

WITNESS STATEMENT OF LEWIS JAMES DUNCAN

Application to The Scottish Redress Scheme

Applicant: Mr Lewis James Duncan

Date of Birth: 22 October 1984

Application Reference: APP614318

Support Person Present: No

Background

1. My name is Lewis James Duncan. My name in care was always Lewis James Duncan.
2. My address is Sandrigg Farm Cottage, Annan Road, Dumfries, DG1 3SF.
3. I make this statement in support of my application to the Scottish Redress Scheme.
4. The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
5. Where I cannot remember exact dates or details, I have made this clear. I confirm that I have provided as much detail as I am able to recall.
6. I understand that this statement will be considered as part of my application, together with my application forms and any supporting documents or records provided.
7. Where necessary, I have exhibited extracts of supporting documents to this statement in support of my application.
8. I am happy for this statement to be submitted to the Scottish Redress Inquiry.

9. I do not need any support to give this statement today, and I do not need anybody with me to complete it.

10. I understand the purpose of this statement and that it supports my Scottish Redress application.

11. I do not have, and have never had, any criminal convictions.

12. I was placed in care while I was under the age of 16.

13. The care setting was in Scotland.

14. At the time, I was living in a care setting as part of the care arrangements. I was approximately 11 years old when I went into care.

15. I am aware it was North Ayrshire Council who placed me into care but not why I was placed into care.

16. I was placed into care due to my Mum claiming I was “out of parental control” . It wasn’t until my Mum threw my Breakfast bowl at me which cut my face requiring stitches when Social Services became involved.

17. My placements were in Residential Schools.

Life Before Care

18. I grew up in Paisley with my Mum Caroline Duncan and her abusive partner George Wilson in a House.

19. We had home cooked meals and were well presented. Mum took control of everything. The house was clean.

20. I didn't and still don't get along with my mum.

21. I was taken into care around 1994/95 when they split up. I went out of 'parental control' but I was being beaten by my mum's partner so I didn't go to school. **“EXHIBIT 1”**

22. I skipped school, mum used a breakfast bowl thrown at my face, I had to get stitches in my face and social care took me. I was abused. They didn't want to admit it. I'd been to the police about it, I wasn't believed.

Entry Into Care

23. I have 5 siblings. 1 blood brother, 2 half blood sisters and 2 half blood brothers.

24. We were separated in the care system.

25. I was 11 or 12 when I entered into care. I didn't know any difference, I just got put somewhere and left.

26. I was a quiet boy, I didn't know any of it.

27. I've got learning difficulties, I am illiterate. I can't read or write.

Detailed Account of Each Placement

Newfield Assessment Centre - 09/1997, 1 year

28. I was placed into Newfield Assessment Centre in September of 1997. It was a residential resource centre where they assessed where a child should be placed. **“EXHIBIT 2”**

29. I was only meant to be here for 6 to 8 weeks but ended up being kept here for 1 year.

30. There was a 24/7 lockdown here.

31. I got my own room with a locked door, bed, a sink in the room and maybe a chest of drawers i cant fully remember.
32. There was quite a strict routine here. You had to be up at 7am. You would be washed, fed and then escorted to the in-house school.
33. After school we would be escorted back to the unit and be locked in our rooms.
34. There were only 4 of us in the class and the teachers didn't give a shit.
35. The food was alright. I can't really complain about that.
36. I had no clothing to begin with and waited 9 weeks for contact with my stepdad to get more clothes.
37. There were shared bathrooms, 2 shared between 12 and toiletries were provided weekly.
38. Contact with family was forced. They made me spend time with them on a regular basis.
39. I was quite lucky that I knew one of the other boys there from school. It took me a day or two to find him in my unit. It was scary for a 12 year old.
40. The staff were alright because I was quiet, I never got restrained.
41. The main punishment was that you wouldn't get out on biweekly excursions or you would lose your weekly allowance if you didn't comply.
42. I wouldnt say i was abused but there was bullying from other kids not so much staff
43. On a camping excursion there was a knife incident with another child, the police were called and I told them what I saw.

44. The lockdown was a different experience. It was like a secure unit. There were no fences but it would be locked down.

45. I felt unsafe a few times. Staff are only helpful if they see bullying. You wouldn't tell the staff because you'd just shut down.

Kibble Education Centre - 22/08/1998, 2.5 Years

46. I was laced into the care of Kibble in 1998. I was the youngest person here and the first to be placed here under the age of 15 years old. It was more of a Borstal. **“EHIBIT 3”**

47. I shared a double room with another boy who was nearly 17, he was called Terry.

48. It was a big house with 10 kids to a wing and 2 wings in one unit. There were 8 units with over 200 kids. It was boys only.

