

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

## Witness Statement of

BHJ  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is BHJ [REDACTED]. My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1974. I am [REDACTED] years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. The institutions I want to tell you about where I was in residential care are as follows:  
(1) 1986/1987 - Barnardos Children's Home, South Oswald Road, Edinburgh for about a year. (2) 1989 – Milne Park, Redhall Children's Home, 7 Redhall House Drive, Edinburgh for about four months. (3) 1989 – Cruachan Children's Home, Balerno for a weekend. (4) 1989/1990 - South Gyle Children's Home for a few months. (5) 1990 – Howdenhall Assessment Centre, Howdenhall Road, Edinburgh, for a few months. (6) 1990 - Danderhall Children's Home, Danderhall, Midlothian for a few months.
3. I cannot be sure of the exact dates or the periods of time that I was in these establishments but this is my best memory of these events.

**Life before going into care**

4. I was born into a chaotic household in the Craigmillar area of Edinburgh. My father was called [REDACTED] and my mother was known as [REDACTED]. When my mother remarried she became known as [REDACTED]. I had two elder brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was four years older and [REDACTED] was three years older. My sister [REDACTED] was four years younger. My grandfather was also an alcoholic and my parents ran away together when they were very young.

5. My home in Craigmillar was a very violent place. My father was an alcoholic and my mother had mental health problems as a result of her upbringing. The area and the school I went to in Craigmillar were very violent. My mother and father split up and I went with my oldest brother [REDACTED] to stay with my father. My mother's new partner also had two children.
6. I was about seven years old when I moved away with my father. My father badly neglected my brother and me as he spent most of the time in public houses and we would be left outside waiting for him. We were not being cared for and were badly neglected. I would also get into trouble with the police and I recall being at Springwell House Social Work Department where I think that my father dealt with a social worker called Lesley Wilson. We moved round different addresses in Niddrie and Dalry in Edinburgh. My father didn't like my older brother and he put him into a children's home.
7. I was with my father for about a year and a half. One day I went home and the door had been kicked in. My father was in trouble with the police and I had to return to my mother's address. By this time my mother was living with another man and the situation was no different, it was still as chaotic. I had brought with me a number of problems because of the way I had been treated by my father.
8. I didn't realise till later in life that a lot of my behaviour was due to my circumstances. The guilt I carried with me was because of the way I was treated and the chaotic lifestyle that I had no control over.
9. I stayed with my mother for nearly two years but she was unable to cope with my behaviour at both home and at school. I was now living in Gorebridge. I used to run away a lot because I was seeking attention. I wanted my mother to come and find me. I would tell her that I wanted to go into a children's home. At age twelve or thereabouts my mother told me that I could have my wish and I was placed into a Barnardos Children's Home, at South Oswald Road in Edinburgh.

10. I think that this was organised by the social work department. I had no direct dealing with the social worker as I remember. I think that the social worker was called Lesley Wilson and she dealt with my mother in relation to all the family issues.

#### **Barnardos Children's Home, South Oswald Road, Edinburgh 1986 -1987**

11. My first thought of Barnardos was that I was in a home where most of the children had been orphaned and yet I still had both my parents. It was a big house set in its own grounds and I remember how dusty the house was. There was loads of space in the grounds to run about. I was about twelve when I first went there and I stayed for about a year.
12. I think that there were about eleven or twelve other children in the home. It was run by a married couple who stayed in the annexe. I can't remember their names. There was another man called BEO who was also involved in running the home. I don't know which authority had overall responsibility. I think that there were maybe eight or nine staff that covered for 24 hours.
13. Half way through my time at Barnardos the person in charge changed. I recall the new man getting everyone together and telling everyone that there would be lots of changes. I remember thinking that he was addressing a bunch of children who didn't really understand and wanted to get outside to play. The staff were all very caring and I felt cared for. Barnardos was a very nice place and I was not abused there. I felt cared for.

#### *Routine at Barnardos*

14. There were four children to each bedroom. I just didn't have any issues with Barnardos and I was treated very well. It was very different to my home life. Because I had parents I was able to go home at weekends although a lot of the other residents were orphans.

