Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Philip DOLAN

Support person present:

1. My name is Philip Dolan. My date of birth is [redacted]1936. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

2. I have almost 30 years' experience of working in local authority child care services.

Qualifications/posts held

3. I graduated from Glasgow University in 1967. I studied a mixture of subjects, which included social studies, psychology and economics.

4. After graduating, I went to Hull University and did a post graduate course in social work. I obtained a double qualification: a Diploma in Applied Social Studies and a Home Office Certificate in Child Care. I was funded by the Home Office.

5. I started work in 1968 as a child care officer in West Lothian County Council's children's department. My job title changed to social worker after the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (the 1968 Act) came into force in October 1969.

6. I moved to East Kilbride Burgh Council as a social worker in about 1970, and was there until about 1972.

7. I moved from East Kilbride to Lanarkshire County Council and was there until about 1974, when I moved to be a senior social worker in Paisley Corporation. I was in Paisley for about 2 ½ to 3 years.

8. I became an area social work manager in East Kilbride in about 1976. I held that post for about ten years. In about 1986, I moved to Glasgow and became the area manager for Glasgow South. Both posts were with Strathclyde Regional Council. I remained in Glasgow until I retired in 1996.

9. I did safeguarding reports for children's hearings for a while after retirement, but I was busy with campaigning work for the Scottish Haemophilia Forum so had to give it up.

Training

Hull University course

10. The person in charge of the course was an American woman called Bessie Kent. It was a one-year course, which started in September and went on until the end of the following September, with only a few days off at Christmas.

11. We got teaching and guidance on child abuse on the course. I don't think sexual abuse came up. It wasn't a term that was used.

12. I spent most of the practical side of the course in probation and child care departments. The tutor made arrangements for me to appear in court to speak to the social enquiry reports I had written. The judge would cross-examine me on everything I had written, which I thought was very important and good training.

13. The law lecturer we had was Professor Hugh Bevan. He insisted we should have more knowledge of family law than lawyers. We did the same exam in family law as

the final-year law students. We were questioned and challenged about everything we were doing.

Child care officer/social worker

14. There was no particular training when I started as a child care officer, certainly nothing like there is nowadays. It was a case of learning on the job and talking things through with colleagues.

15. There were very few professionally trained social workers in any of the local authority services which eventually became social work. I think there were only two other people who were trained when I started with West Lothian.

16. The way it worked in a lot of places, particularly Glasgow, was that you left school and got a job with the Corporation as an administration person in the welfare or children's department. You could then work your way up without having to get a qualification. That changed after the Younghusband report came out.

17. One of the well-known people in Glasgow, Bob Winter, was a welfare officer and later became the director of social work. Historically, lots of the people in Glasgow had no real training in social work.

18. I'm not saying that getting trained in social work made you faultless. I've met a lot of trained workers who I had reservations about, yet they considered themselves to be wonderful. There were some social workers whose priority was to finish work and get to the football or the pub.

19. I think it was early on in my career in child care that I took an interest in issues about child abuse. If you came from a certain background, you didn't see what happened elsewhere; certain things were invisible. The school belt was the only thing I had experienced, so I was possibly naïve.

20. In 1969, I was offered the opportunity to work in London in a unit set up by the NSPCC focusing on battered child syndrome. I didn't want to be based in London so didn't go.

21. I got involved with the Association of Child Care Officers (ACCO), which was the precursor to the British Association of Social Workers (BASW). I was secretary of the Scottish organisation. I was involved in child care and child abuse work. There were a lot of meetings and discussions.

22. I was the Scottish spokesperson on child care. Around the time I got married, which was 1974, I got an embargo copy – the government printers were on strike - of the Marie Colwell report.

23. Marie Colwell was a child who had been very badly abused. That was one of the very first abuse cases about which we got to know the history of. I spoke on the radio making comments about the issues in that case.

