

## Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry

### Witness Statement

Statement taken at 1042hrs on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at Thompsons Solicitors, 16-20 Castle Street, Edinburgh. Witness no HSC0014 refers.

Witness interviewed by Witness Statement Taker [ Irrelevant ]  
Statement noted by Witness Statement Taker [ Irrelevant ] Consent Form Signed.

### Statement of Verona GIBSON

#### Background

1. My name is **Verona Gibson**. I am 68 years of age, and my date of birth is [ Personal Data ] My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I have met today with witness statement takers from the Covid 19 Inquiry team and am happy to provide a statement about my experiences of the Pandemic. I have provided them with access to my meeting notes with Thompsons Solicitors and am happy that they also be included to assist in forming part of my statement.
3. I have signed the consent form provided. I would wish for my daughter's details to remain anonymous if anything were to be published or appear in reports. I would be happy to give evidence at a public hearing. I'm happy that our interview is recorded today.
4. I wish to give a statement to the Inquiry about my daughter.
5. Her name is [ Name Redacted ] and she was born on the [ Personal Data ] [ PD ] She lives in [ PD ] [ PD ]
6. My daughter has a learning disability and has experienced significant mental health challenges in the form of anxiety and self-harming for most of her life. She is unable to walk and uses a wheelchair.
7. My daughter experiences periods where she is very unwell with her mental health. She struggles with her anxiety. She has complex needs which have resulted in her having to be cared for in a specialist unit which provides this type of support for people with learning disabilities.
8. She is part of a family who love her. She has an older sister, and an identical twin sister.

9. Her father and I hold joint Power of Attorney together with her elder sister.

### **Care Home**

10. In 2009, it was agreed together with me, her father, and her Multi-Disciplinary Team that she should move into Name Redacted. Immediately before that my daughter was in a hospital unit that supports people with complex and learning disability needs. Name Redacted was chosen as it specializes in providing support for adults with learning disabilities and complex needs.
11. My daughter has lived in in her care home since December 2009. This is her home. She has her own lounge, shower room and bedroom. There is a communal dining and living room. She currently lives with five others.
12. My daughter's home is an extension of my own home. I know all her staff and residents very well and have always had access to her home anytime of the day and night. I was able to come and go freely to see my daughter with no restrictions at all prior to Covid Pandemic.
13. Staff on the unit consists of a trained nurse and carers to care for and support the residents. There is also a nurse practitioner and other professionals who attend the centre.
14. The staff at my daughter's care home really care about her and she has very good relationships with them. I have great respect for her staff and continue to enjoy open and supportive relationships with both the staff and the management. I cannot praise the staff more highly for the support and care they provided to my daughter during the pandemic.

### **Life before the Pandemic**

15. My daughter attended a day service provided by the local council. She has been going there for many years. It took a long time before she would be able to stay without being unwell. The staff there are excellent and know my daughter very well.
16. She also went out on social outings with local clubs where she met with other younger adults who have various mental and physical challenges.
17. She also knows staff in the local cafés, shops and the local bank who have got to know her through her being out in the community. She is always made to feel welcome when she visits any of them.
18. She was free to visit my home at any time before the pandemic.

19. Before the pandemic my daughter was doing well and was interested to think about moving into a more community-based setting. She used to speak to me and her social worker about this as any transition would take a lot of planning and discussion and would have had to be very carefully managed.
20. Despite my daughter living in a care home, I have always been there supporting and advocating for her.
21. Before the pandemic I would see my daughter in person at least once a week. We would almost always spend our time out of the care home on those visits. We would go shopping, on outings, to the hairdresser, to buy her clothes etc. We would always go for coffee so we could have a chat about how she was doing.
22. I have always taken my daughter to her regular dental checkup appointments. I also take my daughter to many of her GP appointments and have contact with the GP by telephone if needed.
23. I would take my daughter to any hospital appointments and was with her when she had a five stay in hospital prior to the pandemic.
24. Her father visited her regularly and would always take her out of the care home on his visits.
25. I would speak to my daughter most days on video calls or the telephone.
26. I consider myself to be a member of her care team and am involved in all meetings that take place with her multi-disciplinary team including all regular reviews.

