

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of PJO [REDACTED]

Support person present: No.

1. My name is PJO [REDACTED]. My maiden name was PJO [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1970. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mother's name was [REDACTED], born [REDACTED] 1939 and my dad was [REDACTED], but everybody called him [REDACTED]. He was born [REDACTED] 1935. I have two brothers and one sister, all older than me. My brothers are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and my sister is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is five years older than me and [REDACTED] is two years older. [REDACTED] is four years older than me.
3. I was born at [REDACTED], Possilpark, Glasgow and that's where we lived when I was young. It was a two bedroom flat. My dad worked in Stone End Street as a forklift driver. My mum mostly worked as a cook. I had a normal childhood.
4. I'm not sure if it was 1974 or 1975 that I went to Fornethy but it was before I started school. I don't remember much about the reasons for me going to Fornethy. I think it was because my mum had a breakdown. I learned about that as an adult, I don't have memories of my mum being ill when I was four or five.
5. The first time I went to Fornethy I went with my sister, then I went back on my own a few weeks later. I think the first time I went it was the summer because I had my birthday there on either the first or second trip. I remember my mum sewing labels onto my clothes and then I remember going to Bell Street with my dad to get the bus to Fornethy.

Fornethy House, Kilry, 1974/5

6. The bus journey to Fornethy seemed to take forever. I have been back there as an adult and it didn't take long but it did when I was a child, plus there weren't any motorways back then. The only long journeys I had been on before Fornethy was when I went on holiday with my parents to Rothesay.
7. I hadn't been told where we were going. I don't recall being told anything about Fornethy but because I was going with [REDACTED] I felt re-assured, I didn't ask any questions. I sat next to [REDACTED] on the bus but I don't remember the names of anyone else.
8. I would say there were about a dozen girls on the bus. I would say I was the youngest child on the bus. I don't remember if there were any adults on the bus the first time but there was a woman the second time, she put me next to another girl.
9. The two times I was at Fornethy were just a few weeks apart. There was no change in the routine at Fornethy between my first visit and my second, it was the same staff and everything.

Routine at Fornethy House

First day

10. It was all girls at Fornethy House. I remember when we got there, there were hundreds of trees. It got really dark being under all the trees. There was one big building which was lovely looking. We were quite excited when we saw it. Then we drove up to the main door.
11. When we got off the bus there were a couple of teachers standing there. They were Mrs Fletcher and Mrs [REDACTED] PWH. Instantly they started shouting at us to get into line. I

tried to grab [REDACTED]'s hand but she was pulled away from me and moved to a different part of the line. That made me panic.

12. I think Mrs Fletcher was in charge of Fornethy. That's the way she came across. Mrs PWH [REDACTED] is the one I remember more because I was around her more. Thinking back I would say that Mrs Fletcher was perhaps in her forties and Mrs PWH [REDACTED] was about fifty years of age. Mrs Fletcher was pretty tall, Mrs PWH [REDACTED] was noticeably smaller. Mrs Fletcher had light coloured hair and Mrs PWH [REDACTED] had dark hair.
13. After we stood in a line, we got marched into the building. We were told to take our coats off and hang them up on pegs. Then we were told to put our bags down and they were taken away from us. There were a lot of girls in Fornethy, maybe thirty or forty.
14. There was a corridor on the ground floor leading you to different rooms but we didn't really see the rooms on the ground floor at that time, we were taken straight up to the dormitories. My dormitory was on the first floor, I don't know if there were other floors above. I don't know who showed me to the dormitory. After that I don't remember if we got something to eat but then we went for a bath.
15. The classroom and the playroom I went to were on the ground floor. The tuck shop and the showers were also on the ground floor.

Morning and bedtime

16. The dormitory looked nice, it was nice and clean. It was lovely. The beds were spread about and each one had a wee wardrobe. My bed was at the window, they were nice big windows. I think there were about eight or ten beds in my dormitory. The other girls in my dormitory were about eight or ten years old, I was the youngest. I have no idea where [REDACTED]'s dormitory was, I think she got put with the older girls.
17. In the morning a teacher would wake us up, it was all different teachers. The teacher who was in charge of our dormitory, or who seemed to be there the most, was Mrs

PWH . I don't remember what time they woke us up. They would come in shouting to try and rouse us.