24. Over the years, a number of child abuse cases cropped up, and I was asked to make comment on them. I remember saying that one of the problems was that nobody had learnt from the Marie Colwell case. One of the leading abuse cases in Scotland involved a child named [redacted]. He was taken into care by the local authority in Perth. They were unable to find a placement for him locally so placed him with relatives. The social worker was against placing him there and wanted to look further afield for a placement, but management refused. The young boy was killed by the relatives within a matter of days. The reports on these cases come out and there are all these lessons to be learnt, yet the same thing continues to happen.

25. I felt that one of the reasons for failure was that social workers were more concerned with building relationships with parents and didn't appreciate their primary responsibility was to protect the child.

26. I used to tell social workers who were visiting children in their houses that it wasn't enough to just see the child. They had to make sure they saw the accommodation where the child was staying.

27. I remember visiting a house and discovering that beyond the living room, all of the walls were covered in excrement. Social workers and health visitors had been visiting the house and reporting everything was fine. This didn't involve a child in care, but I'm bringing it up as a general point. It's easy to visit and not see anything.

28. After the 1968 Act bedded in, I went to meetings and conferences. It was fine going and listening, but you were never sure how much the management was committed to ensuring things happened. People in management always seemed to have other priorities, such as finance or staffing.

Awareness of abuse of children in care

29. Children being abused in care was not something that was spoken about. I do not remember any complaints being made by children about the way they were being treated.

30. I visited List D schools and other local authority run places and didn't see anything. I chaired reviews and nothing was said. You got no feedback from the kids or their families. To my knowledge, the care the children were getting in all these places was fine.

31. I've now read that there were lots of difficulties in some of the places I visited. Hopefully, people got greater insight into these things as the years went on.

32. I had a boy in Lady Mary School in Colinton. That was when I worked in Paisley. The child and his brother, who was only six, had been initially charged with murder and we needed specialist places for them. The brother went into a Barnardo's home

in Edinburgh. The Lady Mary School had a great reputation at that point in time. I read last week that there were issues in there.

33. I also had a boy in St Ninian's in Falkland. Several of his family members had also been in there. He was from the type of family I would expect to say something if there had been any abuse.

34. I think it would have been difficult for a child in care to raise a concern about their care. It would have been difficult for them to raise their heads above the parapet whilst they were living there. They may have been afraid of the consequences. You tend to find that people only talk about their experiences afterwards.

35. I also think that children might have assumed some of the things that were happening were normal.

36. I don't recall any acknowledgement of sexual abuse of children back in those days. Issues of sexual abuse didn't come up. When you reflect on it nowadays, you realise it probably did exist in a lot of places.

Contact with children in care

37. I would expect a child in a residential home to have contact with a social worker at least once a month. I don't remember if that was standard throughout my time. I don't think it was prescribed. A child on the child protection register would be seen at least weekly.

38. As an area manager in Strathclyde, I was responsible for chairing child protection case conferences. These are meetings involving various professionals who discuss whether a child should be put on the child protection register.

39. Fred Edwards was the director of social work in Strathclyde when I worked in Glasgow. The first director in Strathclyde was Jim Gregory. One of those two, I can't remember which, used to go in through the back door of children's homes and speak to the domestic staff before speaking with the managers. He said that you learn more about what goes on in the place by doing that. I used to try to do the same thing.

40. The degree of contact with a social worker and a child in foster care would vary. Again, I'm not conscious of a prescribed period of time. It would depend on your knowledge of the family. I would probably try to visit at least once a month. It would depend on the situation.

Procedures for raising concerns

41. The line you would be expected to follow if you wanted to raise concerns about a child in care or a children's home, would be through your line manager

42. The district manager position in Strathclyde Regional Council was equivalent to assistant director level. My district manager was Ian Irvine. He was the person above me. He is now dead.

43. When I worked in Glasgow, I was concerned that there was too much of a liberal approach in the way children's homes were being run. Kids were going into care and deciding not go to school. That shouldn't have been their decision to make. These were the kinds of issues I would try to speak to managers about, but they were never particularly interested.