### **During Pandemic**

27. My daughter's care home was locked down on 16th March 2020. I learned about it after receiving a call from the Care Home Manager. Unfortunately, I didn't get the opportunity to see her in person to explain to her what was happening.
28. Initially, when Covid struck we all accepted that we needed to stay at home as we were all having to do this.
29. Luckily my daughter is good at using her iPad so from the start we were able to communicate via video.
30. In the beginning, she managed reasonably well as she knew everyone was in the same boat. She understood there was a virus and that I had to stay home too but as lockdown dragged on it became more difficult for her.

31. My daughter's day during Covid would be totally different to before. She was unable to integrate with people in other units or to socialise in the communal spaces within the home in the way she was used to.
32. She was unable to get out as she was used to doing and for the first few months, I couldn't get in to visit her.
33. Towards the end of July 2020, I was permitted to have garden visits, but these were difficult for both of us. I had to wear full PPE and sit at least two metres from her. I was not allowed to touch her or go near her. She used to get upset and distressed that we couldn't do that and that we had to keep a distance from each other. She hated me wearing a mask as she couldn't even see my face properly.
34. From March to July 2020, I saw changes in her. Some days for were better than others for her. She had very good support from her carers, but she would get very upset if I couldn't go to see her and we couldn't have physical touch or even a hug.
35. My daughter was video calling me 5 or 6 calls a day as she was struggling not being allowed out of the care home and not seeing me in person. She was visibly distressed on many of those calls, and it was hard to see her like that. My husband witnessed many of these calls and was aware of the pain it was causing us both. It was very stressful to witness and to manage.
36. I did speak to the clinical lead on the phone to see if I could have essential visits as my daughter was very distressed, but I was told it was for end of life only. I never took it any further at that point. I wish I had. I feel guilty that I didn't push harder on that.
37. By August 2020, I had only seen her in person for two hours in total over a five-month period.
38. When indoor visits became permitted in around the end of August 2020/beginning of September 2020, I was able to access my daughter's lounge via a patio door to the garden.
39. I was permitted to sit on a sanitized plastic chair near an open window with her sitting on other side of room. Compare this type of visit with the way I had always been free to come and go to her room. She would often be distressed at this arrangement.
40. As things were changing for the public, I had hoped that this would mean things would also change for my daughter. However, none of the freedoms we had were applied to residents living in care homes at that time.

41. At the end of July, I sent an e-mail to the care home manager raising my concerns about my daughter's mental and physical health and asking for her to be allowed to get out to visit my home. I had been told by the staff that she was opting out of activities in the unit and wanting to stay in her pajamas all day. Staff had also reported their concerns to the manager as they felt she was becoming depressed. The care home manager did contact the local care home hub seeking clarification on home visits. I believe he then contacted Public Health, but nothing changed.
42. In July the Scottish Government had produced some guidance on allowing garden visits and they also produced a FAQ's document item 13 of which stated "My care home is for people with learning disabilities – when can we restart home visits for residents who do this as part of their care program?  
The answer was this "would require a local assessment of individual care homes to determine any risks to the resident and their family. In doing so it will be important to assess whether the risk of not seeing someone outweighs the risk of infection". I had hoped that as my daughter has a learning disability this might apply to her as the risk of her mental health declining was in my opinion greater than the risk to her of Covid. But nothing changed.
43. On 5th August 2020, I sent an e-mail to Name Redacted of Scottish Care about my daughter's situation.
44. I also wrote to Jeanne Freeman on 7<sup>th</sup> August. I received a response from the Scottish Government on 14 August 2020.
45. A response came from a policy advisor who works in the learning disabilities policy unit of the Scottish Government. In this letter they quoted that people with learning disabilities were more susceptible to Covid as they often live with other illnesses. My daughter does not have any co-existing illnesses. Her main "illness" is her mental health and the challenges she experiences because of this.
46. In July 2020 my daughter's father's partner died. As a family we agreed that it was her father who should tell her this in person. It was quite a few weeks after his partner had died when he was eventually able to visit her for a garden visit. He had to break the news sitting outside, covered in PPE, 2 metres away from her. My daughter was obviously upset at this news. Her dad couldn't even give her a cuddle to help to console her.
47. New guidance came into effect on 8<sup>th</sup> August allowing indoor visits. I had to wear full PPE, have my temperature and oxygen levels tested and sign the same form every time I went to visit. I had to book a visit via a

