

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

## Witness Statement of

BHE  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My full name is BHE [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1970. I am 47 years old. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

**Background**

2. I understand that my mother spent some time in a mental health institution in [REDACTED] Edinburgh. She met another inpatient while she was in there and became pregnant with me. I believe that I was born into a family in Edinburgh, but my father walked out on us. I have this information from having obtained records as an adult, and also from talking to people.
3. I had two brothers and a sister who were around when I was born. The eldest was my brother [REDACTED], and then it was my sister, [REDACTED] then [REDACTED]. I was the youngest. I believe they were with my mum when I was born, but they were sporadically taken in and out of care.
4. I also have two half-brothers called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They are older than all of us. I also have a younger sister called [REDACTED] who I only traced a couple of years ago. [REDACTED] had a different father from me, and she was adopted at birth.

**Life before going into care**

5. I was in and out of care in the first eighteen months of my life, before I was taken into care properly. I was taken to a place called St Helen's in Corstorphine, Edinburgh. I think it was a place for infants.
  
6. I don't know if any of my other siblings were there with me. I don't remember anything about the home because I was very young, but the name of it has always been in my head. Reading my files has also confirmed that I was in there.
  
7. I think I was four or five years old when I left there and went to [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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9. [REDACTED]
  
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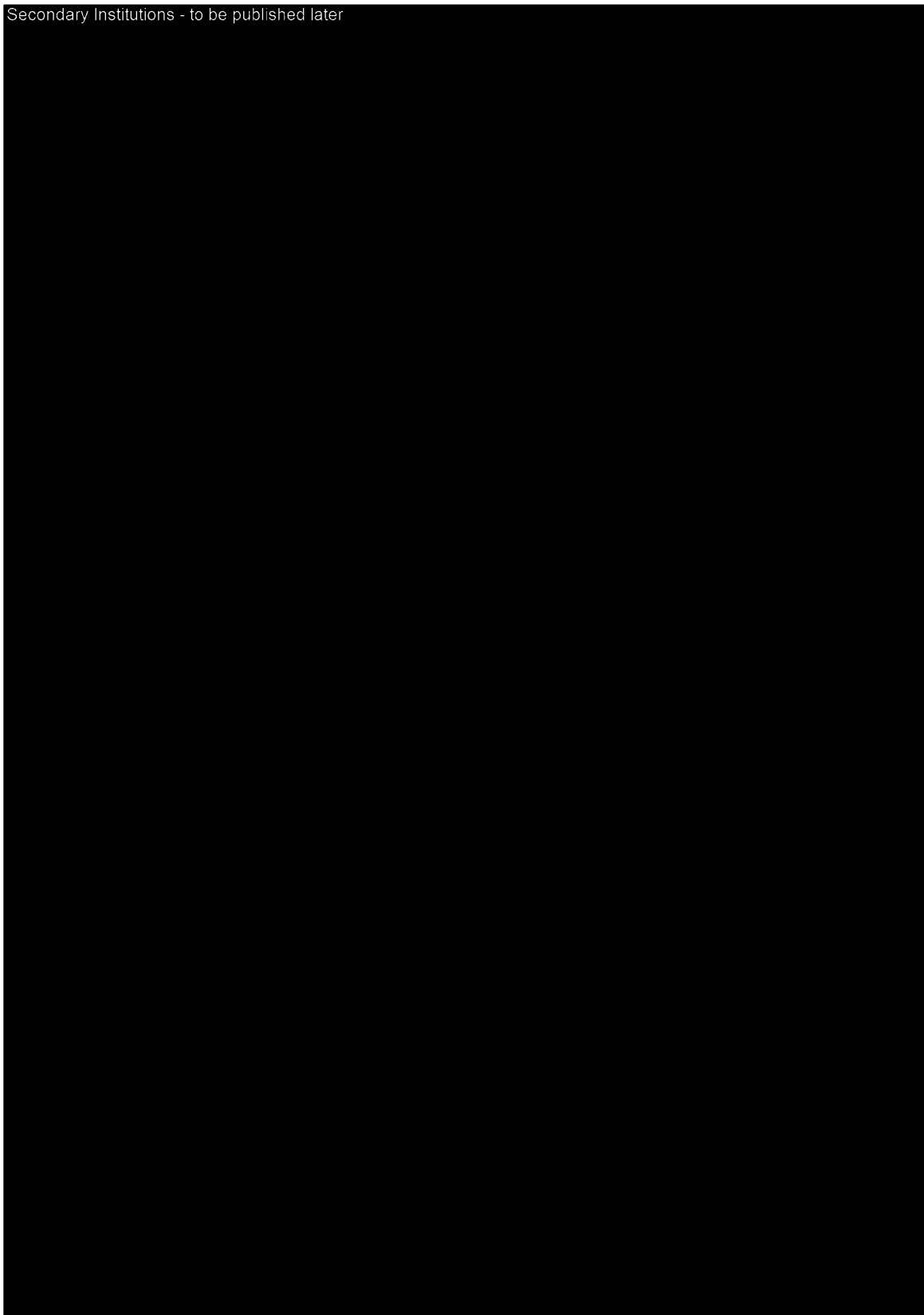
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**Barnardo's - South Oswald Road, Edinburgh**