18. There was a dormitory monitor, one of the older girls, and they would lead us all to the toilet and make sure we brushed our teeth. Then we went back to the dormitory to get dressed. The teachers laid out our clothes for the day but we always had to wear the flowery pinafore over the top of our clothes. The monitor had to help me get dressed a couple of times because I had put clothes on back to front. I don't remember the name of the girl who was the dormitory monitor. She was nice but a bit of a bully. She told all the other girls when I put things on back to front and they all laughed at me.
19. I don't remember what time we went to bed but when it was lights out, there was a wee blue light that came on. I was frightened to sleep because you could hear the teachers screaming and shouting in the other dormitories. You could hear other girls crying too.

Washing and bathing

20. The showers were on the ground floor but I can't remember where the baths were. On the first day all the new arrivals got a bath. That's when I next saw [REDACTED], after we had been separated in the line outside the building when we had got off the bus. We all stripped and stood in a queue waiting for our turn in the bath. There were two ladies who bathed us. I can't remember their names but they were nice. They didn't really say much to any of us.
21. There was just one bath in the bathroom. The ladies put you in the bath and they had big bars of soap. It was quite rough the way they scrubbed but didn't hurt you. We were each bathed alone. I don't remember if the water was hot or cold, I just remember all the other girls watching me as they waited their turn. I wasn't used to that. Everyone was trying to cover themselves up. There were bigger girls there and it was quite a shock.

22. After we bathed we got out and got dried and the next girl got into the bath. I don't know if the water was changed after each girl, probably not as the changeover was quite quick. Another lady combed our hair but she didn't tell us why. I don't remember anyone getting their hair cut. After we had a bath we got changed into our pyjamas that we had brought with us.

Clothing

23. We were issued with wee flowery pinafores, mostly blue coloured. We had to wear them during the day. We had wellies for when we were out walking.

Food

24. After we got dressed in the morning we went down for breakfast. We ate all our meals in the dining room and we all ate at the same time. I can't remember which floor the dining room was on. It was quite a big room, there were separate tables. [REDACTED] was at another table. I think it was one table to each dormitory, the monitor was in charge of the table. I always sat in the same seat.
25. In the morning the food was served to us. I remember the ladies from the kitchen coming out and pouring us tea. We had porridge in the morning and rolls with marmalade. You could choose to have cereal instead of porridge.
26. The food at Fornethy was mostly fine, it was just like food at home. I can't remember that much about the food. The teachers normally ate with us. They had their own table. I did have difficulty with one type of food which was butterbeans.

Schooling

27. I remember Mrs ^{PWH}[REDACTED], Mrs Fletcher, and Mrs Robertson. There were other teachers but I can't remember them. Mrs ^{PWH}[REDACTED] was my teacher.

28. We went to classes in the morning for a couple of hours. We stayed in the one classroom for those classes. I was in with kids who were about my own age. I presume I was in the younger classroom because my sister was in a classroom in a separate building. I could see her classroom when I went out to the playground. I don't think anyone went out of the Fornethy grounds for any classes.
29. I was about four years old when I went to Fornethy, I hadn't been to playschool or primary school. I don't remember much of what we were given to learn. I remember having a workbook in front of me but I couldn't tell you what it was about. I remember other girls having to copy things down from the blackboard but I couldn't write yet.
30. After the classes in the morning we went on long walks in the countryside. The teachers took us on the walks. What we wore depended on the weather. If it was fine we wore shoes and if it was raining we wore wellies. We were taken out in all weathers. When it rained, the rain would run down your leg inside the wellies. It made the wellies rub against your bare legs and make them sore. I remember we got taken to see some stones and a reservoir but mostly it was walking up hills roundabout Fornethy. We were out walking most days and it would be dinner time when we got back.

Chores

31. I don't think I had to do any chores. I don't know if the older girls had to do any chores.

Leisure time

32. We had a playground area and the bigger girls had a climbing frame at one end. I wasn't allowed on the climbing frame because I was small, I had to stay at the other end of the playground. We didn't get out to the playground that often, it wasn't every day.

