

Name: John Caldwell

DOB: 11/10/1996

Name of Care Home: Knightswood Children's Home

Reason for going into care: Neglect

Age in care: Approximately 3-11 years of age.

Personal Statement

I was placed in care due to concerns about my safety at home, with the reason given as neglect. This decision was made through a panel under Glasgow Social Services.

I was moved through several placements, many of which I don't remember by name due to being so young. The first placement I can clearly recall and where my abuse occurred was in Knightswood Children's home, I can't recall names, but this is where it was located, I lived here from around the age of 3 until I was about 10 or 11 years old.

While living in Knightswood, I was subjected to frequent physical abuse by staff. This violence occurred almost daily. I remember being struck with various objects, though I can't recall exactly what they were, but I would be hit with whatever was to hand like a missile getting thrown at you from an adult or to be slapped around the head or backside. I was regularly forced into cold showers as punishment, and I witnessed similar treatment being inflicted on other children, including my sister, who I saw being dragged by her hair by a staff member one day and beaten it was really distressing seeing my sister screaming in pain being dragged by her hair by this staff member. I was always covered in various bruises and injuries.

The emotional and psychological abuse was just as severe. Staff would call me derogatory names and were cruel in how they treated me. They were always making me feel small and not worthy by saying 'my parents didn't love me no one wanted me', they would be nasty about my family or me and there was no care or compassion, just words and cruel actions, being excluded, neglected, not encouraged in my education. I vividly remember one Christmas being told I wasn't well-behaved enough to receive any gifts, I was given nothing. It was deeply upsetting and left a lasting impression.

There were times I was forced to stand outside in adverse weather as punishment for whatever they deemed I had been misbehaving sometimes I think they just did it for their own amusement or as they couldn't be bothered to deal with me. One specific incident took place during a thunderstorm, I remember being so scared and soaked through and cold and just left, who does that to a child. I was also punished by having my mouth washed out with soap for answering back to staff, this happened on several occasions I can still remember the taste of the soap in my mouth.

I struggled with bedwetting at the time, and instead of receiving care or support, I was humiliated. Staff would shame me, and on several occasions, I was taken to the kitchen at night and made to sleep on the floor. I was also removed from my bed and beaten during the night, hit around the body and or head or beaten across backside.

There was lots of bullying among the children in the home, and staff made no effort to intervene. In fact, I believe they allowed, and at times encouraged, this behavior to happen. I was bullied severely by other children, and I hated being there so much, I just wanted to escape.

I ran away from home on several occasions. Each time, I was harshly punished. My privileges were taken away, I was isolated, and staff gave me silent treatment. I wasn't allowed to speak to others and was completely excluded from the daily routines. Treated like an outcast when all I wanted was to feel like I belonged

There was no privacy during personal care, staff would come in and out while I was showering. I was denied visits with my parents and was also separated from my sisters at various points. Staff made derogatory comments about my parents in front of me, which added to the emotional distress I was already experiencing.

I wasn't told about my mother dying by social workers and found out by accident.

One staff member I clearly remember as being abusive was Sandra Wright.

I struggle with my mental health and have ongoing emotional difficulties because of what I went through. I've never been able to maintain a long-term relationship, and I still wake up in the night crying. I have been diagnosed with ADHD, Borderline personality disorder and I have emotionally unstable personality disorder. I have trouble sleeping and require medication to settle. I wake up to every little sound. The medication I'm on means it's a constant battle to support my young children, as I find it difficult to hold down a job and manage the side effects of the drowsiness from the quetiapine at the same time. I haven't worked for 2.5 years as a result; it's caused me financial hardship.

This early experience in care has had a lasting effect on my life emotionally, mentally, and physically. I believe the trauma I experienced during my upbringing in care is directly responsible for the ongoing difficulties I face today.