*Schooling*

15. I attended James Gillespie's High School and I had no issues with the school apart from the fact we were dropped off most mornings by the blue Sherpa van from Barnardos and everyone in the school knew that I was living in a children's home. The children at the school thought I was in the home because I was in trouble and I felt sometimes that they were very patronising to me.
16. I felt that I was treated differently and if I wanted to go to a friend's house after school it involved a lot of phone calls back and forward to organise. I didn't experience issues with the other pupils although on one occasion two pupils from the school called at Barnardos and asked me to come out and fight. That was an exception.

*Food*

17. The food at the home was very good and I had no issues that I can remember.

*Visits*

18. I think that my birth father came to visit once. He told me that he was going to get me out but I think he went back on the drink and I never saw him again. My mother visited a couple of times but after I had been there for a month I was allowed home at weekends. My step father used to pick me up on a Friday and bring me back to the home on a Sunday night.
19. I don't think that I had a visit from my social worker the whole time I was at Barnardos. I can't remember going to any children's panels and I don't recall any inspections being carried out. I think that my social worker was still Lesley Wilson but I didn't see her at Barnardos. I seem to remember that there was a discussion between the home and my mother every three months. It was a review of my circumstances.

**Leaving Barnardos Children's Home, South Oswald Road, Edinburgh. 1987**

20. They had a small party from me when I left Barnardos. I don't know who made the decision to leave Barnardos but one day I just left and went back to stay with my mother and step father at Gorebridge. When I arrived there I learned that my brother [REDACTED] had been put into a home and we no longer talked about him.
21. I attended a local high school in Gorebridge. A month later my mother then told me that she was leaving my stepfather and we moved to the Oxgangs area of Edinburgh. My stepfather didn't drink or smoke but he was very manipulating. My mother couldn't cope with that.
22. I think that I resided in the Oxgangs area and stayed there with my mother between the ages of twelve and fifteen. I was quite happy because it meant that I was able to attend my old school at Gillespie's and be with the friends I had made there.
23. There were still issues at home and my mother was on anti-psychotic drugs. She couldn't cope with me and used to ask me to go to the social work department and ask them to take me back. She didn't know how to deal with either me or the social worker. She told the social workers that I was a problem. She was mentally ill. We never talked about my brother. I never saw my birth father again after he visited me at Barnardos. My father died when I was 25 in 1999.
24. My mother arranged for a social worker called Dennis who was based at Oxgangs social work department to come and see me. My family was intending to emigrate to Australia with my stepfather and my stepbrothers. My mother was very keen to go and we had to attend interviews from the authorities. I was very excited about emigrating to Australia. My mother's experience of Australia was watching episodes of the TV soap Neighbours.
25. My mother didn't really want me to go with them to Australia and told the social workers that I had a number of problems. It was obvious that my stepfather didn't want me to go either and he was manipulating my mother. The social worker Dennis

arranged for his manager to come to the meeting and my mother was put on the spot and asked if she wanted me to go to Australia. She said that she didn't want me. It had to be her that made that decision. Two days later I was sent to Milne Park, Redhall Children's Home, Edinburgh. I found this very upsetting as I had no issues at school and didn't understand what I was doing wrong. I think that the social workers felt that it was my mother had problems and not me.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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**Life after being in care**