33. There was one scooter and you had to stand in a queue to get a shot of the scooter. Where you had to stand in the queue was next to three steps leading down to the climbing frame and that's where I was restricted from going. I remember standing in the queue and turning round to see if I could see my sister. I stumbled and fell off the step. I got up quickly and thought nobody had seen me but from out of nowhere Mrs Robertson grabbed me and started shouting, "You were told not to go off the stairs." I didn't get a chance to explain myself or say anything. I felt scared, I probably wouldn't even have tried to explain myself. For the rest of playtime I was made to sit inside where we kept our shoes.
34. I think it was only at the weekends but we got to go into the TV room to watch TV. We could eat our tuck from the tuck shop and we got a biscuit and a drink of milk. I didn't get milk because I was a bed wetter.
35. We were allowed in the playroom more often. There were toys in the playroom but most of the time we were sat in seats singing whatever song we were told to sing. It was hymns and things like that. Mrs PWH was sitting there doing her knitting. I don't know if that was on a Sunday.
36. I don't know if we got to go to the tuck shop everyday but that was the only time I got to see [REDACTED] because my mum sent one cheque or postal order for the both of us. Mrs Fletcher would sit with the book and tell you how much had been sent and you would pick your sweets depending on what you had been sent. I didn't get my sweets the first time because I was a bed wetter but I still had to go through the process of queueing up with [REDACTED] and being told how much there was. I sometimes got my sweets the second time I went to Fornethy.

Religious instruction

37. I went to church once at Fornethy. We couldn't all go at the same time so certain people got picked to go each Sunday. I think about eight of us went in a minibus. A man drove the minibus, I don't know who he was. I don't know how far away the church was.

Medical care

38. I didn't see a doctor or a nurse at Fornethy at all.

Visits/inspections

39. There weren't any social work visits either. I don't think the social work department were involved with my family before going to Fornethy. I don't remember anyone coming round to inspect Fornethy.
40. Our family were allowed to send letters and we were allowed to send letters but that was it. We didn't have any visitors. I didn't send any letters as I was too young to write. [REDACTED] might have sent letters. I remember that the teacher wrote on the blackboard and the girls had to copy down what she had written to form their letters home. Basically, every parent was getting the same letter.

Trips/holidays

41. I don't remember any trips anywhere.

Birthdays/Christmas

42. I did have a birthday when I was in Fornethy but it wasn't acknowledged at all. I didn't even know it was my birthday until I got home. When I got home there was a card and presents. I wasn't at Fornethy for Christmas.

Bed wetting

43. I wasn't a bed wetter before I went to Fornethy and I wasn't a bed wetter after I went home. I confirmed that with my mum in later life.
44. In Fornethy a teacher would come round the dormitories in the morning and check the beds. You weren't allowed to strip the bed until a teacher came round to check.

The teacher just told you to strip your bed, they didn't say anything else about the bedwetting.

45. When I wet the bed I had to take my sheets off the bed and hang them over the bannister outside the room. I was the only one in my room who wet the bed but I saw sheets hanging over the bannister outside other rooms so it was happening to other girls. I don't know if someone came and collected the sheets and made up the bed again or whatever.
46. We didn't get sent for a shower or bath if we had wet the bed. We just didn't get allowed drinks at night or sweets from the tuck shop. There wasn't any other punishment. The second time I went to Fornethy I wet the bed less often so I got to go to the tuck shop sometimes but I still wasn't allowed a drink at night.
47. At night you wouldn't get up to use the toilet. I was terrified because I could hear other girls being screamed at if they were out of their dormitory. The teachers would come round at night to check that we were all in bed after lights-out but no-one ever came round and checked if we needed to go to the toilet. I was frightened to go out of the dormitory at night and I was frightened to go to sleep in case I wet the bed but obviously I would fall asleep and it would happen. That was what it was like the whole time of the first time I was at Fornethy.

Discipline

48. The discipline was quite bad. I was hit in the showers, a lot of girls were hit a lot in the showers. When I went into the shower I didn't know that you had to face outward. I remember the force of when Mrs PWH hit me on the backside with her hand. I don't remember anyone telling us which way we had to face in the shower, even the older girls didn't tell me which way to face. That only happened to me once because obviously I stood the right way round in the shower after that but I saw it happening to other girls. I didn't see much of [REDACTED] and there was no-one else there that I felt I could talk to. I think we were all too scared to speak to one another.

