

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Gavin Mcclymont
Date of Birth: 18/12/1952
Care Setting: Dunhaven house in strathaven- here for around 2 years
Dates: 1960-1963
Persons Involved: Staff

Full Statement

I was around 8 years old when I was taken from my family home. To this day, I still do not properly understand why I was removed. There was no real explanation given to me that I could understand as a child. One day I was at home, and the next I was taken away and placed into Dunhaven House in Strathaven. My life changed overnight.

I remained in Dunhaven House for approximately two years during my first placement there. When I first arrived, I was terrified. I was confused, emotional, and extremely anxious. I did not understand what was happening or why I had been taken away from my family. No one helped settle me in. No one sat with me to explain what was happening. No one comforted me. I felt completely alone from the very beginning.

My first night there was horrific. The environment was chaotic and frightening. The children were feral and aggressive, and I witnessed them being made to fight each other. It was not a safe place for a child. It felt violent and out of control. Straight away, my siblings and I were separated. We were very close and had always supported each other. Losing them in that moment felt like losing the only safety I had left. I was not only scared for myself, but constantly worried about what was happening to them as well. That separation deeply traumatised me.

There was constant bullying in Dunhaven House. The staff allowed it to happen and, at times, actively encouraged division between us. They would play us against

each other. Instead of protecting vulnerable children, they created an environment of fear and humiliation.

I clearly remember members of staff, Mrs Brown and Miss Wilson. They regularly spoke to me in a degrading and cruel manner. They would deliberately embarrass me in front of the other children. They would insult me and belittle me, and the other children would laugh and then torment me further. I was publicly humiliated on many occasions. This destroyed my confidence at such a young age.

Physical abuse was also a regular occurrence. Staff would push me around and hit me around the head. I

was physically assaulted while in their care. When I reacted or became upset, instead of helping me, I was punished.

One of the most traumatic punishments was being sent to what they called a “dorm,” but in reality, it was a single cell with nothing in it except a chair. I was locked inside this room alone for days at a time. As a child, sitting alone in a bare room for days was psychologically unbearable. I felt isolated, abandoned, and completely worthless. It was mental torture. I was regularly called names and made to feel like I was nothing. My body felt weak and drained from constant fear, bullying, and stress. I lived in a permanent state of anxiety.

After approximately two years, I was placed back home with my parents, who had moved to Douglas. I was only home for a few months before I was taken and placed back into Dunhaven House in Strathaven for just over another year.

When I arrived back the second time, I felt immediate panic. I remember the overwhelming sense of dread as I realised I was back in what felt like hell. The panic attacks started almost instantly. Nothing had changed. If anything, things were worse.

The children were more violent, and I was forced into fights regularly. I was targeted again by both children and staff. Not long after returning, I remember Mr Griffiths, who was the head of the home at the time. He singled me out repeatedly. On one occasion, he tried to force me to go to school wearing a girl’s coat. I refused because I felt humiliated. He took me into his room and beat me black and blue. This was not an isolated incident. He physically assaulted me on multiple occasions.

I began running away because I could not cope any longer. I was being tormented daily. I felt trapped. Family visits were stopped during this time, so I had no way to ask for help. I had no voice. No adult stepped in to protect me. I was completely failed by the system that was supposed to keep me safe.

Each time I ran away, I was caught, taken back, beaten, and placed again in the single cell with only a chair as punishment. I remember being locked in there every day for two weeks straight. I genuinely felt like I was going insane. The isolation severely affected me both mentally and physically. I would sit alone for hours and days with nothing but my thoughts and fear. It broke something inside me.

There were also occasions where I was placed into cold baths as punishment. These experiences were degrading and traumatic. I was treated like an animal rather than a child in care.

After just over a year, I was eventually placed back home with my parents. By that point, I had no strength left. I was physically exhausted and emotionally broken. I was not the same child who had been taken away at 8 years old. I felt like my childhood had been stolen from me.

The abuse and mistreatment I suffered at Dunhaven House in Strathaven has had lifelong consequences. I now struggle with severe anxiety, PTSD, and depression. I experience panic attacks, intrusive memories, and flashbacks. I struggle to sleep properly. I remain hypervigilant and constantly on edge, as if something bad is about to happen. I struggle deeply with trust and forming relationships. I find it difficult to believe that

anyone will protect me or treat me properly, because the people who were responsible for my care abused me instead.

The separation from my siblings, the bullying, the beatings, the isolation, the humiliation, and the lack of protection have all had a lasting impact on my mental health and my ability to function normally in life. My confidence was destroyed at a young age. I still carry feelings of worthlessness and fear.

We were failed as children. I was failed by the care system. Instead of being protected, I was subjected to physical abuse, emotional abuse, psychological torment, and neglect. The damage from those years continues to affect me every single day.