44. [REDACTED] I felt very comfortable and safe at Barnardo's. It was strange being somewhere where the abuse didn't happen. I think I was there from the age of seven until I was thirteen or fourteen years old. My siblings didn't come with me to Barnardo's. I know from my file that moving [REDACTED] with me had been considered, but it was thought that both of us together would be too much of a handful.



45. I had my own single room in Barnardo's. I have read in my file that there was an occasion when a female member of staff was reading me a book at bed time and I acted inappropriately. She said that she was finishing the reading and not continuing. I asked her why and she told me because what I had done wasn't very nice. The social worker has also written in my file that the key worker later asked me about the incident and I had said: "that's just what the [REDACTED] do."
46. I remember the female member of staff reading the book, 'Flat Stanley,' to me as I was lying in bed. I had a black and white panda cuddly toy, which had been ripped. A sewing lady had sewn a felt green patch on it that looked like underwear, which was quite funny. I can't remember what I had done that was inappropriate. It must have been something sexual because of the abuse. Nobody investigated why I had said that it was what [REDACTED] do. There are a lot of things in my file that could have been picked up as clues.
47. I continued to go to Restalrig School while I was in Barnardo's. A boy called [REDACTED] shared a room with me for a couple of nights because he also went to Restalrig School.
48. I used to have contact with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who were in other care homes, but that slowly fizzled out. [REDACTED] was in a family group home for a while, near to Howden Hall Assessment Centre in Edinburgh.
49. Barnardo's was the most stable place I had been while I was being brought up in care. It was the place where I felt most comfortable. Towards the end of my time in Barnardo's, I was put into a residential school in Peebles, called Craigerne.

#### **Barnardo's - Craigerne, Peebles**

50. Craigerne was basically a boarding school. I felt very comfortable in Craigerne. The housemaster, who was in charge, had an office on the ground floor. He had boxes

and boxes of toy cars in his office. His door was always open so you could go in a play whenever you wanted to, even if he wasn't there.

51. They used to let off fireworks on fireworks night and we'd be told to go and find them the next day. We would then be given a smartie sweet for every one we found. That was a ritual every year, which was very good.
52. There was a massive woodworking shop in the converted garage attached to the house. The housemaster would take us in there to make things. It was always with other people so there was nothing fishy about it.
53. They used to have something that was called the 'Ride Out' where they would ride the boundary of Peebles on horseback. I felt more comfortable and relaxed around animals than I did around people. There was a member of staff called Bob Soboneiska, or something like that, who lived in a flat within the main grounds of the Barnardo's Craigerne School. He had a couple of horses in the field. He would let us ride them every so often. There was also a teacher called Claire Trunda who had a cottage and small holdings just outside Peebles with a lot of horses. She would pick me up at weekends and take me riding.
54. One time there was a weeklong activities week and each member of staff was in charge of one or two children for the whole week. You would stay with them for the week at their house, and they would take you to do activities, such as canoeing. On one occasion we covered a fair length of the River Tweed and ended up camping out. We'd taken camping stuff in the canoe with us.
55. I did a lot of outdoorsy stuff with the school like cycling and horse riding. I felt really comfortable at Barnardo's.

### *Befriending*

56. I was also part of a thing they called 'befriending' while I was at Barnardo's, which they arranged. I specifically remember a husband and wife couple who lived in

Musselburgh. They worked at the really snobby school out there, which I think was called Loretto School. The woman ran the tuck shop at the school and I don't know what the man did. They lived near the racecourse in Musselburgh. I would spend the whole day with them, at their house, every other weekend. I don't remember if they had their own children and I don't remember if I ever spent the night. I went by myself and it was absolutely brilliant. That lasted a couple of years, if that. It was a good experience.