49. The routine here was very similar to Newfield. You'd get up in the morning, set your room, have a shower, eat your breakfast and head to school.

50. You were still escorted over campus but I didn't do schoolwork here because of the violence. I ended up going separately and doing maintenance with the maintenance team.

51. I got qualifications in Joinery and Landscaping qualifications instead of school work.

52. The food was alright as they had an onsite kitchen facility with chefs. It was like high end jail food.

53. I was provided with clothing grants so we could pick our own clothes. Toiletries were provided. They'd take us to a Cash and Carry to shop with an allowance for this.

54. Contact with family was allowed, mainly my stepdad not so much my mum. I still got evening excursions with my stepdad.

55. Being the youngest was good for me as they all knew so got slightly taken under their wing.
56. There were set rules and punishments for breaking these. You would lose access to your finances or to outings.
57. You would be isolated if you were restrained or a menace. I got isolated to keep me away from incidents.
58. I felt shit being locked in a room for any amount of time with nothing but a sofa, wooden fabricy unit like a waiting room but you were always checked on.
59. I now consider what happened to be rather negligent. If an incident happened it gave others the possibility to get away with more such as bullying.
60. I got beaten black and blue by a boy who did boxing. The staff just stood and watched for about 2 to 3 minutes before they intervened.
61. They did get the police involved and got me medical help from this.
62. I got restrained once and I was black and blue covered in carpet burns on my face. I tried to escape because I wanted out. We were sick of being escorted everywhere. I just wanted some freedom.
63. I had 5 staff on top of me while kicking and screaming. The more you try to resist the more piles on top.
64. After calming down they bring a staff member you get on with to smooth it over. You get your punishment after. I lost both money and outing privileges.

65. They use pressure points, they call the one below the adams apple the 'hamster'. It disabled you straight away and you couldn't breath. I would shake it off.

66. From 2000 onwards I've self harmed, sliced my arms.

67. This only happened once, I learned my lesson after that.

68. I had lots of problems sleeping after this as I feared it happening again. I ended up shutting off. If I shut down I wouldn't be involved.

69. Other people witnessed this happening. There were 24 other children in the room. This was in the Munro Centre. **“EXHIBIT 4”**

70. I told my stepdad what was happening but he himself was a social worker and had restrained kids in th home he worked in. he told me “fucking act like a cunt get treated like one”.

71. You got a bit more freedom here.

People involved, reporting an institutional Knowledge

72. The main people to blame are my mother and her partner. They caused this.

73. I witnessed plenty of people being restrained and flung about and fighting. There were loads of bits and pieces that went on.

74. I believe the local authority knew what was happening because they were told enough times. Everybody was telling them.

75. A lot of complaints I made were brushed under the carpet with “that didn't happen” every time I said what my mum’s partner did I was ignored.

76. I was removed from my home several times before going into care into police custody and released back to them even after I told the police I was being abused.

77. I was never taken seriously.

Movement Between Placements and Leaving Care

78. I was moved because the assessment centre shouldn't have held me for 12 months, it should only have been 6 to 8 weeks.

79. While they were assessing me they tried to put me somewhere even worse.

80. Nothing was explained to me about where or why I was being moved. I got told to pack my stuff.

81. I attempted to run away and actually ran away numerous times.

82. I ran away from Newfield for 2 days, I was jumping between trains to escape until I got caught and taken back. I would run away from Kibble for a few hours at a time just for some quiet.

83. I was tackled to the floor a few times in the back fields of Kibble by the staff.

84. I left care at 16 years old, I tried to reassociate into the community but instead I moved in with my stepdad John Davidson Cameron. **“EXHIBIT 5”**

85. There was no aftercare or any help. You were left to yourself.

Impact On Life Past/Present/Future

86. I have serious abandonment issues.

87. The first time I stepped into a tescos i shriveled up out of fear and anxiety.

88. People scare me. I couldn't bring myself to leave the house.

89. Sleep is one of these issues. It's on and off and I turned to drugs and drink to block everything out.

90. I have been medically signed off for 5 years.

91. I tried to seek help in my 20's but the NHS said there was nothing they could do and to get on with it.

92. I have PTSD, Anxiety, i have attempted suicide.

93. I also struggle with nightmares, flashbacks and depression.

94. I have been a high functioning alcoholic for 23 years. I turned to drinking and drugs because of my experience. **"EXHIBIT 6"**

95. 6 bottles of Buckfast is easily my drink of choice and I only took recreational drugs: Coke, Ecstasy. Nothing hardcore. Cannabis now and again.