49. It didn't take much for Mrs PWH to lose her temper. I would say that the standard of discipline was excessive, even for the standards of the day in the 1970's. No-one ever got any warnings about anything. There were no second chances.

Abuse at Fornethy

50. I saw girls being hit several times a day.
51. We weren't allowed to speak in the dining room. I never got to speak to [REDACTED], we never got to have any conversations at mealtimes. Mrs Fletcher was violent in the dining room. If someone spoke they would get dragged away.
52. I got dragged away for talking. I think I just got made to sit down, I can't remember more than that. I saw many girls getting dragged away if they were talking in the line or whatever. It was quite tense. People would go stiff and not move until it was over.
53. I saw Mrs Fletcher dragging a girl off her seat and taken off somewhere. I don't know what that girl's name was but she was about ten years old. Everybody just panicked. The way she was dragged was quite violent, her chair toppled back. God forgive me but you were always just glad it wasn't you.
54. We got butterbeans with a meal one night and I had never had them before, I didn't even know what they were. Mrs Fletcher came up to me when I had eaten everything else on my plate and told me to eat them. I couldn't eat them, I was retching. She told me that I would sit there until I had eaten them. Most of the other girls had left except me and the other girls who were struggling with some food. I kept retching as I tried to eat and Mrs Fletcher came up to me and said, "Don't make a mess of my floor." She was the same with the other girls who were struggling to eat.
55. Mrs Fletcher went away and I tried so hard to eat the butter beans but I remember vomiting in my hands and thinking, "What am I going to do with this?" I ended up

trying to eat it but every time I would just vomit them up again. I tried several times to eat them. I was there for at least two hours, I remember it was getting dark outside. I don't remember the other girls leaving but they must have finished.

56. Mrs Fletcher came back in a few times and each time I was worried I would vomit on her floor. Eventually I finished the butter beans and she was satisfied I could go. We got served butter beans quite often so that happened a few times.
57. Mrs PWH was very strict in the classroom. I sat beside a girl called [REDACTED]. We had our workbooks but you didn't write in the workbook, we had a sheet of paper to write on. [REDACTED] drew on my workbook and then put her hand up and told Mrs PWH I had drawn on it.
58. I had never been hit before in my life. Mrs PWH came up to me. She had a wooden ruler in her hand and she belted me right across the back of my hand. The pain was unbelievable. That was the first time I had been hit by an adult. She was shouting but I don't remember anything that she said. There was no question of me trying to explain that I hadn't done it and that it was [REDACTED] who had drawn on the workbook. I got made to rub out the pencil marks on the workbook. I remembered [REDACTED] from then. When I went to secondary school she was in the year above me.
59. Mrs Robertson was a teacher. I think she was [REDACTED]'s teacher. She taught up in that other classroom. I would say Mrs Robertson was in her thirties. I didn't have much dealings with her but she was pretty bad. She was always shouting, pushing, and grabbing people.
60. There was one day we were out walking and I went over on my ankle and fell to the ground. I had really twisted it. I could not for the life of me put any weight on it. I remember Mrs PWH running up to me, scooping me up, and dragging me. She grabbed hold of my jacket or my neck. Her nails or her ring must have caught me because I ended up with a massive scratch down my neck but at the time I didn't feel it because I was in such fear. I wasn't able to stand up, she was dragging me with my legs on the ground, on the rough heather.

61. I don't know how far she dragged me over the heather but my legs got torn to bits. Afterwards, in the shower, the hot water nipped at my legs and my neck. The stinging was so painful. I wasn't given any treatment for my injuries. My ankle was sore for some time after that but I had to walk about normally, I couldn't limp. I was afraid that if I was limping it would single me out and Mrs PWH would drag me again.
62. The second time I went to Fornethy there was an older girl who was in the shower and she sort of slipped, so she turned round and faced the wrong way. She got smacked so hard by Mrs PWH she went sliding across the floor. It was terrifying. I don't know the name of that older girl.

Reporting of abuse

63. There wasn't any opportunity to report what was happening at Fornethy when I was there. I didn't tell my father about it when I got home either.

