

Name: Gladstone Breckney

DOB: 09/01/1960

Name of Care Home(s): Kerelaw

Age in care: 15

Date: 22/05/2026

Method: Over phone call

Personal statement

As a youth, my friend and I were involved in a burglary and ended up with firearms. I pointed a shotgun at a police officer, which led to my placement in care. I was young and foolish and got myself into trouble. This decision was made by a children's panel with Ayrshire social services when I was 14 years old. Despite being only 14, my name was published in the Scottish Express, which led to public bullying of me.

I spent 9 months in Kerelaw. During my time in Kerelaw, I faced physical violence from the staff, who would punch me. One teacher I distinctly remember is Mr. Miller, a science teacher, who seemed to take pleasure in hitting me. I recall one day when he punched me in the face while laughing uncontrollably. I sustained a black eye. He was always jumping about doing kung fu moves. Mr Miller had a room at the end of the block that I lived on, so he was always around. I can actually remember his room. On the other end of the block there was a house that the housemaster lived in but he was quite a nice guy. I think everybody knew what Mr Miller was like and what he was doing at various times, he definitely had his favourites, and I wasn't one of them.

Most of the violence I experienced came from the day staff, occurring from time to time. It wasn't necessarily something that happened every day, but you could you guaranteed that at points you would be singled out for something you had done or said. I also witnessed similar treatment towards other children. At night, I would hear the screams of other boys who were having nightmares.

Mr. Torrance, the head of the facility, would whip boys with a belt across their buttocks. Additionally, Mr. Torrance behaved inappropriately towards me, touching me on several occasions. He would insist on inspecting my testicles when I was alone with him in his office. He would drag you in the office with no given reason, even though nothing wrong with me physically. It was bizarre. He would say things like I had a rash from the washing powder; I remember that. It was very embarrassing, so you kept that sort of

stuff to yourself, but everybody knew was Mr Torrence was like. As a result, later in life, I prefer using a stall instead of a urinal to avoid being seen, which has impacted my ability to trust others. I ended up in the military so eventually you had to use toilets that other people were also using but it's certainly not something I felt comfortable about. I suspect I was not the only victim, as I heard about similar incidents, there used to be a lad in there I am not sur of his real name, but we called him Monty. Monty was a lot younger than the rest of us he was only around 10 and a lot of teachers and fellow residents abused him sexually.

I was placed in isolation in a cell for 2-3 days at a time, and during this period, I received no food at all. This would happen if you did something or they thought you did something. One time somebody had stolen all of the cigarettes out of the draw in the office, and me and another lad got the blame for it. We were plonked into these isolation cells I would be put in there and left to be forgotten. It was basically a cell and the only people that would come to the window would be the other lads who would come and look and shout you, but you would never look out through the hole because they would spit at you through it. There simply a bed and a blanket in the cell. You would put the mattress on the floor because whoever had been in there before you had probably weed the bed.

When you returned home for the weekend, upon your return, I would be stripped naked and subjected to a harsh de-lousing process by being thrown into a shower, which was quite brutal. You would have to have your hair done and be showered and the staff were pretty rough about. Initially for the first 3 or 4 months I wasn't allowed to go home. After this I was sometimes allowed to go home on a Friday night or Saturday morning and would have to be back in by 6pm on a Sunday night. I didn't say much to my mother and father because they thought I deserved it. Later in life I would talk about it to my mother but back then you would keep it yourself. Where I was from you were expected to stand up for yourself, but you couldn't stand up to adults running the care home, so you were sort of at their mercy.

I did attempt to run away, and when I was brought back, the staff members who picked me up would slap me around, sometimes even in front of the police. When we got back, I would end up in segregation for several days. There was a culture of bullying at Kerelaw, there were a couple of lads always punching people. One of the lads was called To Collins, I remember his name. I don't remember the names of the other bullies. The staff were aware of it but did nothing to stop it. In fact, I would argue they even encouraged it as it gave them more control over who was doing what. In fact, on they had two boys fighting each other at one point, they took them down the gym made them wear boxing gloves and made them fight each other. During PE, we were forced to play murderball, which was quite painful. You would have to get the ball and if somebody too it off you they would throw it at you. If the gym teacher thought, you

weren't being aggressive enough then he would throw the ball at you. This was a medicine ball not a football, so it was painful. The gym teacher was not hesitant to use his hands; he would slap you if you didn't do as you were told or if he didn't like your attitude.

I can only recall about two visits from my mother while I was there, as it was too challenging for her to come. I spent this time away from my siblings, which was difficult. My experiences have affected my mental health on and off throughout my life. I struggle with relationships, which I believe stems from this time. There are moments when a flashback will suddenly invade my thoughts. Sometimes you might see something, or somebody says something and it can drag you all the way back to then. Being in Kerelaw made me more aggressive – I come from a small village in Southwest Scotland, and I was in there with boys from Govan and Glasgow who were all pretty rough. It gave you a short fuse because you didn't know what was going to happen next in there. When I was in there, I fell out with Corky another resident and he had a comb that he had taken all of the teeth out of, and he actually tried to stab me in the back with this. The other lads would encourage that sort of thing between people if they had fallen out.

I spent some time in the military, which I feel helped to calm my mind.