57. I then had another set of befriending foster parents. I think they were a man called [REDACTED] and his wife, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had worked at the Barnardo's Home, and was maybe still working there. They had a German shepherd dog [REDACTED] who I immediately took to. We used to go out to places like Peebles for a day out with the dog. We'd walk around and see things, and we went to a place called Gino's for ice cream.
58. There was a Barnardo's fostering or adoption type thing in Glasgow, just off Byres Road, where the market was. There was a social worker there called Eilidh Grain, I think, who arranged for me to go on radio. It was a publicity thing about adoption for Barnardo's on Radio Clyde. I think Steve O'Donnell was the presenter, and he interviewed me on the radio about how I was looking for a foster family. A large part of me wanted a foster family, but a small, niggly part of me thought that I didn't want one because I had a family somewhere. I went along with it though, because being on the radio was a big thing back then.
59. Towards the end of my time at Barnardo's, I had behavioural problems. Looking back, they probably stemmed from the abuse. I would act out. It was just silly things with other kids. I was getting quite strong and the staff reckoned I was getting too physical for them. I was sent to stay at an assessment centre in Edinburgh at Howden Hall. It was like a borstal, which was locked down. They kept telling me I was only there to attend the school.

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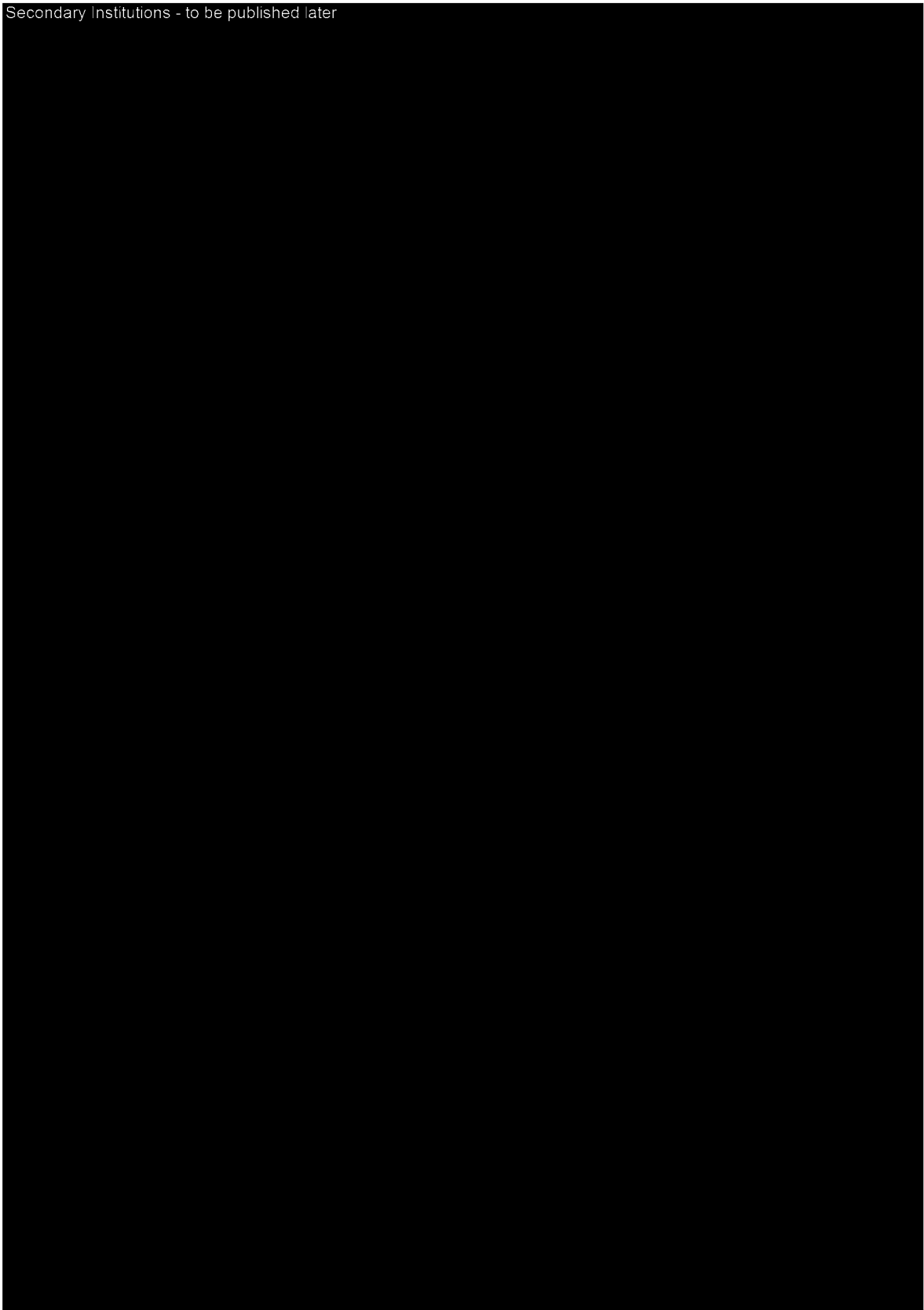
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#### **Leaving Dr Guthrie's List D School**