phone call to the care home administrator. I never had difficulty getting a slot and I was never supervised by staff during those visits, but they did have to leave the door to my daughter's room open which impacted on our privacy and family time. I had to sit on a sanitised plastic chair at an open window and was not allowed to go near or touch my daughter during any of those visits. I had to access my daughter's room via a patio door to her lounge. I was not allowed to use the toilet or move around her room.

48. In August my sister who is very close to my daughter and had spoken to her every day on video calls since the lockdown began emailed the care home manager to express her concern at the decline in my daughter's mental health. My daughter had told her that she was "on the floor" and my sister observed that every day my daughter looked more and more unwell and had talked to her of "giving up".
49. In September 2020, things had changed for the public, and I was free to go on holiday at that time. My daughter, however, still couldn't even go out for as much as a cup of coffee or a run in her car. The care home manager had again contacted the care home hub asking if public health would consider visits to family homes after the letter he received from the Scottish Government dated 3<sup>rd</sup> September to care homes. I understood that this guidance referred to visits home in relation to adults under 65 and I had emailed the manager about this. He forwarded an email to me from the care home hub confirming that any visits by a resident to a family home would have had to involve a resident having a test and isolating for 14 days in their room. The email from the care home hub acknowledged that this was a barrier to home visiting and were looking to facilitate these via risk assessments carried out by the care home. Nothing progressed from this.
50. When the Scottish Government guidance came out in October 2020 outlining that visits could be up to 4 hours with touch, I have a copy of a letter sent to care homes from the chief executive of the local Public Health area confirming that he was NOT in favour of this aspect of the new guidance due to the amount of Covid circulating in the community at the time. But during this time staff were coming and going and providing personal care to my daughter so why would I have been more of a risk?
51. On 20<sup>th</sup> October I also received a letter from the head office of the care home questioning why Jeanne Freeman felt it was appropriate to encourage the lifting of restrictions given the amount of Covid in the community at the time. My daughter lives in a small unit. I am the only regular visitor. How would my presence have increased the risk?

52. I would be the last person to put my daughter at risk. I was living in my home with my husband. Staff were going home to their families and going about their daily lives as they were of course entitled to do.
53. In October 2020, I was still raising the impact of my daughter's imprisonment on her mental health. She was desperate to be able to visit me in my home and to get out of the care home. As my daughter has a history of significant self-harming there was a high level of concern about her mental health and the deputy care home manager sent a risk assessment to Public Health outlining the impact that not getting out of the care home to visit me was having on her.
54. My daughter's social worker also contacted the care home manager outlining his concerns about the impact the restrictions were having on my daughter's mental health and confirming that it was important that visits out of the home are started as soon as they can be. He also was pushing for increased family visits as he felt the amount of time on offer was not sufficient. He confirmed in his email that the disruption to my daughter's normal routines were at a critical level and that this was a view shared by all professionals and family members in attendance at her on-line MDT review.
55. I understood that the risk assessment would then be sent by the care home manager to Public Health, but I never saw a reply. It felt like the local public health department was taking no notice of the risks to my daughters mental and physical well-being by ignoring risk assessments and emails and continuing to apply blanket bans to residents. I feel that they showed no regard for my daughter's mental or physical welfare. There was still no progress.
56. Christmas 2020 was a truly depressing experience. Presents had to be delivered to the care home 72 hours before Christmas day to be "sanitized". I'm always with my daughter on Christmas day. A normal Christmas day would be a visit for Christmas morning from myself and my husband, spending time with her and helping her to open her presents. I was aware that other families were having visits with touch as Jeanne Freeman had made a pushed for LFT tests to be available to families to have a Christmas visit before lockdown on Boxing Day.
57. Christmas 2020 was very different. There was no joy in it at all. Christmas trees and decorations were banned. That year it was only me who was permitted to visit. I was "allowed" to visit her in her room. My most vivid memory of that day was my daughter sobbing while attempting to open her presents. I was not permitted to help her. She was instead given help and a cuddle from a member of her care team. She got so upset that I had to go outside from her patio door to sort out my own distress before I could go back in. It broke my heart to see her

like that. It was so distressing to see a carer consoling her when that is my job as her own mother!!