Leaving Fornethy

64. When I left Fornethy the first time, I left with [REDACTED]. The only reason I knew we were leaving was that we got taken down to the tuck shop and were allowed to spend the rest of our money on sweets. That's when Mrs Fletcher told us we were going home. I remember we bought a box of Matchmakers for my mum. We went home either that day or the following day. I was excited to be going home and glad to be out of Fornethy. It was the same routine when I left Fornethy the second time.
65. We got back on the bus to Glasgow. There were other girls leaving at the same time. Some of them were girls we had arrived with. I remember seeing Indian girls when we got to Fornethy and they left with us. We got dropped off in Bell Street in Glasgow and my dad came to meet us.

66. It was only a matter of weeks after my first trip that I was sent back to Fornethy. I think my dad was struggling to cope. My dad told me I was going to have to go back to Fornethy, but not for as long as the first time. I was devastated but there was nothing I could say. I went back to Fornethy soon after him telling me I was going. It was harder going back the second time because I was on my own. [REDACTED] and I didn't discuss Fornethy after we got back, we didn't tell my dad what had happened. After my second visit to Fornethy, I didn't have to go to any care facility again.
67. Everything was the same at Fornethy the second time but it was easier because I knew the rules, even at that age. I just kept my head down and tried not to be noticed. I was there for about three or four weeks the second time but there is nothing that sticks out in my mind about what happened to me, I just remember other girls being hit the way I had been hit.
68. When I got home the second time I tried to keep my head down in the family home. I was so scared that I would get sent back to Fornethy again. I started school not long after I got back from the second trip to Fornethy so that made it easier.

Life after Fornethy

69. Everything went back to normal after Fornethy. I remember my brothers and sisters going to school. My mum was still in hospital when I went back the first time. The woman upstairs used to look after me when my dad was at his work.
70. My mum was in and out of hospital for her mental health. That didn't go on for too long but then she developed diabetes and that got worse. She had to have her leg amputated.
71. I went to Saracen Primary School in Glasgow for a few weeks while they were finishing building a new school at Wester Common and then I went there. I can

remember my first day at school but I don't have much memory of school apart from that. I saw [REDACTED] at school. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were both at secondary school.

72. School was OK for me but I wondered if the teachers were going to be the same as Fornethy. I just kind of tried to blend into the background. By the time I went to secondary school I went for the first year but then I didn't bother going back. I left school without any qualifications. I have always worked since I left school. I started working weekends to begin with. Then when I was old enough I started working full time.
73. I left home when I was eighteen years old. I was pregnant with my first daughter and I got my own house. I was with my husband for 25 years and we had four daughters. We separated because he had had enough of me not letting him discipline the girls. I wouldn't let the girls go away anywhere and my husband wasn't happy about that.
74. I worked in a snack bar for a few years. Then when I had my kids I took cleaning jobs in the morning or at night. When my husband came home from work, I would go out to work. I continued like that throughout my working life as I have no qualifications for anything else.
75. I started suffering panic attacks in my twenties. My daughter had choked on a bit of food and I panicked more than I should have. It was just for a second or two but it triggered something in me. Ever since then I have suffered panic attacks that got worse and worse. They are not so bad now but in my twenties I lost three and a half stone because I couldn't swallow, not even my own saliva. That lasted about six months. Every now and then it flares up but not to that extent. I can't go out to eat, I can't stand being pushed against a table.
76. My husband did know that I had been to Fornethy but not about the abuse I suffered. With my refusal to let him discipline the girls, my issues with food, and my panic attacks, there was a lot for him to deal with so we ended up splitting up. Since then I have been on my own, I prefer it that way. I couldn't go through all the eating carry-on again, or involve anyone else in it.

77. I now work as a domestic in a hospital. I have shifts but I do a lot of overtime. I don't mind because I am in the house on my own now.
78. I have four daughters and four grandsons. My daughter [REDACTED] is 32 years old now. [REDACTED] is 31, [REDACTED] is 26, and [REDACTED] is 24 years old. [REDACTED] is in the army. [REDACTED] has two sons, [REDACTED] has one, and [REDACTED] has one.

