

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Frank Woodward
Date of Birth: 22/12/1960
Care Setting: oakbank approved school – Aberdeen-
Dates: 1974- 1977
Persons Involved: The Staff and Children

Full Statement

Oakbank Approved School – Aberdeen – 1974 to 1977

I was placed in Oakbank Approved School in Aberdeen in 1974, where I remained until 1977. From the moment I arrived, the environment felt hostile and unwelcoming. The staff were not kind or supportive towards me. Instead, they spoke to us in a harsh and unpleasant way, which made me feel intimidated and uncomfortable from the very beginning.

Shortly after arriving, I was sent to a room where I was constantly locked away and secluded. Being isolated like this as a child was extremely distressing. I often felt alone, frightened, and confused about why I was being treated this way. Instead of helping me settle in or supporting me emotionally, the response was to shut me away, which only increased my fear and anxiety.

The other children in the school could be very ruthless and aggressive, and the environment felt extremely unsafe. There were frequent fights between the children, and it often felt like the staff allowed this behaviour to happen without stepping in to properly stop it. Living in that kind of atmosphere meant that I was constantly on edge, unsure of when something might happen.

Oakbank was a very strict place, and we were expected to do exactly as we were told at all times. Although the staff did not hit us, they would physically restrain us, which was frightening and humiliating. They would also stop visits and take away privileges, which left us feeling powerless and punished even further. I was not allowed to go home every other weekend like some others, which made me feel even more isolated and cut off from the outside world.

The way we were treated made it feel as though we had very little value as children. Privileges were often taken away, and there was little sense of care or encouragement. At the same time, the staff did not properly supervise or protect us. For example, although they did not directly supply cigarettes or alcohol, they allowed us to smoke and drink from a very young age. I was allowed to smoke up to six cigarettes a day, which shows the lack of proper care and responsibility towards children living there.

We were always given dinner, but at times we were forced to eat, which made me feel uncomfortable and controlled rather than cared for. Education was also not taken seriously, and there was very little effort made to support our learning or help us build a better future. We were not properly taught about basic hygiene or how to look after ourselves, which is something children should normally learn while growing up.

There were also local children in the school who appeared to receive more privileges, which made the

situation feel unfair. I often felt that I was treated differently and that I was excluded and secluded. This had a serious effect on my mental wellbeing, as it reinforced the feeling that I did not belong and that I was not valued.

We were never treated for special occasions or given the kind of care and recognition children normally receive. Birthdays, celebrations, or moments that might make a child feel special simply did not exist there. Instead, we were treated in a very harsh and controlling way, and at times it felt as though we were treated more like animals than children.

Looking back, I feel strongly that I did not have a normal childhood during those years. Instead of growing up in a safe, supportive environment, I lived in a place where fear, strict control, and neglect were part of everyday life. The experience left me feeling emotionally damaged and deeply affected.

Over time, and especially in my later life, I have realised just how much this period has impacted my mental health and the way I live my life today. I have found it very difficult to build relationships or trust other people. I often struggle to open up to others and tend to keep my distance.

Because of what I experienced growing up, I am used to being alone. I find it easier to ignore people and keep to myself rather than risk being hurt or disappointed. Being around others can make me feel uncomfortable, and I do not enjoy being in company for long periods of time. This sense of isolation has followed me into adulthood and has affected my personal relationships, my social life, and my overall wellbeing.

The experiences I went through at Oakbank Approved School have had a long-lasting impact on my life, shaping the way I see the world and the way I interact with people even today.