58. By March 2021 my daughter had still not been permitted to get out of the care home. I had managed to get agreement for me to be "allowed" to take her for a walk along a country lane near her home where we were very unlikely to meet other people, or if we did, we would be a very safe distance from them. To be permitted to do this it was a condition that I had to wear full PPE. This was extremely undignified for both of us. My daughter hated me wearing PPE on these walks. Not only that but the plastic apron was often flapping around in the wind. I could not see the point of this and how this was in any way a useful use of PPE particularly when we were out in the fresh air.
59. I still was not "allowed" to have a cup of coffee in my daughter's room.
60. I was in constant email correspondence with the care home manager around this time and was raising the issue of my daughter needing to get to the dentist and have her hair cut and my concerns about her increased use of sleeping medication due to her stress and anxiety. My daughter had also gained weight which was a concern to me as she uses a wheelchair, and this can make transferring harder. I was aware that new guidance would be coming out and I wanted to get ahead of the curve by having a plan already in place. There was a lot of email discussion about risk assessments. Public Health had to be involved in approving these.
61. I became so frustrated at lack of progress that I contacted the Care Inspectorate. The Care Inspectorate listened to what I had to say and agreed to help me. They were a great support and got involved in meetings with the Care Home management to try to find a way for me to be able to take my daughter out to get her hair cut and her teeth checked. We were also trying to get progress on a garden visit to my home.
62. It wasn't until the 22 April 2021 that I received confirmation that the dentist and hairdresser visits could go ahead but public health were still not prepared at that point to sign off for garden visits to my home.
63. There appeared to be a great reluctance on the part of public health and the care home provider to agree to these outings. I pointed out that these businesses were having to comply with guidance from the Scottish Government and that if they were not safe for my daughter then they were not safe for any of us. It was a ridiculous situation. I had sent copies of the guidance being followed by both my hairdresser and dentist in an email to confirm that they had all the relevant precautions in place. None of the rest of us were having to get risk assessments done to be able to do these things.



64. I understand that the Care Inspectorate got in touch with the care provider based in England who were the owners of the care home at the time.
65. Eventually I managed to get permission for her to be "allowed" out to the dentist on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. She was permitted to go to the hairdresser on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
66. I was able to do this as my daughter has her own adapted car. I had to agree to wear a mask during the car journey, use alcohol rub and her car required to be cleaned before and after use and as well as my daughter's wheelchair. I had to have a negative LFT test and complete a health assessment form. The risk assessments required me to follow all these conditions. When my daughter returned to the home, she had to have her oxygen levels and temperature taken and a test 48 hours after her return. No-else was having to go through this to be able to attend the dentist or the hairdresser at the time.
67. My daughter was eventually allowed to visit my home that month. From memory the agreement was that she was not allowed to come into my home but could be in the garden. I recall it started to rain and my husband, me and her twin sister had to stand inside the entrance to my house and my daughter had to be placed on the doorstep with an umbrella over her. I did this as I was just so relieved to have got her home at last and didn't want to break the trust with the care home manager. When I look back at this, I can't believe I agreed to it.
68. My daughter didn't see any other members of her family in person except for her father until 19<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### **Impacts on my daughter**

69. The Impact on my daughter was enormous. It was sad to know that she felt her home now felt like a prison.
70. Staff would comment to me about her low mood, and they often felt that she was becoming depressed.
71. During that time, she had no access to speech and language therapy or her music therapy apart from via Zoom which was a much less productive way for her to take part in these therapy sessions. She wasn't getting out to go to them or having her usual contact as all face-to-face appointments with practitioners had been suspended.
72. Her independence and freedom of choice was completely taken away from her.

