

Survivor Full Name: **Joan Mulheron** Other Known Name: **None**
DOB: **05/10/1969** Redress Case Ref Num: **TBC – Initial Application** Status: **Low Priority**
Mother's Name: **Joan (Kelly – maiden name) Mulheron** Father's Name: **Robert Mulheron**
Siblings Names/DOB: **Marie Mulheron - 12/04/1971 (in care with Joan)**
Serious Criminal Conviction in the last 5 years: **None**
Reason for going into Care: **Mother was physically attacking Joan and her sister.**

1. Introduction

My name is Joan Mulheron and I am making this statement to share my experiences of being in care as a child and the impact these experiences have had on my life. Some of the details are difficult for me to talk about, and some memories are clearer than others, but I will describe what I remember to the best of my ability.

I understand that my records from the time are limited or incomplete, and I want to explain my experiences in my own words.

2. My Time in Care – Overview

Our dad had passed away in 1978, so we just had our mum, who drank a lot. I was involved with social work services at around 13 years old in 1982. I believe this involvement began because me and my sister Marie had bruises on us. I remember my eldest sister taking us to the police station because of the bruises. I recall being in the police station then Social Services intervened. I believe my mum went to court and got charged with assaulting us.

Apparently, a children's panel hearing took place with Glasgow social services. The next thing I remember, we were picked up by the Social Worker to take me and Marie to Blairvadach.

Over the following months/years, I was moved between several care settings. These included:

- **Blairvadach Children Home - just under a year (1982 - 1983)**
- **Sister & partner's home – for approx. 2 months**
- **Burnside Children's Home in Irvine - just under a year (1983-1984)**
- **Eglington Children's Home, Glasgow – Around a year (1984-1985)**

I will describe each placement as I remember it.

Blairvadach Children Home - just under a year (1982)

I remember it was around teatime when we arrived here as it had gone dark. The building was an old convent and was a beautiful big building. It was sort of two houses in one. The top one we were in, and the bottom one was for the older residents. We were in a girl's dorm; around 4 of us altogether.

I got bullied by the other girls in there; they have their own code. I got bullied by the boys too as we were in a mixed sex home. They would hit and kick me and make me 'run the gauntlet' which you had to get through without being hit. One of the boys in there 'branded' me with a T tattoo on my arm. I don't know why he did it or what it meant.

The night watchman would lock us in our room for hours. He slept in a lounge area next to our room as he was always drunk. He used to come into our bedroom drunk at night. I did not sleep on the nights he was working as there were rumours that he was touching the kids. He used to come in and touch my hair and put his hand on my shoulder. I shouted at him, and he slapped me across the jaw, backhanded me. He would lock me in the room, and he locked my sister in a cupboard.

A new staff member joined, and he was really touchy feely. He used to put his arms around me and touch my breasts, and he would hang over me. He put his hands down my trousers a few times. He would touch me on the backside then my vagina and put his fingers inside it. I was too scared to say or do anything. It happened a few times. He used to ask me how I kissed boys and would try to get me to kiss a boy in front of him. He encouraged the boys there to “slip the hand” and put their tongue in girls’ mouths to see if we liked it. None of the boys did anything other than kissing.

I was always very good at school and a good athlete. I could have gone far. I was in classes at Notre Dame girls’ school in Dumbarton. In classes at Blairvadach Children’s Home, they took us for an orienteering evening and other events to the Blairvadach Outdoor Centre on odd weekends which was nearby. After school in the evenings, we would just stay in the grounds doing nothing then go back to our dorm.

I was subjected to cold showers, and female staff members held me under it. I was made to shower with the shower curtain open and they watched me while I showered. We had no privacy. They did it to humiliate me. They would comment on my small frame as I was so malnourished. They would call me “Dolly Parton no tits” as I had small breasts. This always stuck with me, and I was older I had a breast enlargement as was so self-conscious about them still.

Sister & partner’s home

We asked to move in with our older sister, Maureen Hunter, so we left Blairvadach Children Home then stayed with my older sister and her partner for around 2 months. Maureen is 7 years older than me and I think they only agreed to us going there as she wanted the extra money. She wasn’t bothered about us. It didn’t work out so we ended up being moved to the home in Irvine.

