

Survivor Supplementary Statement**Date Completed:** 14/07/2026**Survivor Full Name:** James Carrigan Manellis Stewart **Other Known Name:** None**DOB:** 08/06/1965 **Redress Priority:** Low **Serious Criminal Convictions:** None**Mother's name:** Elizabeth Stewart**Father's name:** John Stewart**Name of Care Home(s):** Polmont**Age in care:** 16 – 18**Reason for going into care:** Unpaid fines**1.Introduction**

My name is James Stewart. 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

Polmont - I was sent here for an unpaid fine at around the age of 16-17. My friend was accused of trying to run a police officer over, and every time I was with him after that, I would get arrested for no reason at all. I was being targeted for being his friend. I would get arrested for things such as breach of the peace and police assault, but these were all false allegations. The police had it in for him and whoever was with him, I went to school with this guy and lived on the same street as him as it was hard to not be around him.

I have asthma, and while in Polmont I would be forced to do extreme exercise regimes, which included The Circuit. I would be forced to run up and down until my legs could no longer move. I would have run so much that I was taking asthma attacks, and officers would not give me my inhalers. I wouldn't be able to breathe, and I would need to try to control my own breathing, which would take some time. I remember after the first time I completed the circuit trying to walk up the stairs and it was sore as hell just pure torture. I would be verbally abused by officers and embarrassed in front of other prisoners as they tried to belittle me, calling me pigeon chest and swearing at me. Sometimes you would have to stop and take a break just to try and get some breath, but they would just scream and tell you to move again, it was like you were in the army. They would withhold my inhaler even though I couldn't breathe and was having asthma attacks.

I couldn't swim at all, and we went swimming. I was told to swim and that was it. There was one officer supposed to be watching around 30 kids. You would have to watch your back with the smart arses. You were simply told to get in and swim, but you weren't allowed to just stay in the shallow end they made you swim across to the deep end. I had to hold on to the side because I

couldn't swim but they wanted me to swim across to the other side so I let get and tried to just kick my legs, just as I did that a guy jumped in, I am not sure if he did it deliberately but he whacked me in the head and my head was bleeding. I ended up sinking in the pool until I got the bottom and then I used the power in my leg to push off from the bottom and get back above the water. I got straight out spent the rest of the time sat in a chair. The officer came over to me and said I saw that, and I just thought to myself you could have helped.

There was another prisoner who set fire to himself in his cell and the smoke fumes were coming through into our cells, but they wouldn't let any of us out. The guy was screaming and pressing his buzzer to get out because he was burning but they wouldn't let him out either. Eventually they came to get him, I am not sure whether he died or not. You can imagine the fumes that were coming in off the old mattresses, the smoke completely filled our cells, and our lungs began filling up. There were 2 times I genuinely nearly died in Polmont, the drowning incident and the smoke inhalation.

On Sundays, we had governor visits so I would need to make bed blocks where my clothes would be folded into boxes in a certain way. I would need to shine the floor in my cell and the hallways on my hands and knees with polish, a scrubbing brush, and a cloth. There were no toilets in the cells, we just had piss pots so I would need to slop out every morning. If I hadn't done this, the cell would have been stunk out and I would go on report, so I quickly learned to hold the toilet in until the next morning, which caused extreme pain. So, we always had to hold it in until after the governor had done his visit.

I was put on report a few times, and I would be taken to the governor's office by prison officers who would shove me right into the governor's door, causing me to hit off the table, which would get me another report. The punishments for this would be privileges taken away; for example, I would not get to watch the film in the evening at recreation. Some received punishments of long stay periods in solitary confinement (the digger), but I never got any time there. I was hit on a regular basis, not by all officers, some were okay, but others were like army sergeants. The officers who were okay were voluntary officers. The other officers were more violent. These officers would use objects such as their batons and chains, pretty much anything that they could get their hands on. They would do this sometimes even if they were just having a bad day, it seemed like they were just taking their frustration out on us. Of course, you couldn't retaliate or fight back because you would be put on report. I also witnessed this happen to a lot of other prisoners. My time in here was like being in the army; the officers used brutal force to try to get us into line.

There were also officers called the birthday squad, which was about 5-6 armed officers in protective clothing who would come into your cell and batter you. They would come in with shields and batons and things and batter you. This did not happen to me, but I did witness it with another prisoner. They used the birthday squad as a threat over prisoners to show their control, to show they could send these officers in to sort out any troublesome prisoners. I had collected so many fines that the only way I was going to get through it was to serve the time.

In terms of washing there was no privacy at all, there was 1 member of the staff watching the line and another member of staff watching us in the shower. In terms of the slopping out you had a certain time to do it but if you didn't do it then you would have to leave it full and it stinks.

I was in and out of Polmont for some time until the age of 21 and then moved on to Barlinnie. I was probably in Polmont around 6- or 7-times for unpaid fines. I became accustomed to time in prison and started to feel strange when I was outside. When I left care, I began to develop mental health issues and would pick my hair out and eyelashes out whenever I thought about it. I developed a small issue with alcohol and glue, which would lead me to trouble, and I would be arrested all over again. I got into drugs a bit because I was desensitised to everything because there were more drugs in the jail than outside. The mentality in there dehumanised you as well, looking back I don't know how they could treat people like that. I would spend a lot of time trying to hide from authorities for the unpaid fines, which all had a mental effect on me. I used to take antidepressants but no longer do, as I manage my stress and depression on my own.

4.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; James Stewart

Date: 15/07/2026