44. You could raise concerns at supervision sessions with someone senior to you, but you never knew the outcome. I suppose you just thought it would get dealt with if you raised it.

45. I don't think whistleblowing was a definition when I was in work. I don't know if the culture in any of the councils was such that staff would feel comfortable speaking out. I would always speak out if I had concerns. Some people would and others wouldn't.

46. One of my ex-colleagues used to talk to me about concerns that he had had. He did a similar job to mine. He was a very able guy. I'd ask him what he was going to do about it, and he used to say that he'd just keep his head down.

Inspections

47. I don't know what kind of systems existed for the inspection of residential care places. Inspections were not part of my job.

48. There were principals of residential care in most authorities. It was their job to carry out inspections. I don't know how often they did it. I think it didn't happen very frequently. I think that's where there was a failing.

49. I think one of the flaws with inspections is that prior warning is given before the inspection takes place. This allows time for something to be done cosmetically to give a false impression of what's going on. Spot checks would be much better.

50. In my early days in the probation side of social work, the procedure in place was that the inspectors would come in and ask for a list of the probation officer's caseload. They'd then select six cases and go over the case notes. They'd often find things out that way, as they weren't just looking at cases that had been selected for them. I don't know how people deal with these kind of things now, but feel this is worth mentioning in terms of lessons that might be learned.

Records

51. There was a new children's officer in post when I started in West Lothian in 1968. He'd maybe only been there for about a year. The previous one had died.

52. The curious thing was that when he died, all the names of the children who were in foster care had died with him. West Lothian's records were pretty awful. The only way they could trace the children was to go through the finance department, which was paying the foster parents. I don't think West Lothian was any worse than anywhere else.

53. I'm sure there were policies about record keeping within the various councils I worked for, but I don't remember what they said. I know that specific things had to be recorded, such as going to a children's hearing. A report always had to be prepared for the children's hearing.

54. Keeping records was important, but they weren't always kept up to date. It was often the case that a social worker would be making notes on a case and an urgent matter would arise. They'd then have to put the pen down and rush off to deal with that. They wouldn't get around to doing their notes again until much later and would have to rely on memory.

55. Some people were good at jotting things down all the time and keeping good notes. I wouldn't say that I was the best, but there were many occasions when I was very exact because I wanted to make sure I got particular things on record.

West Lothian County Council

56. I don't remember the recruitment process being particularly great. I had gone there to do childcare work but became a probation officer and welfare worker, as well as a social worker, when the 1968 Act came into being. I also became a mental health officer in later years.

57. I reported to the children's officer. He was the manager of the office. He died a long time ago. I don't know if he had a qualification in social work. There was a senior child care officer under him and maybe 3 or 4 other staff.

Handling of child abuse case

58. I dealt with my first incident of child abuse whilst in West Lothian. It was before the 1968 Act came into force.

59. Although the child was not abused in care, I think the way in which the local authority was going to deal with it gives an insight into the how lack of training and knowledge of the law could affect decisions.

60. We received a report from a consultant paediatrician at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh about a 5-month-old baby who had suffered multiple injuries and was left in a vegetative state. The consultant was concerned about the explanation given by the parents as to how the injuries had been sustained.

61. The children's officer said it was not our responsibility and we should pass it on to the SSPCC. I suspect the child care service at West Lothian had not been very good over the years. They were probably good in some ways.

62. I disagreed with the children's officer and reminded him that the local authority had responsibility in terms of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 (the 1937 Act). His response was, "Fine. You take it on then".

63. I pursued the case and finished up speaking with the legal director for West Lothian. He agreed with my opinion and a decision was made to raise a case in the civil court under the 1937 Act. It went to court, with the consultant paediatrician fully supporting it, and the case was established. The baby was never back in the care of the parents.

