

Name: Alexander McGarry

DOB: 26/05/1958

Name of Care Home(s): St Ninians, St Joseph's Tranent, St John's Springboig, Glenochil

Reason for going into care: Theft

Age in care: 11 - 17

Method: Taken over phone 14/05/2026

I was originally sent to St Ninian's due to stealing.

St Ninians: Age 11 1969

I received emotional and physical mistreatment. Verbal abuse often occurred daily. I was struck with a belt on the hands and backside, sometimes with trousers lowered to hit bare skin, making it more painful and forceful. In the dormitory they would get people out and lay you down on the bed pull you pants down and smack your bum as hard as they liked with their hands and other stuff. Occasionally, they would send you to your room without food, causing you to miss a meal, which might not have been due to anything you did wrong, but rather the staff's mood that day. I was just about 10 or 11 years old, very young. They all covered for each other. They would say sorry that happened to you wee man, but we can't say anything about it and things like that. There was no issue with other residents, in fact it was very much they were together and we were together even though we were very young and immature. Contact with my family was very rare as they were poor. It was quite far away when your family has no transport. I was scared to tell anyone what was happening to me in the home because I was scared, I would be bullied further. I witnessed other children being treated the same way. Staff were always watching there was no privacy. Even when we took showers the staff would be watching. This made me feel very uncomfortable at that age.

St Josephs: Age 13 1971-72

A few years later I got sent to St Joseph's Tranent near Musselburgh for stealing again. There was total abuse in St Joseph's to be honest with you, and I hate talking about St Joseph's. In St Joseph's I changed in the place. There was this teacher called Sivia, Sivvy screw we called him, he stayed in possibly Melrose one of the dormitories because the staff had their own rooms there which they stayed in. He asked me to go into his room and tidy up for him and that's where I got touched up then. But I couldn't rove obviously and so I just hate talking about it. That really made me very very weak at the time but

strong in my mind because I would never let anything like that happen to me again. After that I became sort of a recluse, I didn't want to know anybody and I fought with everybody. I wouldn't even take a shower anymore unless they shut the door and that kind of thing. That's why I don't like talking about it. I believe I was there for around 14 months. The treatment in general by the staff was very similar of that to in St Ninians. The treatment was bad because I am actually from Hamilton, but they classed us as Glaswegian bastards to the Edinburgh mob or to those in that area. There was a clear difference in the way that we were treated due to where we were from. They used to say why are you coming up to here to serve your sentence you should be doing it in the Glasgow area. They were just beasts really, just terrible.

St John's, Glasgow age 15 - admitted 21/08/1973 then re admitted 20/06/75

Not long after I left St Joseph's I got sent to St John's approved school. The most severe abuse I received was here, it felt like a prison, yet it wasn't one. It was mainly mental abuse in here and bullying in there. If you were out on weekend leave, they would make you sit and watch the clock from 9 till 12. If you try and sit and watch a clock for 3 hours straight without moving your eyes, being allowed to talk to anyone or to get away, it's pure mental abuse. It was I would be thrown into the swimming pool despite not being able to swim. What started it all off is one of the guys got into a fight with one of the staff there somebody who ran it and he told me to go and get the headteacher and get this sorted, but I wouldn't do it. I didn't want to get involved because I had already seen at the two previous approved schools what happened if you went against the staff. After that point my life became terrible. I eventually got moved into a single dormitory. I kept myself to myself and so I went on a YTS scheme, and I got a job in the pallet company. I would run away because of the conditions but then got lost and sought help from the police (as I was lost), they returned me and I then faced punishment. They would withdraw home leave, so I wouldn't get to see my family. It is a nightmare even thinking about it.

A staff member entered the shower and attempted to touch me on my backside. I reacted and threatened the staff member not to do so, resulting in me being punished and locked in my room. I was terrified so I would always keep something with me while sleeping to protect myself, just in case someone entered during the night. Staff would instigate arguments; if either me or any of my friends retaliated or talked back, we would have to see the governor, and then all of us would be punished by being sent to a room where we had to stare at a clock for hours without talking or moving. I was quite a good football player and when I came about, I played alongside some good players. But what happened was even when I was playing for the amateur football teams I would sometimes refuse to go because they took showers at the end of the game. If I did go, I would just make up an excuse like sorry I have to go something has happened at the

home so I could go back and take a bath in private because I was that embarrassed. Some of the staff gave me tasks to do and I would do whatever I could to get them done because I was scared what would happen to me if I didn't.

By the time I left St John's I was very nasty. I would hit with my fists before saying anything with my tongue. I was very very stubborn, nobody's say was worth anything other than mine. That whole attitude all came from what happened to me and those guys touching me, but I couldn't say anything because I couldn't prove anything. However, the mental torture and pain is still in my head.

Glenochil: Age 15 – 3 months 1975

When I was at St John's I got arrested for police assault and I got 3 months short sharp reminder at Glenochil. It was 3 months, but we called it 8 weeks, 3 days and a breakfast. I was then returned to St John's after this. Here I suffered mental abuse and excessive chores, along with derogatory names like 'spazzy', were common. Punishments included being locked up without food. We would be set tasks and every day; you had to improve your time. I have never been as fit in my life. It was ex-army people that ran it. They never came into your cell or things like that, but it was pure mental torture in there. They wouldn't let you talk to each other; you had to sit and fold your arms while you were having your soup. You would be given half an hour talking time in the reception. People would be kicked out if they failed to do so. This controlling torture was something they relished and thrived on. People grew weary and kept their distance from others as you were pitted against each other. Staff at Glenochil would observe me washing during showers, making comments about the size of your genitals and watching you pick up soap, among other things. One name stands out from Glenochil - crazy Joe, who was the worst staff member. Crazy Joe was often violent towards me. Hit at the back of head often, I would often have bruises, and my head was always sore. No medical treatment was ever sought. I was too frightened to ask. If you didn't follow the rules, you would get kicked up and down.

I often have flashbacks to this very day. As I am 68 now, I have started to suffer from poor memory. My experiences in care have had a negative mental effect on me throughout my life. I have got three kids and with all three of them as babies, I wouldn't put them on my stomach or cuddle them or anything because I would think what if somebody thought I am cuddling them too much. I also ruled very much with an iron hand. I would keep them in a lot and ground them a lot, I would never hit them, but I would keep them in the house a lot. I wasn't really a proper father. I would never let my son or daughter stay out all night because I needed to know where they were. Whenever you hear of any child abuse on the television or papers it really takes me back and brings it all back. I had a serious drink problem, and it has only been 4 years since I gave

it up. I used alcohol to block everything out and numb my mind. My mentality was always fuck this I'm going for a drink, but I try not to do that now.