73. She was struggling to sleep at nights and became more reliant on medication and her weight increased.
74. When she finally got her freedom back, she struggled with the changed world where so many things were not the same.
75. My daughter used to talk about her future. She doesn't do that anymore.
76. It's almost impossible to put into words the emotions and feelings that my daughter and I experienced during the **14 months** that she was unable to get out of the care home.

I have recordings of her feelings during those awful days and **months**. Some of the words from those recordings are below:

**4<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**"I'm not alright because I feel like I'm stuck in here and I would like to get my freedom back".**

**"I would like to go out again and be back to normal because I feel like I'm stuck in here".**

**6<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**"This is shocking because I can't do what I used to do like go out with you and my Aunty".**

**"This is a piece of nonsense because it's making me sick anxious".**

**"I really want a life like not staying in here all the time and it's not giving me a life staying in the house all the time".**

**"It feels like its setting me back".**

**18<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**"It's affecting me in a big bad way."**

**"It's keeping me back".**

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

**"I feel like this problem is never going to end".**

**February 2021**

**"This is a message for the Government.**

**I feel like I'm down on my knees and it's destroying my life, and it feels like I'm getting nowhere."**

**"And it's making me feel unwell and I'm fed up because I feel stuck and it's getting too much now".**

**"It feels like I'm getting nowhere by asking my mum questions and my mum can't give me the answers I want to hear because my mum has got no answers to give me."**

### **February 2021**

**"This is another message for the Government.**

**It feels like I'm a prisoner and not able to do things like go out shopping with my mum."**

**"And I'm not able to get home. And I would like it back to normal and I feel stuck in here and it's hard to keep it together and I'm not able to get cuddles from my family."**

**"I feel like I've lost my family".**

### **15<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**"I would like to do something about it. I would like to tell somebody how I'm feeling."**

**"Somebody in the Government"**

**"I feel angry and fed up."**

### **18<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**"Why should I stay at home if I've not got Covid".**

**"It's not doing my health any good and it's making me feel low".**

**"Why can't I have a test every day to let me out the same as staff".**

**"It feels that if someone else has got Covid it is stopping me from doing the things I want to do".**

**"When Covid is here I can't see people who help me, and it feels like I'm locked up again."**

**“It feels like I’m back to square one again”.**

**“It feels like I’m a prisoner again and I don’t think that’s fair on me”.**

**“What is the point of me speaking up if no-one is listening to me!!”**

77. Over the next few months after May 2021 life did resume some normality for my daughter but she struggled when Covid got into the home in the winter of 2021, and she was locked down again when there were outbreaks.
78. When there were Covid outbreaks in the home we had to revert to garden visits. These often took place in the freezing cold and were a miserable and depressing experience for both of us. We had to sit in a gazebo on the edge of the car park with no privacy and we were both often blue with cold!! I was still dressed in full plastic PPE for these visits.
79. Sometimes there were rolling lockdowns in the care home which meant that residents were again unable to leave the home. This was hard for my daughter once she was able to get out.
80. She wanted to be tested the same way as staff were to allow her out. However, she was subjected to a testing regime that was not in place for the rest of us living in the community. In February 2022 when she caught covid and her LFT tests showed negative on days 6 and 7 public health insisted she isolate for 10 days in line with guidance. I don’t recall this regime being the case for the public at the time.

### **Infection, Prevention and Control**

81. I never really had an awareness of what procedures were in place for any viral situation prior to the pandemic. The care home had never been closed to me before.
82. I never had any issues with getting access to PPE when visiting the Care Home. I wasn’t allowed in unless I was wearing mask, gloves, and apron.
83. My daughter didn’t see staff without a mask for two years. She hated seeing people wearing masks.
84. With regards to handwashing and hygiene. The place was spotless, and I understood exactly what I had to do and why we were doing it.

85. I used to have to test for Covid when I arrived at the Care home. I then had to sit in my car awaiting the result. I live an hour away from the care home, so this was not convenient at all. Eventually it was agreed with the care home manager that I could test at home and log the result on-line. The home also did temperature and oxygen tests, and I was required on each visit to fill in the same form time and time again.