Burnside Children's Home in Irvine - just under a year (1983-1984)

Me and Marie shared a room here. We were made to clean up everyone’s dinner plates. I am not sure why it was always us, nobody else had to do it. The male staff were in and out of my rooms constantly, going through my underwear drawers. All mine and Marie’s underwear got stolen by them and other items of ours got stolen by other residents. I remember the social worker coming to the home, she was a lovely Indian lady. We had no knickers on as they’d gone. She had to take us out to buy new ones.

The food there wasn’t edible, it was disgusting. They would make us eat it but later on we’d throw it back up. Marie once stole some marzipan from the kitchen as we were so hungry. To punish her one male staff member rammed it into her mouth so hard she was choking. She’s never touched marzipan again to this day. I had my mouth washed out with soap by a male staff member. He was on a power trip. He shouted that I would not be “fucking swearing again.” He called me a dirty wee cow and locked me in a room or a cupboard, I can’t remember.

The toilets were always dirty here. I was also subjected to cold showers and was made to shower in front of female and male staff. They would make us queue up and always make us go last so the water would be cold by then. One female staff member used a stick to keep us under the water if we were trying to get out because it was getting too cold. She would push you back with the stick. The male staff would make comments about our breasts. It was humiliating.

I once got pulled by the hair by a staff member and was then thrown to the other side of the dining room. Marie got punched so hard she went flying across the floor. The staff would encourage bullying amongst the other kids. We had come from a different area so because we had different accents we got bullied. We'd end up eating alone as didn't want to get picked on. There was this one girl there who was crazy. She would always want to fight you, but nothing ever seemed to happen to her. The male staff probably used her to bully the other kids.

We smashed up some of the dishes once in one of the wings kitchens. It was only around 5 plates. We got locked up in a cupboard for that. The Social Worker said we were "unmanageable" and we were then moved to the Clevedon Children's Home.

Eglington Children's Home

I was around 15 when I got moved here. I remember it being a new place and me and Marie were amongst the first residents there. It was a mixed sex home, but we never really saw half the other kids here unless it was at mealtimes. We had our own rooms. Some of the staff would come into my room and ask if I wanted to "go on the pull". I wasn't sexually active and found this really shocking. It was at least 6-7 years after leaving care, when I was in my 20's, that I even had my first proper relationship.

One of the male night staff there, called John, would come in and give me a coffee. He would make sure that I drank it all, saying "come on Joan, drink it all up". I wouldn't remember anything after that. I'd have a sore, heavy head the next morning and feel really tired. Other kids there had this happen too. My legs and down below would feel sore and sort of throbby. I just put it down to probably needing the toilet, but when I think about it he could have done something to me.

3. Emotional and Long-Term Impact

I'd parked all of this away in my head years ago. It took me a long time to digest it all in my head. Life has been busy with other things going on like having to deal with my son being on drugs; I've had stage 2 cancer so also been having treatment for that. That distracted me from all the other stuff.

I don't drink alcohol anymore; I've been teetotal for a long time, or coffee! I used to drink a lot of coffee! I'm on medication for anxiety as I still suffer with my mental health. I have bad anxiety and depression, and it took me a long time to process everything in my head that had happened to me.

I still have issues showering due to being attacked in the shower. I have triggers which cause me to have flashbacks. For years I woke up with fear. I still sleep with the door open because of being locked up. I think every kid just thought it was all normal with coming from an abusive background. It just seemed to be a normal way of life.

These experiences have shaped my life in ways that continue to affect me today.

4. Missing or Incomplete Records

I understand that some of the institutions involved have been unable to provide full records of my time in care. This has been difficult, but I know that my memories and experiences are valid. I am sharing what I remember because these events had a significant impact on my life.

5. Closing Statement

I am making this statement to help Redress Scotland understand what happened to me and how it has affected me. I am doing this in the hope that my experiences will be acknowledged and that I can continue to move forward in my life.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement.

Signed: *Joan Mulheron*

Date: 05/08/2026