64. It seemed to me that if that case had happened in the past or elsewhere, it might have slipped through due to people not wanting to do it and applying the legislation incorrectly. I don't think West Lothian was much worse than a lot of places.

65. I don't know if it was West Lothian's usual practice to pass these matters to the SSPCC. It was the first time I had come across that particular situation. It wouldn't have been my practice. I knew fine what the 1937 Act said.

Wallhouse Children's home, Torphichen

66. I think also that there would have been limited training going on for staff in children's homes in those days.

67. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

68.

69.

70. The whole idea of getting training and experience came out of recommendations made in the Younghusband Report. It took a long time for that report to get recognition.

Strathclyde Regional Council

71. The area I covered as an area manager in Glasgow had the highest population in Strathclyde. It was bigger than some of the districts. It covered from Battlefield to Carnwadric and from Pollokshields to the Kilmarnock boundary. The population was about 110,000. I worked across very affluent areas and ones with a high level of poverty.

Written complaint – children's home in Pollokshields, Glasgow

72. I made a written complaint about a local authority children's home in Pollokshields. I think it was around a couple of years before I retired. I put it in writing because I felt that was the only way I could get management to listen. I don't remember the name of the children's home. There were a few in Pollokshields.

73. A girl from Eastwood was received into care for her own safety because she kept running away from home. She was placed in a children's home in Pollokshields and was pregnant by the time she left.

74. It concerned me that a child who had come into care needing care and protection had got pregnant while she was in local authority care. I approached the worker who was dealing with the girl and got nowhere with her.

75. I then sent a memo to the district manager, Ian Irvine. He just dismissed it. He faxed the memo back to me saying, "Why are you telling me? It's got nothing to do with me".

76. I retained that memo. I came across it a few years ago in my basement. It'll still be there. I don't know how legible it'll be after all these years. A former colleague of mine remembers me making the complaint.

77. The person who was Ian Irvine's depute would equally have been aware of my written memo. She and Ian would have discussed it. That person chaired the

Rotherham Inquiry and is now chairing the Inquiry into child abuse in England. Her family were part of the hierarchy of the Labour party during the period of time she was with Strathclyde Regional Council.

78. I'm very cynical about politics. Politics was a big factor in my time in social work. Many of the folk who were in management, certainly in Strathclyde and the subsequent council, were people who had close connections with the Labour party.

79. I'm not anti-labour, but to me there were too many cliques. And there was too much closeness among the people in management within Strathclyde.

80. A Conservative regional councillor complained about the Pollokshields children's home around the same time as me. She complained about the children running amok and the state of the place.

81. Pollokshields is an affluent area and it really got up the residents' noses that there were kids' homes in the area. The councillor complained to the depute director of social work, who in turn spoke to the district manager.

82. An inspection of the place was arranged and the home got a few days' notice, during which time the place got tidied up.

83. People in management were more interested in dealing with that sort of complaint, rather than the issues I had raised about the welfare of children living in the home.

Care worker - children's home in Newlands, Glasgow

84. A man, who I don't want to name, worked as a residential care worker for the local authority. He is now a convicted sex offender. He received a sentence at one point of 6 years' imprisonment, which I believe was extended to 12 years. He has been in and out of prison.

85. Before any of this came to light, the man worked in a children's home in Newlands in Glasgow. I don't remember the name of it. It was a local authority run home.

86. A guy, whose name I don't remember, came to work with me in Glasgow and told me that he had complained about the man when he worked with him in Newlands. I can't say specifically when he told me. It was within the ten-year period I was in Glasgow.

87. I think the guy who made the complaint was a social work assistant or an occupational therapy assistant. He might still be in social work.

88. He told me that after he made his complaint, the man got moved by social work management to another home, in either Newlands or Pollokshields, for children with learning disabilities.

89. I don't know what the nature of the complaint was. I just remember him saying that the man was a "dangerous guy" and that he'd made a complaint about him.