### **Evidence**

86. I have photographs of my daughter which are available to the inquiry if required. They show her during Covid and reflect how sad and depressed she looks. This is very different to the photos of her taken before and after the pandemic.

87. I have several recording clips of my daughter's voice which are also available if required. My daughter would like to have her voice heard by the inquiry. She attended two meetings with Scottish Government officials and sent various recordings to the Government explaining how she was feeling and what she felt her imprisonment was doing to her.

88. Some of the recordings are of my daughter on a call to me asking for help to get out, for hugs and to see her family. She is distressed during these calls and is sobbing in some of them.

89. I have many documents, emails and correspondence relating to the period that my daughter was within the home during Covid.

90. I will collate these, along with Thompsons solicitors and make available if required. They contain communications between various bodies/agencies and me involving my daughter and concerns for her mental health and wellbeing.

91. I also have copies of risk assessments in connection with conditions to permit my daughter to leave the care home.

### **Pamis**

92. During the initial period of the pandemic, I was struggling to know where to turn regarding the restrictions and who to turn to for help. Initially I got in touch with Scottish Care who referred me to the Scottish Council for Learning Disabilities. They then introduced me to PAMIS (Promoting A More Inclusive Society).

93. PAMIS, (Promoting a More Inclusive Society) is the name of an organisation that works with individuals with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In line with the argument put forward by Pamis I

believed I should have been treated in the same way as staff to support my daughter during this distressing period.

94. I then became part of a group comprising Jenny Millar, CEO of PAMIS, and several other mothers whose adult children were exposed to Covid restrictions. We felt that our adult children were invisible and had no voice. No-one really understood what they and we were going through.
95. The CEO was writing to the Scottish Government to try and argue on our behalf for us to be acknowledged as carers in the same way as staff.
96. We had zoom meetings with MSPS Joan McAlpine, Jeremy Balfour and Jackie Baillie. They are SNP, Conservative and Labour MSP's so we were reaching cross party. Three of us were involved in an interview on STV news on 24 September 2020.
97. I became aware of the Anne's Law petition when I heard Natasha Hamilton on Radio Scotland pushing for relatives to be treated in the same way as a member of staff which I then signed. It felt a relief to know that there was someone out there trying to fight for the same thing as me.

### **Involvement with CHRS**

98. I became aware of CHRS when I saw them on the news at the first protest. I then contacted Cathie Russell of CHRS via Messenger on 17/09/2020 asking her if she would mention my daughter's situation and if she would raise the issue of younger adults like my daughter being imprisoned in their care homes.
99. CHRS were also pursuing the right for a family member to be treated as part of the resident's care team. While most care homes have elderly residents there are homes which provide various supports for younger adults, and I was concerned that this group was completely invisible to the Scottish Government, and they needed a voice.
100. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2020 I contacted Cathie via Messenger to ask her to raise the issue once again about the situation for younger adults living in care home settings. It's at this point that I asked Cathie if there was any representation on CHRS offering a voice for the younger adults in care homes.
101. Cathie contacted Jeanne Freeman to ask if I could join in their on-line meetings. I have been fully involved as a core member of the group since then attending many meetings with Scottish Government policy advisors and ministers and sitting on working groups in connection with Anne's Law.

102. During that second CHRS on-line meeting I explained my daughter's situation to Jeanne Freeman. She asked the deputy chief nursing officer to contact me after the meeting to discuss the situation further. I also remember that Graham Ellis was in that meeting, and he acknowledged that as my daughter was young, she was less likely to become seriously ill with Covid.
103. The core group of CHRS have been a great support to me and I don't know how I would have got through the pandemic without them.