87. When I left Danderhall and the care system I went and stayed with my uncle for a short period and then my brother. My brother had also been in care and between the two of us we had no idea how to live normally. I was sixteen when I was living with my brother at [REDACTED] in Edinburgh. I did meet with Dennis my social worker at some stage as I was desperate for money to buy food. Dennis gave me £25 to tide me over. I think that I met Dennis on two other occasions usually when I was in some sort of trouble.
88. My life in care had introduced me to alcohol, substance abuse, drugs and I started smoking. All this happened when I went into The South Gyle Children's Home. I had a lot of run ins with the police and had racked up a lot of charges. I was usually charged with breach of the peace but only went to prison once for three days when I didn't pay a fine. When you meet other children in care you tend to stick together and I still associated with the people I had met in the care establishments.
89. I moved between various different addresses staying in "digs" where there was a landlady in charge. Over the next few years I had mental health problems. I was forever moving on. I had one long term job with a wallpaper company but I was struggling to cope with the effect of my upbringing. I worked for a short time as a cycle courier and did a couple of courses at college for making guitars.
90. I was often homeless and lived wherever I could get a bed. I was heavily abusing alcohol and had other addiction problems. I was drinking myself to death. At one stage I lived in a Cyrenian Hostel in Portobello and through that placement I was housed in supported accommodation in St John's Hill, Edinburgh. The Cyrenian's continued to support me. I was living off state benefits. I was now about 32 years of age. The Cyrenian's introduced me to Lothian's and Edinburgh Abstinence Program. I started going to AA meetings and my life started to turn around.
91. I was admitted to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and have had psychiatric help through the staff there. I was prescribed anti-psychotic drugs. I received Cognitive

Behaviour Therapy through a Community Psychiatric Nurse based at the hospital. I stayed in the hospital for about a week but also attended as an outpatient.

92. It was not until more recently when I contacted Future Pathways that I received help and started to understand that a lot of my addiction and mental health was a direct result of my early trauma. Being abandoned by my parents and being in care where I didn't know what future I had.
93. I have managed to settle down at my current address where I have resided there for ten years. It has meant stability in my life and I have been able to tackle a lot of the issues from my childhood that I had locked away. I have been diagnosed with Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of my early life. More recently I was referred to [REDACTED] at The Anchor Centre in Glasgow and he has been working with me ever since. It was [REDACTED] that diagnosed my Complex PTSD.

### **Impact**

94. I felt that I had nothing to live for. My father had died of alcohol addiction and I was going the same way. Throughout my life I have been diagnosed with depression, mild schizophrenia, psychic dysthymia and drug induced psychosis. The chaos of my early life led to the violence and addiction. I never felt settled. I had to create chaos in later life so that I could cope with what I was used to. I needed the chaos to be comfortable.
95. I find I have difficulty with people in authority as I suspect that they will be violent to me. All people in authority in my life were figures that demanded respect through threats or violence. I had a poor attitude towards them all. I find relationships difficult. I have no contact with my family.
96. When my mother came back from Australia I have tried to engage with her but she blames her children and my father for what has happened in the past. She didn't stay long in Australia.

97. My best friends were the other children that had been in care. Most of the people I was in care with have since died. I only know one person who is still alive but he is in a terrible mess and the last time I saw him he had bad shakes. His name is [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
98. I still take anti-psychotic drugs and drugs for depression. I have not had addiction problems for about ten years. I still receive trauma counselling once a week. I have engaged with the National Confidential Forum and they put me in touch with Future Pathways.

### **Records**

99. I have tried to get hold of my records through the freedom of information request. I have had very little information as the social work department told me that they have lost my records and they can't be located. Very recently I did get a phone call from Sean Bell from the archives who explained to me that he didn't know where the records had gone. He gave me a number of excuses. When the phone call was concluded I spoke to a lawyer friend who advised me to get a paper record. I think I did get a record from the Children's panel which had very little information.

### **Lessons to be Learned**

100. I think that the places where a lot of the Children's Homes were sited was wrong. The homes were situated in the middle of "rough" housing estates where you would stick out as being a person from the home. The best times when I was in care were when I was in a place that was separated and there were grounds and places to play nearby without being under the scrutiny of the locals.
101. South Gyle, Howdenhall and Danderhall were all places that were situated in the middle of housing schemes whereas Milne Park and Barnardos were great places for children to be brought up.

**Other information**

- 102. I have since volunteered to help with some of the people attending LEAP or Barnardos and am able to talk about addiction and mental health issues as a person that has been dealing with them. I try not to think about my time in care as it still upsets me to this day.
  
- 103. 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..... BHJ .....

Dated..... 4/9/18 .....