

Name: Steven Coughlan

DOB: 13/06/1984

Name of Care Home/s Cardross and Balinkinrain

Reason for going into care: Behavioural Issues

Age in care: 12-16

Personal Statement

At Balinkinrain, Greg McDougall, headteacher was my main abuser. He punched me in the arms and stomach, twisted my arms, restrained me forcefully, and slapped me across the face. On several occasions, he tried to touch my private parts. When I pushed him away, he would become violent, twisting my arms and hitting me. I was always covered in bruises. He always blamed me for everything. I felt deeply embarrassed and ashamed. I also saw him strike other boys. I do not know if he touched them the way he tried to touch me, but it is possible that he did.

I was also hit with slippers and belts. I could barely sleep at night, and that would provoke them to hit me. They never understood why I struggled to sleep; it runs in my family, as my daughter is also a troubled sleeper. They would strike me on my bottom, legs, and arms with these objects. Even now, I have great difficulty sleeping. No Medical attention was ever sought for it. Because I struggled to get up in the mornings, they would tip my bed upside down with me still in it, causing me to fall to the floor with the mattress. Then they would make me tidy everything up.

If I misbehaved, they would punish me by forcing soap into my mouth. Sometimes they would push a sock filled with soap into my mouth and move it around so that I could taste it.

The showers were communal, and I was very shy. I tried to wait until last, but they forced me to wash with the other boys. Greg was often nearby, watching, and other staff members would also stand and watch us. There was never any privacy. I remember Mike Devine staff doing this as well.

I often did not like the food they gave us. My parents used to bring me snacks and sandwiches, but the staff would take them away from me.

I had to clean up in the woodwork department and also did painting and joinery. The work was constant and far beyond what was reasonable.

At night, some of the boys would come into my room and beat me. They had clearly formed a hierarchy with certain staff members, who encouraged this behaviour.

Sometimes I was taken out of my room at night and made to stand for what felt like hours. It was an extremely cruel punishment, done only because I struggled to fall asleep. Once, I had to go to the hospital because of an injury to my wrist caused by the excessive force used during restraint.

I ran away a few times. When I was caught, I was beaten with a belt or a slipper, then made to face Greg, headteacher who would slap my face and punch me in the stomach. I told my parents about the abuse, and they confronted the staff, but the staff completely denied it. Bruises on body being in pain. Would hide it from parents.

Today, I suffer from anxiety and depression and take medication to help me cope. For a long time, I used cannabis to deal with the effects of the abuse, but I no longer use it. I still struggle deeply with

trust and believe it all stems from my childhood trauma. Social services also failed me and allowed the abuse to continue. I did confide in my key worker, Paddy, who was very kind and supportive, but nothing was ever done to protect me.