Reporting of abuse at Fornethy

79. I have never made a report to the police about the abuse at Fornethy.
80. When we were children, [REDACTED] and I didn't speak about what happened at Fornethy because my mum was in and out of hospital with mental health conditions. [REDACTED] and I didn't speak about it until we were in our twenties. After my mum had died we spoke to my dad about it. Obviously he had known nothing about it. He was shocked and wanted to know why he wasn't told at the time but there was so much going on with my mum. We didn't want her to feel guilty about it when she was in an out of hospital all the time. My dad was angry but I was more angry with my sister for bringing it up.
81. My girls know about the abuse I suffered at Fornethy. I didn't tell them everything, I told them bits and bobs. They didn't know until stuff started coming out in the papers, so I had to tell them. They obviously knew that I had been there.
82. I have always thought about Fornethy. Over the years it has always been there, it has never gone away. It was a girl at my eldest daughter's work who said to my daughter that Fornethy was being investigated. She knew that I had gone to Fornethy and she gave my daughter her number and I messaged her. It just started from there. They had an [REDACTED] group but I came out of it as it was bringing on panic attacks because of the questions they were asking. People were talking about what

happened to them and asking what had happened to me but I wasn't ready to talk about it.

Impact

83. The worst thing about Fornethy for me was the humiliation. When I was shouted at or singled out for bedwetting it was worse than the hitting. It was so embarrassing. That carried on when I went to school. If a teacher said anything that embarrassed me I took it really hard. I feel that my time at Fornethy affected my education because I was always scared I would be singled out by the teacher. I didn't want to be in that situation so the older I got, the more I stayed away from school and just walked the streets.
84. I haven't been told about what my personality was like before I went to Fornethy but when I came back I tried not to draw attention to myself in case they made me go back.
85. My experiences in Fornethy definitely influenced the way I brought up my daughters. I wouldn't let my kids go to nursery and it continued that I wouldn't let them go and do things. They would keep asking me *why* they couldn't but I just wanted to protect them. It was hard on me having to say no to them. I was scared, I didn't want them to be treated the way I had been treated at Fornethy, especially when they were young and wouldn't be able to speak out against anything. I didn't want them to ever be in that position. Now they understand but I still feel really bad about it.
86. I went to the doctor about my panic attacks and I have been on tablets a few times but they didn't help. I tried a few different tablets but I know how to deal with my panic attacks now. I don't think I would benefit from counselling, I have learned to deal with things in my own ways. I have moved on over the years. I do a lot of walking and reading. I am alright as long as my mind is occupied but I find that I think about Fornethy a lot more as I get older.

87. I haven't experienced nightmares or flashbacks, just the panic attacks. I remember going to the park once and as I walked through I smelled something that took me right back to Fornethy. My son-in-law told me it was a pine tree.
88. I can't sit with the other girls at work. I don't go on the Christmas nights out. At work I sit in the room where they keep the cleaning stuff and eat there. People must think I'm a weirdo but I can't be sat at a table with other people watching me eat. At home I would take a mouthful of food and then get up from the table to get something. People would think that I was being helpful but my girls knew. I don't even have a table and chairs in my house now.
89. I wanted to be an auxiliary nurse but I couldn't because I couldn't deal with vomit. I just had to stay as a domestic. When my daughters were young, if they were sick, my partner had to deal with it.
90. You can't say for sure but the only thing I can think caused all this was Fornethy.

Records

91. I have never obtained my records from Fornethy, I didn't know you could do that until I read in the papers that other people were trying to do that. I would be very interested in getting my records.

Lessons to be learned

92. I think we should have been told about the way they did things. If you go into a strange place you don't know the rules. As far as I can remember I wasn't told anything. If they had told me to face that way in the shower, told me do this and don't do that then I would have done it. Even if they gave you a warning, "That's not allowed don't do it again."

93. I don't think the people who worked there were suitable for the job. I just don't think anyone should ever be violent to kids or treat them that way. If that's the way you are then you shouldn't be working with kids. I think they should be stricter about the vetting procedures for working with kids.

Hopes for the Inquiry

94. If these people are still alive I would like them to be held responsible for what they did. I would like it to be acknowledged that we were there and that it did happen. I would like someone to say they are sorry it happened.

Other information

95. 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..... PJO [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 23 - 11 - 21