96. I struggle to keep a relationship, it can be volatile and violent due to drink and drugs.

97. I lost my kids, my business. I've got a good partner now Barbara but she doesn't get an awful lot of intimacy from me. I've got no interest, I'd rather get pissed.

98. I speak to about 3 folk, ive got hundreds of friends but I've got no time for any of them.

99. My closest friend went through something similar so it helps both of us. He's called Lee Green.

100. I don't trust anyone, not even my family. I just isolate myself if I'm not out working.

101. I lost my business because it was too stressful. I had a bad breakdown about 6 years ago.

102. I have no confidence at all, when I'm at home or work I'm okay but in public I'm always watching out.

103. I spend everything I make. Day-to-day, my partner prompts me to eat or appointments.

104. It has affected everything all around.

105. The police are a big trigger because they come for me. I'm not a violent person but because of the domestics and mental health they come combat handed and try to throw me about. They're fine when they realise I'm not a threat.

106. I don't like hospitals because I was in for childcare injuries. I tend to stay out of public. It sends my anxiety through the roof. I don't like meeting new people, that's a big one.

107. I screwed my life, no education didn't help. I got no gcse's the year of the fuck up. Got standard grades but didn't sit any.

108. Life would have been better, half decent job, bought house if i was never in care.

Support and treatment

109. I have had professional support for multiple years for multiple things. I've had drug addiction help and support from my GP and my Probation counsellor for mental health.

110. I have anxiety and depression. **“EXHIBIT 6”**

111. The last medication they gave me was for my liver but nothing to get off the alcohol.

112. I have tried to hang myself, i have had 3 overdoses and sliced my wrists up. **“EXHIBIT 7”**

113. I haven't seen a doctor in about 6 months. I decided not to because they give me a hard time about my drinking.

Supporting Evidence and Records

114. I understand that records and documents may be considered alongside this statement. I have exhibited documents to this statement where necessary. I have also provided a bundle of evidence in addition to this statement.

115. It contains all the relevant documents that my legal representatives have been able to obtain on my behalf from relevant institutions, local authorities and medical practices.

116. Some records may be incomplete, missing or unavailable due to the passage of time. Where records are missing, I ask that my own account still be considered carefully.

117. I have done all in my power, with the assistance of my legal representative, to obtain and provide as much evidence as possible. I have asked my legal representative to redact any information that is not relevant to my Scottish Redress application.

Difficulties with Memory and Gaps in Evidence

118. The events described happened many years ago. Some dates, names and details are difficult for me to remember.

119. My memory has also been affected by the trauma of what happened to me.

120. Where I have used approximate dates or descriptions, I have done so honestly and to the best of my recollection.

121. I have not intentionally exaggerated or included anything that I do not believe to be true.

Previous Claims, Applications or Payments

122. I have not previously made any civil claim, criminal injury claim, Redress application, complaint, police report, inquiry statement or claim to another scheme about this abuse.

123. I have not received any payment, apology, settlement or decision, or signed any waiver or discharge.

Why Am I Applying to the Scottish Redress Scheme

124. I am applying because for starters I should never have been in there and that's the bottom line. Second, I was prompted by friends for similar reasons.

125. I'd like to see other people get help instead of being pushed out the door.

126. I want the Scottish Government to open their eyes and realise the way they operate clearly hasn't worked. There are better ways to deal with things.

127. An acknowledgment would mean I can put it to bed once and for all and begin trying to move on instead of just blocking it out. It would make me feel better.

128. I think the system could have worked a lot better. They put people into places they didn't need to be. There were lots just being brushed under the carpet.

129. My social worker was friends with my dad. There has to be a fine line between telling a staff member to fuck off and being restrained. There is another way.

130. Things could have been run better and having help when you get released, that's the make or break.

Final Statement

131. I have never made a previous civil claim, criminal injury claim, Redress application, advance payment application, complaint, police report, inquiry statement, or claim to another scheme about this abuse.

132. I have never received any payment, apology, response or settlement in respect of my Scottish Redress claim or the abuse.

133. I have never signed any waiver, settlement agreement, discharge or acceptance form in respect of my Scottish Redress claim or the abuse.

134. I have tried to provide a full and honest account of my experiences to the best of my knowledge and belief. I ask that Redress Scotland consider this statement, my application forms and the supporting evidence I have submitted when determining my application.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Name: Mr Lewis James Duncan

Signed:

Dated:

