

PRIVATE

HIA REF:434

Witness Name: HIA 434

## THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

## WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 434

I, HIA 434 will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] I am one of four children and I am the third child. I lived with my mother and father at [REDACTED] in Belfast. My father was a service engineer and my mother was a housewife. My parents separated early in 1986 and my mother moved to England. My father started a new relationship shortly afterwards. I began playing truant from school and in May 1986, I was placed in Rathgael for 2 ½ years on a Training School Order.

**Rathgael Training School (16 May 1986 – Feb 1989)**

2. I was taken to House 9A when I initially arrived at Rathgael. I was given a change of clothes, had a shower and a medical examination. The reception area had two classrooms, one for education and the other for woodwork. I was put in a single bedroom initially but I was moved to a bedroom dormitory after a week. The staff locked us in our dormitories overnight from about 10.00pm until 7.30am. A member of staff was on duty all night and they would let you out to use the toilet. The quality of the food was generally okay. I do not have any complaints about that aspect of the care.
3. I was moved again to House 2 after about five weeks in Reception. I recall witnessing an incident there when a member of staff, RG 20 assaulted another inmate, RG 77. RG 20 was in his early thirties, had dark brown hair, an athletic build and was about 5 feet 8/9 inches tall. RG 77 broke a glass pane and RG 20 restrained him and put him in a lock by twisting

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his hands behind his back. I saw **RG 20** hitting **RG 77** by punching him repeatedly in the back. I remember seeing this assault and then two members of staff took **RG 77** upstairs.

4. I remember another incident when **RG 78** and I absconded in the summer of 1988. The police caught us and returned us to Rathgael. We were locked in separate rooms. All our normal clothing was taken from us and we were left with just our underwear, a plastic mattress and a sheet. We were held in this way for 10-14 days. I did not have a watch or a clock and it was difficult to gauge time. The staff brought me food three times a day on a tray. We were left isolated and a member of staff from the next house kept an eye on us from time to time. At times, you had to wait hours to use the bathroom because there was no one in the building.
5. The education system in Rathgael was broken down into a form-based system regardless of age. If you were very clever, you were put in Form 5. The children who were least able were put in Form 1. I was in Form 4 because I was weak at English. I was about 14 at the time but the age group of the class was mixed. There was no set curriculum but I remember that English, Maths and Geography were taught. The teaching staff overall were quite good to me. They never hit me although some lost their tempers more easily than others and this made me apprehensive around them.
6. I was given two Training School Orders for two charges of theft around Easter 1987. These were both appealed and I was given an absolute discharge. The police normally escorted you to and from Court. On this occasion, **RG 41** **RG 41**, a member of staff at Rathgael, took me there. After the hearing, a member of the police told **RG 41** that it was his responsibility to take me back to Rathgael. She disagreed but he insisted. The police put me in a room on my own in the court building where the appeal was heard and they forgot about me. This was at approximately 11am in the morning. The police did not come to collect me until after midnight that night. I was only fourteen at the time and I should not have been held in this way as I was given an absolute discharge. I

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had nothing to eat or drink for the whole of that day apart from some toast in the morning.

7. I began a placement with the Youth Training Programme with [REDACTED] Training Centre in September 1988. As part of this programme, I was doing some work experience in a garage in [REDACTED] in Belfast. However, this placement broke down because I hadn't been paid in 4 weeks. The money was going to my father's house and to Rathgael instead of my brother's house in [REDACTED] where I was living at that time. After 4 weeks without money, I took a car from the garage. The police stopped me and I was sent back to Rathgael. The staff told me that I was being returned there because I was dismissed from the work placement. I was placed in House 3 because House 2 was full. I was not arrested for the theft of the car and, as far as I know, it was never reported to the police. After I returned to Rathgael I asked if I could return to education. **RG 33** told me "No". I was not given a reason.
8. I stole another car and crashed it joy-riding in December 1988. I was taken back to Rathgael and placed in House 3 but I could not settle. I ran away from Rathgael a few times for about a day at a time. After a couple of weeks, the staff moved me to House 5, which is the reception for the justice section of the institution. I was not given a reason for the move. The atmosphere in the justice side of the institution was very different from the one I experienced on the care side. I was treated as if I were a criminal. The boys could be quite violent with each other but I was never bullied while I was there.
9. After about 5 weeks, I was moved again to House 6. I did not get along with the housemaster there, **RG 81**. Another boy, **RG 1** and I broke into an office in the Rathgael grounds, stole a van and ran away. When we were caught, we were both remanded to Lisnevin Training School. After spending 2 ½ months on remand at Lisnevin, I was sentenced to 6 months imprisonment at Hydebank Young Offenders Centre. **RG 1** was returned to Rathgael with Training School Orders. I thought this was surprising as **RG 1** was in Rathgael with criminal charges that were far more serious than my own. **RG 81**, my housemaster, wrote the reports that helped determine my placement in Hydebank and **RG 1** placement in Rathgael. I felt that because

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**RG 81** and I did not get along, he wanted me out of Rathgael. Consequently, he wrote a poor report about me. I asked to see the report, but I was not allowed. I felt that the system excluded me from any effective participation in matters concerning my welfare.

10. I remember another boy at Rathgael, **RG 83** whom I had known since primary school and he was about two years older than I was. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia. He was bullied when he was in primary school and he was bullied at Rathgael. I remember he tried to hang himself at Rathgael and they moved him to hospital. He took his own life at home when he was eventually discharged. No-one on the staff at Rathgael offered us any counselling or asked us if we wanted to go to his funeral. It was as if it never happened. I found this very upsetting.
11. The staff found out that I was having consensual sexual relations with a girl at Rathgael in 1987. They told me I had to start going to the VD clinic. They made me go every 2-3 weeks for roughly 3 months to medically test me for any sexually transmitted diseases. I was told on one of the last appointments that I was disease free and I was given some sexual education. They also gave me a brown paper bag with pamphlets and durex condoms. I put these in my own overnight bag. The following weekend, I went to my father's house for an overnight stay. I had forgotten about the brown bag in my overnight bag and when I saw it, I hid it in a drawer in my room as my dad or step-mother did not know anything about going to the clinic. My stepmother found the brown bag while putting clothes away and told my father. My father got very angry and said he was not aware that I had gone to the clinic. Rathgael did not inform him of any of this and he said he was going to speak to them about it. It never came up again.

**Lisnevin (21 February 1989 – May 1989)**

12. I was in Lisnevin on remand for about two and a half months. The regime there was very strict but generally the quality of care was good. Everything was regulated and you were given very little freedom. For example, if you wanted more food in the dining hall, the staff took your dining plate and then gave you

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whatever was available. You were not allowed to move from your seat and help yourself. All of your autonomy in relation to basic decision making was taken from you and you were treated as if you were a child. I remember that there were fights on an almost daily basis between Catholic and Protestant inmates at Lisnevin. The staff did take action to break these fights up and I was never personally bullied while I was there.

13. The furniture in our cells at Lisnevin was very basic. There was a plastic foam mattress which was similar to a gymnastic mattress and this was used as a bed base. There was another three inch mattress which you slept on. There was also a sheet and a continental quilt. There was no central heating in the room, instead there were two six inch heating pipes. The rooms were so cold that I slept right beside those heating pipes because they were boiling hot.

14. One night I sustained a burn on the back of my arm because I slept with my elbow near the heating pipes all night. I still have the scar from this burn which is about a square inch wide where the skin was burned off. I remember pointing this out to staff at the time. However, they just laughed it off and I did not get any medical treatment.

15. We were only allowed to shower every 2 days. We were told to strip in our room and the only towel we were given was a hand towel. We were required to walk from our room to the shower with only this small towel while passing female members of staff. We had to hold our hand out to ask for a small amount of shampoo, which was dispensed straight into our hand. Once we were finished in the shower, we had to use the hand towel to dry ourselves and then use it to cover up again to walk back to our rooms. I felt humiliated walking past female members of staff. We were only given fresh clothes after our shower. Bedding and clean clothes and undergarments were given to us every 2 days after a shower.

**Hydebank (1989-1990)**

16. I was moved from Lisnevin to Hydebank after I was sentenced for the joy-riding offence in May 1989. I was expecting to be sent back to Rathgael and

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this was a complete shock to me. I left most of my belongings in Lisnevin. I was in Hydebank for about three and a half months. The regime in Hydebank was much tougher than Lisnevin and it was a shock to my system. In those days, for example, you could be on your hands and knees, scrubbing floors, walls, toilets and even pipes from early morning until after lockup at supertime. The Officers also inspected the cells on a daily basis to check that they were being kept in the proper order.

17. I remember a particular incident when some-one deliberately set fire to the prison. Everyone was locked up for two days. It was a complete lock up and we did not get released even for one hour in order to exercise. They let us out eventually in groups of two in order to clean the rooms. There was soot everywhere. It was a horrible job and I can still remember the taste of the soot in my mouth.
18. I was always hungry at Hydebank. There was insufficient food and the quality was not good. For example, the evening meal would consist of a spoonful of beans, two sausages and bread together with a mug of tea which had more tea leaves than tea.
19. The everyday routine in Hydebank was that you were woken up at 7.00am, you cleaned your cell and then you were given breakfast. We had to clean until lunch-time and afterwards we were locked up again for an hour and a half. You were allowed out again in the afternoon. You cleaned again and then you had your dinner at 4.30pm and were locked up again until 6pm. You were allowed out at 7.30pm and then locked up for the night.
20. We had to shave our faces every day, regardless of whether we were old enough to shave or not. I was only fourteen and I have incredibly sensitive skin. We were given soap and a disposable razor. My skin was covered in cuts and sores every day. This still did not stop them from making me shave every day for a month. Finally, the doctor stepped in and said that I was allowed to shave every second day and I was given E45 cream for my face. This helped a little bit but I was still getting cuts and sores from shaving every second day.

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21. I was in and out of Hydebank approximately six more times for short periods. At that point, I decided that I wanted a different life for myself and I resolved to stay out of the criminal justice system.
22. When I was released from Hydebank, I went back to Lisnevin to collect my personal belongings. When I went to House 6, I found that most of them were missing. I questioned a member of staff about where they were and I was told by **RG 81** to never contact them again regarding the matter.

**Life After Care**

23. I got married here in Northern Ireland and I have three children, I am now divorced. I held down a good job here in Northern Ireland and stayed out of the criminal justice system. I moved to **██████████** three years ago and I have a new relationship with a girl there.
24. My time in care made me very withdrawn and shy. I second-guess every choice I have to make. My confidence in my ability to make day-to-day decisions like going to the grocery store or choosing what to have for supper is gone. I still struggle with this even though I am **██████████**. I find it hard being around people and find it even harder meeting new people because of my lack of confidence. When I am in a group of people I am very withdrawn and try to keep to myself and I only really speak when I am spoken to. In some cases, I actually have to take myself out of the area to get away from the confrontation of people.
25. My family life was hugely affected by my experiences in care. My father did not talk to me for many years afterwards. Even now, he only speaks to me when he has to. My relationship with my two brothers never really developed because I was in these institutions when we were growing up. I lost touch with my sister for many years as well. When I was 20, we re-established contact however the relationship is slightly strained.
26. I have three children and my relationships with them have been strained since they were born. I found it hard to connect with them correctly in the way a

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father should. Even now, I still struggle to connect with them. I feel that as a husband, a man and a father that I have failed along the way. I am getting a little better in my new relationship as my new partner helps me work through the insecurities that I have. I do not feel I have fully healed psychologically from my experiences. For example, when I have a setback, it brings all these bad memories to the surface and I have to rein in all of these negative emotions again in my mind. I feel I have moved on from my experiences but counselling may help me deal with these occasional setbacks.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed **HIA 434** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 1/6/15 \_\_\_\_\_



# ADMISSION HISTORY

(Taken from Pupil File)