90. The man's family were very close to the principal officer of residential care at that time. I don't remember her name. She knew them through the Baptist Church in Queen's Park in Glasgow. The man's father was a police inspector and the mother was a deputy head teacher.

91. The principal officer of residential care was in charge of children's homes and would have been in a position to look out for the man. There was a close group of them who knew him.

92. I don't know what people knew about the man. I am bringing this up because sometimes people don't take account of things that are happening because they're too close to the people involved. My point here is that the system allowed people in positions of responsibility to either take action or keep quiet. And this might still be the case today. I think there needs to be more independent scrutiny.

St Mary's List D School, Bishopbriggs

93. A girl called [redacted] kept getting into trouble and running away from children's units, so she was placed in St Mary's. [redacted] managed to abscond from St Mary's and was found and brought back. They then discovered she was pregnant. She was about 14 or 15. Staff at St Mary's advised her to have a termination.

94. I was an area manager in East Kilbride at this time and chaired several case conferences for [redacted] The local authority had parental rights for her. Her parents used to visit her. They lived in Castlemilk. Her parents wanted her to keep the baby at one stage, as did [redacted]. I spoke to [redacted] and her parents. It is my view that some of the staff put pressure on [redacted] to terminate the pregnancy.

95. The decision was made that the pregnancy was to be terminated and the doctor said that parental consent was needed. I was asked by management to sign the consent. I asked for the instruction to be put in writing by the divisional director. They then decided to get advice from legal services, and they said it had to be signed by the director of social work for Strathclyde, Fred Edwards.

96. In the event the process went ahead. This wouldn't have been an isolated case, but I don't know how other cases were dealt with by staff in different care units.

Quarriers Village

97. I visited the Quarriers Village as a student at Glasgow University. A minister came to speak to us and told us how great things were there. I think Quarriers did a good job, but I was surprised to learn from the minister that the children had to go to church in the morning, afternoon and evening. I remember thinking that I didn't agree with that.

98. Some twenty years later, while I was the chairman of the Local Review Committee for Barlinnie and Shotts, I heard about another practice in Quarriers that was considered acceptable at one time. I was a member of the committee from 1977 to

1987. The committee reviewed the cases of eligible prisoners for parole and reported on their suitability for parole.

99. In about 1986 or 1987, I interviewed a man who was in prison for having given his two-year-old a cold bath. I think he was about thirtyish.

100. During the course of the interview, he said that he couldn't understand why he had been sent to prison for this. He had spent his first sixteen years in Quarriers and that's what happened to him if he got into trouble. As far as he was concerned, that was part of his parenting experience and was the right thing to do.

101. It made me think back to what the minister had told us during our visit. He seemed to think that it was acceptable for children to be required to attend church three times a day.

102. This illustrates what I was saying about a possible reason why children didn't speak up: they may have assumed that things they were experiencing were normal. The man in prison had never spoken about his experiences in Quarriers before.

Abuse at Mossbank List D School, Glasgow

103. I worked at Mossbank Approved School, which later became a List D, before I went to university in Hull. I got free lodgings in exchange for helping with supervision at night. I only worked for a few hours nightly. I didn't do very much. The school was run by the Corporation of Glasgow.

104. I did not witness any abuse, but I heard things from staff and had no reason to doubt them.

105. I was told that when the kids ran away from the school, they were taken to the headmaster's office where members of staff held them down and SNR [redacted]

[redacted] either caned or belted them. The guy who was [redacted] of Kerelaw List D School.

106. One of the other guys who worked there did PE with the kids. He said to me, "You can't have a go at these kids, but I teach them shinty and it's great that you can smash them on the legs". I'm going back a lot of years here so it's difficult to remember names. I think he [redacted] of Newfield Assessment Centre in Johnstone.

107. I don't know if anyone ever spoke to the kids to find out why they had run away.

Other information

108. 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..... [redacted] .....

Dated..... 12th October 2017 .....