#### **Other issues with the pandemic**

104. Everyone has had different experiences with care home providers and managers. I personally have always enjoyed good relationships with management and staff who I believe were often put in challenging situations. However, I feel that the care home provider whose head office was in England was just not prepared to change things for my daughter despite being informed on many occasions about the impact the restrictions were having on her.
105. If there were any changes to visiting or closures due to an outbreak, then staff would call me. I never had any issues with booking in visits once they started up although in the beginning these visits were very restricted in terms of length of time and were distressing to both my daughter and me as this type of visiting had never been the norm. Although I was not supervised during those visits the door to her room had to remain open which had an impact on our privacy.
106. Managers were inundated with guidance from Government, public health, and providers coming at them from all angles and I felt that often providers guidance took precedence.
107. It took until May 2021 – 14 months after the initial lockdown to get permission for my daughter to leave the care home. Differing guidance in Scotland and England led to care home providers applying English guidance in care homes in Scotland. Additionally, there was inconsistent application of guidance by public health in different local areas which often resulted in a post code lottery when it came to interpreting and implementing the guidance.
108. I never understood why the Scottish Government could force every other type of business and institution to comply with their guidance but couldn't enforce this when it came to care homes.
109. My daughter was subjected to blanket bans with no recognition of her individual rights or needs.

110. Her human rights were completely thrown under a bus.
111. I did get some help from the Deputy Chief Nursing Officer – he was supportive where he could be and did at times contact care homes to discuss individual situations with providers with varying degrees of success.
112. I do feel a serious question that needs to be asked is, what was the plan if there had been no vaccinations. Would residents have been confined forever?
113. Where were the organizations who were there to protect vulnerable groups. The Human Rights Commission and the Mental Welfare Commission were conspicuous by their absence.
114. Public health and the care home provider did not consider the balance of restrictions, decisions made, and the impact it would have on my daughter in relation to her mental health needs and wellbeing. My role as her mother and POA was compromised, and her freedom and any form of independence and choices were taken away from her. Her life pre-Covid was completely dismantled.
115. I believe that my daughter was discriminated against because of where she requires to live. I also believe that the fact that she lives with some older residents restricted what she was able to do.
116. Throughout the whole of the period of the pandemic the only residents' voices that were ever heard by the Scottish Government were those of my daughter and my colleague Sheila's mother.
117. My daughter sent voice recordings to the Scottish Government. However, sending those did not result in any changes for her and she felt that throughout the pandemic no-one was listening to her. I have copies of those recordings.
118. I believe that if I had been granted essential visitor status at the outset, I would have been able to comfort my daughter and make the restrictions easier on her. I would also have been able to care for my daughter and at the same time be a support to the staff allowing them more time to devote to other residents.
119. Throughout this entire experience I have felt anger, exhaustion, frustration but mostly powerlessness even though I was involved as a core member of CHRS and never gave up on trying to be a voice for my daughter. It seems to me that my daughter got lost in the minefield of guidance and the freedom that various agencies had to interpret and implement guidance in the way that they saw fit. SG did not produce



their guidance on the back of a cigarette packet. It was informed by scientific and medical experts, so it was hard to accept that others felt they knew better!

120. I felt as if there were always barriers in place preventing my daughter getting out of the care home or to get essential visits despite all my efforts.
121. The authorities which included the Scottish Government, Public Health, and the care provider were all aware of the impact the continued imprisonment was having on my daughter's mental and physical health.
122. Tests and vaccines did not seem to be making much difference in respect of getting her out of the care home.
123. I would like to know why people who knew how the restrictions were affecting her thought it was okay to lock my daughter up for 14 months.
124. The covid pandemic took a huge toll on everyone. I never expected to be involved in campaigning and it has had a significant effect on me personally. Being in the public eye has never been comfortable for me. It has been the most challenging exhausting experience of my life. I truly believe it should never have been this hard!!

### **The Inquiry**

125. Going forward I believe that it is vital that residents in care homes are protected under the law therefore we must have Anne's Law as a matter of urgency.
126. As a society we must also recognize that what happened to those living in care homes must never be allowed to happen again.
127. Residents should be respected as individuals and treated in a non-discriminatory manner with equal rights to the rest of us in society. They should never again be the subject of blanket bans which had such detrimental effects of those living in our care homes.
128. No-one should ever be imprisoned in a care home in the way that residents were during the pandemic. There needs to be a process through which decisions to imprison residents can be challenged.
129. I believe that all residents should always have access to a relative or friend no matter what the circumstances.

[Statement concludes]

Signed...Verona A Gibson.....

Date...13/11/2023.....

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