**HIA 434**

**D.O.B.** [REDACTED]

16/05/1986 Admitted to Rathgael on Training School Order for Non School Attendance  
July-August 1986 Summer leave home  
01/09/1986 Returned to Rathgael , regular weekend leave continued  
30/11/1986 - 02/12/1986 Absconded  
24/04/1987 - 01/05/1987 Absconded  
20/09/1987 - 26/09/1987 Sailing week in Scotland  
22/12/1987 - 26/12/1987 Absconded  
11/01/1988 Received Training School Orders x2 for charges of Theft. Subsequently appealed and given Absolute Discharge  
07/03/1988 - 08/03/1988 Absconded  
30/03/1988 - 31/03/1988 Absconded  
31/03/1988 - 01/04/1988 Absconded  
14/09/1988 - 15/09/1988 Absconded  
05/10/1988 - 08/10/1988 Absconded  
17/10/1988 - 20/10/1988 Absconded  
29/10/1988 - 02/11/1988 Absconded  
27/11/1988 - 28/11/1988 Absconded  
04/12/1988 - 05/11/1988 Absconded  
23/11/1988 - 27/11/1988 Extended Leave  
09/12/1988 - 10/12/1988 Absconded  
11/12/1988 - 13/12/1988 Absconded  
19/12/1988 - 20/12/1988 Absconded  
22/12/1988 - 23/12/1988 Absconded  
28/12/1988 - 29/12/1988 Absconded  
30/12/1988 - 31/12/1988 Absconded  
05/02/1989 - 07/02/1989 Absconded  
18/02/1989 - 20/02/1989 Absconded  
21/02/1989 Remanded to Lisnevin Training School  
09/05/1989 Sentenced to YOC

REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT6TH LICENSING REVIEW: 17TH APRIL 1989

UNIT: Grampian      PRIMARY WORKER: [REDACTED]      REG.NO.: C19/86  
NAME: **HIA 434**      ADMITTED: 16.05.86  
DATE OF BIRTH: [REDACTED]      ORDER EXPIRES: 15.05.89  
LAST REVIEW: 21.11.88  
REASON FOR COMMITTAL: Non School Attendance

GENERAL:

Since **HIA 434**'s last review in November his behaviour has deteriorated. At this time he was working in a garage on a Youth Training Programme and everything appeared to be going well. However on the 2nd December 1988 he took a car from the garage and abandoned it in the centre of Belfast when the engine cut out. He returned to the garage and tried to get another car but was recognised and ran off. He lost his job due to this incident.

On the 4th December 1988 **HIA 434** and another boy from the Centre stole the new Astra car from the Centre. After joy-riding around Belfast, they were chased by Police and finally crashed the car outside Holywood. Court appearances are expected re these offences.

There followed a period of abscondings when **HIA 434** was away from the Centre for short periods on eight occasions and this resulted in him being transferred to the Youth Treatment side of the Centre and on the 12th January 1989 he was placed in Grampian House Unit 6. However abscondings continued and these culminated with him breaking and entering buildings within the Centre and stealing the minibus etc. He is at present on Remand in Lisnevin for these offences.

OTHER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

**HIA 434** is not a management problem within the Unit, he is a pleasant, co-operative and well mannered boy and is popular with both staff and his peers.

However the only feasible recommendation at present would be to retain and afford us sufficient time to work with **HIA 434** to discourage him from joy-riding and other devious activities.

SENIOR DEPUTY DIRECTOR'S (HEAD OF YOUTH TREATMENT) RECOMMENDATIONS:

Unfortunately this young man's behaviour has deteriorated to a most unacceptable level. Recent abscondings and offences would indicate a worrying determination to be deviant.

There can be no option but to retain at present.

HIA REF:

NAME:

DATE:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness Statement of **RG 20**

I, **RG 20** of [redacted] will say as follows:-

1. I have read and considered the redacted statement of **HIA 434** that has been served on me.
2. I remember **HIA 434** as one of the many young people who lived in the unit. I remember nothing of significance regarding my contact with him.
3. I do not remember the particular incident set out in his statement. There would have been instances where young people were restrained and they were always restrained according to protocol.
4. I never punched **RG 77** in the back and I never assaulted him or any other young person in the unit.

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.

Signed ..... **RG 20** .....

Dated this 21 day of October 2015.