. When they have their main staff meeting, when everyone comes in, every fortnight or so, I would stand at the door from the get go. I was always told they would get to my complaint, but they never did.
57. I had made the complaint to the unit manager and remember wording it. It would have been put into my notes. It was a brief summary. So every fortnight I would stand outside the door of the staff meeting to make my complaint official, but I kept being told they hadn't got to it. The police were never told. There were no repercussions for ERY and ERT. They were nice to me to my face thereafter, but I just acknowledged them. They gave me two major slams into the floor, so to my mind it was deliberate. It was around the middle of my time at Geilsland.
58. I do think Alex Ferguson, the music teacher, was too handsy, touchy feely. I threw a chair at him one time. He used to annoy all the boys by putting his hands on their shoulders.
59. Some of the staff, I don't know names, were a bit enthusiastic in their restraining tactics. All staff restrained us. It was different when you were restrained by women. There could be one guy who is a bit enthusiastic but if it's two women, you're already calming down when you see that they are hurting themselves while trying to restrain you.

Records

71. I know my records will be sitting in that mansion house in Geilsland. I am trying to get them. I contacted the Highland Council but I was told I need a Subject Access form to get them. I wouldn't know where to get that.

Lessons to be learned

72. I know staff should have solidarity between each other, but they shouldn't underestimate the fact that a child always tells the truth, and if they tell you something then you have to listen. I had a loss of connection with the social work and had abandonment issues with them, like I was on a waltzer in the system.
73. When I was with the sound members of staff it was good, but they then acted up when other members of staff were about, and couldn't be themselves. If you watch
- Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Hopes for the Inquiry

74. I've been told they are now using children who were in care in Children's panels now. That's a good idea because they have lived that life, even though I think they are mollycoddled in care today.

