

**Name:** Mr Barrie Oliver

**DOB:** 29/04/1986

**Name of Care Homes.** Gorebridge Unit Children's Home. Midfield House Children's Home. Wellington Farm Residential School. St Phillip's Residential School.

**Reason for going into care:** Out of parental control.

**Age in care:** 11-16

### **Personal Statement**

My behaviour was challenging for my mum to handle when I was younger, leading to a decision by a panel with Dalkeith social services to place me in care. Initially, I was in an emergency foster placement for about a week, then Gorebridge, Midfield Children's Home and then to Wellington farm residential school two years before finally moving to St Phillip's for the remainder of my time until I turned 16. My negative experiences primarily stemmed from my time at Midfield and Wellington farm; however, abuse happened in Gorebridge and St Phillips too.

### **Gorebridge**

At age 11, I was transferred to Gorebridge unit for a few months, where I was subjected to restraint tactics by staff. I had my head squashed into the ground and I was in pain and left 10 minutes in that painful position. I was also punched and kicked by staff.

### **Midfield Children Home**

I was at Midfield children's home for approximately a year, still aged 11. I endured physical abuse from the staff here too, which occurred quite frequently. I was again subjected to painful restraints, during which I was again punched and kicked. My face was often forced into the ground with someone's knee pressing against the back of my head. This treatment was mostly inflicted by the day staff, who seemed to take pleasure in it. One staff member even laughed and boasted about the power and control he had over us. I was spoken to in a cruel manner and called names. It felt extreme, especially since I was just a child, and there would be 3-4 adults physically holding me down. I was whipped with a belt across the backs of my legs and my back. Although this was not as frequent, I still bear physical and emotional scars from those whippings. I also witnessed similar treatment towards other boys during my time there. Food was often weaponized against me, with meals often withheld based on my behaviour, as a result I often went hungry.

There was an old, abandoned building known as 'the garages,' and within the boiler room there, I would be locked up in an 8ft x 10ft room, sometimes in the middle of winter. The duration of confinement sometimes lasted up to 3 hours, with staff often saying they forgot to release me and finding it funny. When I took a shower, I had to wait in line while naked. The showers were communal, and staff members were present to watch us. At night, if the staff thought I was smoking, they would take me from my bed and make me stand in the hallway facing the wall. Often, I would be in my underwear during this time. I would sometimes anxiously wet the bed while in this situation, and the staff would humiliate and shame me for it. They would conduct room searches and tear apart our rooms if they suspected smoking. Because I wet the bed until I was 16, I frequently found myself standing in the hallway in my wet underwear, feeling humiliated in front of everybody. I did escape from there, but when I was brought back, I was locked in my room and faced severe loss of privileges, including food. I was not allowed to socialize or watch TV, as these were considered luxuries, and if I refused to comply, I would be violently restrained. I was also denied visits with my family and kept in isolation for a month in the "visiting room" which had a table and chair and no bed. One name I remember from Midfield is Derek; I can't recall his last name, but his nickname was

'Popeye'. When I would misbehave, he and other staff would enforce bedtime at 6 with lights off for everyone, turning everyone against me.

### **Wellington Farm Residential Farm**

During my time at Wellington farm aged 12-14, I was here for 2 years, I faced violence from staff once again. On one occasion, a staff member named Bill Barclay kicked me in the face. I reported his behaviour, as he was not supposed to be involved in my care, but he denied everything, he was reported for assault by me but was still allowed access, due to being short staffed. To my knowledge, no action was taken against him. Unfortunately, if they were short-staffed, I had to endure his presence again. There was an incident where my mouth was washed out with washing up liquid. I wet the bed, and this time my mattress was placed in the hallway. This led to everyone being encouraged to call me names, which was incredibly degrading and humiliating. The bullying was already severe, and the staff did nothing to address it. I had no privacy while showering; staff members would be present to monitor us. The showers were communal, and I had to stand naked alongside other boys. Cold showers were also used as a form of punishment. For a long time, my family visits were denied before I was finally allowed to go home. I attempted to run away from there, which resulted in me being kicked out and moved to St Phillips, to prevent further attempts, as it was located far from everyone else.

### **St Phillips**

I then went to St Phillips, until I was 16. I remember staff member Jerry Riley, who insulted and degraded me, he grabbed me by the throat and called me a bastard as I dared to speak back.

My experiences there have profoundly affected my mental health as an adult, regardless of my efforts to suppress it. It has influenced my relationships with others throughout my life. While in care, I was separated from my siblings, causing me to miss out on crucial bonding years with them. I have been diagnosed with depression and anxiety and have been medicated since 16.