

Statement Addendum

Client Name: John Mcphee
Date of Birth: 07/09/1960
Care Setting: clark house- 42 molbourne road - largs
Dates: 1967
Persons Involved:

Full Statement

I was only 8 years old when I was placed in care at Clark House. I was taken there along with my brothers. From the very beginning, there was no empathy, no explanation, and no reassurance given to us about what was happening or why we were being taken from our home. We were heartbroken, confused, and deeply distressed. We were simply brought in and placed straight into dormitories without any comfort or understanding. As the eldest brother, I felt an immediate sense of responsibility and worry—not only for myself, but for my mum and my younger siblings. I carried that fear and confusion with me from the very first day.

Clark House housed over 26 children, all living in just two dormitories. The environment felt overcrowded, chaotic, and unsafe. From the moment I arrived, I felt frightened and vulnerable. Very quickly, it became clear that this was not a place of care or protection. We were beaten by staff every single day. The abuse was constant and relentless, and although it should never have been normal, it became something we were forced to accept as part of daily life.

I clearly remember a staff member called Redina. She made our lives unbearable. She was extremely cruel, nasty, and aggressive. She would take any opportunity to beat us and seemed to take pleasure in humiliating us. She would hit us, mock us, and single us out for her own amusement. On some occasions, she would take us into a room, pull our trousers down, and force other children to laugh at us. This was deeply degrading and humiliating. At such a young age, I didn't fully understand why this was happening, but I remember feeling intense shame, embarrassment, and confusion about myself.

There was another staff member, Mrs Robinson, who I believe felt sorry for us. She was the only person who showed even a small amount of kindness, and around her we felt slightly more normal. However, she was limited in what she could do, and she was not able to properly help or protect us. Ultimately, we had very little support from anyone.

My dad would come to visit us every other Saturday. Those visits were the only moments I looked forward to, but even then, Redina would take our pocket money from us. It felt like we had no control over anything in our lives—not even the small comforts.

I also remember the gardener at the home. He made me and other children feel extremely uncomfortable.

There was something very unsettling about him, and I recall that he would try to assault other children. The boys and girls were kept separate, and to this day I fear what may have happened to others. It added another layer of fear and anxiety to an already unsafe environment.

Another staff member I remember is Mr Andrews. Overall, the treatment we received from staff was harsh, controlling, and deeply cruel. We were treated more like prisoners or soldiers than children. We were constantly shouted at, controlled, and punished. The staff would mentally torment us, deliberately upsetting and intimidating us. This left me in a constant state of fear, always on edge, never knowing what would happen next.

Although food was provided, it was often poor quality and unpleasant. We were forced to eat it regardless, even when it made us feel unwell. There were also deeply humiliating experiences, including being dressed in girls' clothing. This was extremely degrading and confusing for me as a child. It made me feel ashamed and affected how I saw myself.

During my time at Clark House, I was separated from my two brothers. We were not allowed to maintain our bond or support each other. This was one of the most painful parts of my experience. Instead of helping us stay connected as a family, the staff isolated us. I felt completely alone. We were constantly bullied—not only by staff but also by other children. The staff encouraged this behaviour and often played children against one another, creating a hostile and dangerous environment.

We lived in a constant state of fear, always in what I now understand to be “fight or flight” mode. Punishments were severe and abusive. We were locked in dormitories, sometimes for long periods. I remember Mrs Forbes, the matron, who would beat us with belts, slippers, and her hands. The pain from these beatings would last for days. We would cry and scream, but no one ever came to help us. I felt completely unsafe at all times and had no one I could turn to for comfort or protection.

Bathing was another traumatic experience that has stayed with me. We were forced into cold baths, often with three or four children at the same time, under staff supervision. This was humiliating and degrading. It stripped away any sense of privacy or dignity we had as children. I still remember how exposed and powerless I felt during those moments.

Punishments included being beaten, being forced to stand outside in the dark all night, being locked in cupboards, and being subjected to constant verbal and physical abuse. The other children in the home were also deeply affected. We were all traumatised, and this led to frequent fighting and aggression between us. Instead of protecting us, the staff allowed and even encouraged this behaviour.

I lived in Clark House for approximately five to six years. During that time, me and my brothers were completely broken by what we experienced. We were terrorised on a daily basis. I witnessed my siblings, especially my younger brother, being bullied and beaten, and I felt powerless to protect them. That has stayed with me ever since.

The abuse I experienced has had a profound and lasting impact on my life. I continue to struggle with my mental health, including severe anxiety, depression, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. I relive the memories of what happened in that home, and they affect me on a daily basis. I find it extremely difficult to trust people or to feel safe, even now. Building and maintaining relationships has always been a challenge for me, as I struggle with fear, insecurity, and emotional distress.

After everything we went through, we were eventually sent back home to our mum and her violent boyfriend—the same environment we had originally been removed from. Once again, we were exposed to bullying, violence, and abuse. The system was aware of the risks, yet we were still returned to that situation. We remained there until we were old enough to leave again.

Throughout my entire life, I have struggled significantly with my mental health. I suffer from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression. I do not trust people, and I find it extremely difficult to form or maintain relationships. Every day is a struggle, and it always has been. I also carry a deep sense of guilt for what my brothers went through. I feel that our lives have been profoundly damaged by these experiences, and the effects continue to impact me every day of my life.