75. I think my time under Barnardo's care stopped when I left Dr Guthrie's List D School. I don't know the exact date, but I remember there was a ritual when you left. You would have a massive blancmange fight outside when you were leaving the home. Even the staff would get involved. This happened outside Barnardo's after I left Dr Guthrie's. This clearly marks the day I left the care of Barnardo's.
76. I must have still been of school age when I left because I managed to persuade them to send me to Boroughmuir High School in Edinburgh. This was a normal, mainstream school. I went to stay with a foster family.

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**Life after care**

92. After care, I stayed in different bedsits and housing. I was between sixteen and eighteen years old. I'd occasionally go back to see Mary at Barnardo's. They had set up an after care club, which they had plugged me into. I would go to that every week. We'd drink tea and talk about any problems that they could help with. I didn't talk about the abuse but they'd help with housing issues and things like that.
93. I joined the army when I was about eighteen. I joined the [REDACTED], so I started off in the Territorial Army in Tollcross, Edinburgh. I was in the army for about four years.
94. When I left the army, I messed about for a while. Then I got married, settled down in England and had kids. I became a father for the first time in 1995, when I was 25 years old, then again in 1998. I have two daughters.
95. I had lost contact with my siblings, but I bumped into [REDACTED] in a pub in Soho. We re-established contact for a while but then it fizzled out.
96. Secondary Institutions - to be published later  
[REDACTED]
97. I had not had contact with my siblings for years, but after the police contacted me, I decided to get in touch with them. The police gave me [REDACTED] address so I went to his house. He was no longer there and I was told he moved to Ireland. I later found [REDACTED] via Facebook, and then also found my other siblings.
98. I am still in contact with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I had contact with [REDACTED] for a while, but I am no longer in contact with her.

99. I had no contact with my parents after leaving care. I remember turning up at my mother's door with [REDACTED] once, while we were still in care. She was not happy. She ended up marrying a man called [REDACTED] or [REDACTED], who had an adult son in the cadets. He and I didn't like the fact that our parents were getting married so we would give each other dirty looks. This was when I was still young. I am told my mother died in about 1994 of a heart attack. I have no idea about my dad or where he is.
100. After the army, I found it difficult to find regular work. I worked sporadically in bars, as a doorman. I even worked as a trouble shooter for [REDACTED] for a while. I worked as a door supervisor for a private members club for about six years, until I had a stroke in 2012. I have not been able to work since 2012.
101. I have committed two crimes in my life, which were theft and I have been to court for them. I didn't like the consequences of offending. I didn't like going to court and being on probation.

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**Impact**

107. The abuse started when I was in [REDACTED] and that's when I was made to move school. I think, looking back, the abuse was the reason I started acting out in school and had to be moved. It was my way of coping. I believe the abuse affected my education because I left care with no qualifications. This made it difficult for me to find regular work after I left the army.

108. I started to self-harm a couple of months after I left care. It only really stopped a couple of years ago. I have not really had help about this.
109. I have always had trouble watching anything on television or even in films where there is any indication of abusive behaviour against children. I obviously remembered that something had happened, but I had pushed it so far back in my mind, and then every so often I would get a tug. It sometimes hits me hard when I see or read something about abuse.
110. When the police contacted me, the memories all came back. I had always thought that the abused becomes the abuser, and that scared me because I had a young child. I was a house husband and looked after my eighteen month old daughter at the time. I was so self-conscious when I was looking after her. I felt awkward changing her and taking her to playgroup. Most of the people there were mums and I was a novelty. I didn't know if my wife trusted me with my daughter.
111. I had always been a bit sulky and mopey, but I got depression after the police contacted me. I still have it and it sometimes hits me like a freight train. I think this is due to the abuse, and discussing it during police and court proceedings. It just popped its ugly head up. My self-harm became much worse after the police got in touch too. I would take massive gouges out of my arm and end up in hospital with infections. I had to get plastic surgery because of it on my arm.
112. I have never been physical with my children, but I can shoot my mouth off. When the police got in touch, I didn't know who I was anymore. I already had some problems, but it got worse. It came close to wrecking my relationship with my wife.
113. I am difficult to live with, and my wife would tell you that too. She says that I have a short fuse; I am uncooperative and tend to retreat into myself. I would often just get on my motorbike and disappear for a few hours. It was my way of trying to cope. I think this all stems from the abuse. I have tried to see psychologists, but I have a tendency to walk away when it gets too hard.

114. I find it difficult to trust people. It takes me a long time to make friends, which is why I don't have many friends. I can be in a room full of people and still feel lonely. It is hard for me to form relationships with anyone. I think it all stems from the abuse.
115. My faith as a Christian teaches me to accept what happens and try to forgive, but I can't. I can't forgive it and I can never forget it. It has been put in my mind and engraved into it. It can't be scrubbed clean. I think it is something that will be with me for the rest of my life.
116. [REDACTED] I wanted people to know my story and didn't want to sweep it under the carpet and be a victim any more. I am not a victim, I am a survivor and nobody can take that away.

### **Treatment and Support**

117. My health problems started after I got diabetes in 1999. Since then, it has been one thing after another. I had a stroke in 2012. This has left me with weakness on my right side, short term memory loss and extreme fatigue. I had a stammer for a while as well.
118. I was diagnosed with depression at least ten years ago, after the police contacted me. I am on anti-depressants now. I tried to have contact with psychologists and psychiatrists. They have all said I am depressed and want to continue to see me, but I leave when it gets too hard. I feel that they try to make my abuse too clinical and put it in a pigeon hole.
119. I am not getting any support at the moment. When you walk away from one psychiatrist, it's hard to get plugged in to support again. The GP just says that they have tried to plug me in to help so many times. It makes it virtually impossible to get referred again. They don't seem to understand that it's so hard. I was comfortable

with someone at Kings Hospital, but the hospital is geographically difficult for me to get to.

120. I have not had any specific counselling for my self-harming.

### **Records**

121. I asked for my records from Lothian Regional Council, as they were called back then. They said that I had to travel up to Scotland to get them. They refused to send them down. I have no records from social services at all.
122. I managed to retrieve my Barnardo's records a few years back. I went to their head office in Barkingside to get them. Someone read them with me, and then I was allowed to take them away. It covered my time at Barnardo's on South Oswald Road, Craigerne and bits and pieces about being in other places. There were a few things in it that I think should have rang alarm bells to social workers.
123. I have destroyed my files, which I think was a mistake. I will probably try to get them back again.

### **Final Thoughts**

124. When children are in the care of a local authority, they are acting as your parents. The staff need to be vetted with criminal background checks done. I don't know if these were done when I was in the home, or if they were sufficient enough. Once they are in the job, there needs to be continuous and rigorous checks, as well as on-going training for staff.
125. The local authority have a vested interest in ensuring that things are running smoothly, otherwise their jobs may be at risk. I don't know if that then leads to them just ticking boxes to say that everything is fine.

- 126. There should be a child advocate, separate from the social work department, who children can trust and talk to about anything. This person should be independent. They shouldn't be responsible for multiple homes at a time because that leads to them having to rush and keep to timescales. It should be one person per residential unit, who can go and spend time at the home and speak to the staff and children. They should spend time there and see how the place is run, and if it is a happy place where children feel content.
  
- 127. There needs to be spot checks carried out in care homes without pre-warning.
  
- 128. There should also be a number that children can call if they have problems. They should have access to a phone somewhere without staff being around. There should be information about child abuse near to the phone that children can see, explaining what child abuse is and what forms it can take.
  
- 129. I don't know why it has taken so long for everything to come to light. All the signs were there with the children themselves, or within their file entries at the time the abuse was happening. I hope the Inquiry leads to changes being made.
  
- 130. I don't care about confidentiality and if people know my name. What has happened has made me who I am, [REDACTED] I want to get it out there because I am not a victim anymore. I am a survivor and nobody can take that away. It will hopefully never happen again to another child if people know about it.
  
- 131. 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.

BHE  
[REDACTED SIGNATURE]

Sign .....

Dated.....

22/8/2017