

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FZT

Support person present: No

1. My name is FZT. My date of birth is 1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Experiences as a foster carer.

Background

2. I left home at the age of seventeen and a half and initially trained to be a RGN nurse in Aberdeen. After a year and a half as a staff nurse, I moved to Edinburgh and did midwifery training at Elsie Inglis hospital. I worked there until it closed in 1988 and moved to Simpsons maternity at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. I married my husband FZS in 1979. Three months later I had twins which were born 10 weeks premature. I have two other children. My son was born in 1984 and my daughter was born in 1989. I resigned when the twins were born, but subsequently went back to midwifery a year later to work part-time. Initially, I worked one nightshift a week, but after my son was born I worked two nights. I retired in 2012.
3. When I was working I also did some private child minding, which I started in 1993. I also heard about child day care which I did from 1994. This involved taking a child for a few hours through the day to give the family a bit of respite and prevent them going into foster care.

Becoming a Day Carer / Foster Carer

4. I had heard about day care so I looked into it and a social worker came to the house to explain what the process was. They put us forward to do the course in 1994. As part of the training I went to the Howdenhall assessment centre for a couple of Saturdays and a number of evenings during the week. I think it was four hours on the Saturdays, and two hours on about six evenings. This course was for both people training to be foster carers and day carers. We carried on doing day care up until 2003.
5. Before we finished the course and were finally approved, we were allocated a support worker who was going to be my allocated worker and who would discuss the children who may potentially come to me. This supporter was Maggie Harvey. We were about halfway through the course when we were asked to look after our first day-care children. They were a set of triplets and their brother. Their mum was only nineteen, and she and her partner were obviously finding it difficult. We never took them all together and only took two at a time, on different days. The hours for doing day-care fitted in with our own children, who were at school. We collected them around 9:30 am and returned them at 2:00 pm.
6. The process for becoming a day-carer was to go in front of a panel after completing the course, and they decided if you were suitable. This was exactly the same process that you went through if you were trying to become a foster carer.
7. I don't think there was any requirement to have any qualifications. I don't remember ever having to provide any references. My support worker came to the house and checked to see that the house was suitable, clean and tidy. They also provided us with things that we would need, like prams, cots and things like that.
8. At the first panel we went to, we were approved to do day-care. Later, when we decided to foster, we went to another panel and we got approval from them to begin foster caring. We didn't have to do anything extra to become foster carers.

...ted to become a foster carer because I was a midwife and I loved babies. I had wanted to be a nurse from when I was in primary four at school, and I never wavered from that. It was the caring side of me that drove me from being a nurse and a midwife through to having my own children. The biggest thing for me was helping families and, through the day-care, we helped a number of families get on their feet and prevented the children from going into care. It wasn't just looking after the children, it was helping the parents with support and advice as well. We had our own children and couldn't imagine not having children in the house. We loved the house being busy with children.

10. FZS and I were joint carers right from the word "Go", but he was still working at the start. He had a few jobs and stopped working around 2006.

Training

11. The training I did to become a day-carer was identical to that done by a foster carer. There were other foster carers on the same course as me when I was training to be a day-carer.
12. Over the years as a foster carer I have been trained, and retrained, to be able to continue fostering. Training continued from day one. Not all the training was essential, but it was advisable. There were two units which were mandatory and they were (1) First Aid training and (2) Child Protection Training. There were refresher courses for these topics every three years. Other training I did was 'Skylight' training, Introduction to Play, Domestic Abuse, Baby Calm workshops, Life Story Work, 'Holly Van Gouding' training, and Vulnerable Babies training, which I did after I became a foster carer. I have done a lot of training over the years.
13. Safeguarding training is detailed in the carer agreement, which is a document which we signed. I can't remember how we got this, but whoever gave us this document to sign would have gone over it with us. We knew everything about safeguarding in relation to ourselves and children.

14. My support worker would usually tell me when training was coming up and would tell me if it was advisable or desirable for me to complete the training. I sometimes went on several training courses every year, maybe four or five some years. In relation to the Vulnerable Babies training - which was for drug addicted parents - I formed part of the team who gave this training because, when I was a midwife, I gained a lot of experience dealing with drug addicted parents in the hospital. I usually did this training about twice a year at the Jack Kane Centre, although it became less and less towards the end of my time fostering. I also got involved with an organisation called Prepare, and I spoke as a foster carer when they delivered their training courses about dealing with vulnerable babies.
15. I have records showing I did a Child Protection Awareness course in 2006. The further Child Protection training, which I did in June 2008, was a two day workshop. This course covered all aspects of child protection, and I recall that it was held at a rugby club somewhere. There were social workers, teachers, other foster carers and probably other people who looked after children, on this course. I have probably done other child protection training since these courses. I do not have my records to hand. None of these courses resulted in me getting any qualifications. All I got was a certificate of attendance which showed the name and dates of the course.
16. My husband FZS did his training separately. We couldn't go on the courses at the same time because we had the children to look after. I have done more training than FZS because, in the beginning, I was the main carer even although we were joint carers. I did all the training I needed to do, and probably had more training than a lot of other foster carers because of my background as a nurse and midwife.
17. Over the years I was given lots of documents, like family policy documents and carers agreements, which were signed every time there was a panel. These documents contained all the rules and regulations, together with a foster carers handbook. Almost everything you needed to know was in the handbook. I still have a box of these in my house.

18. If there were ever any issues, I could contact my support worker. If they weren't available I could speak to the practice team. I always felt that the support I got from my support worker was good. If I had any issues, they would sort it out for us.

Foster Care Arrangements

19. I was never employed by the local authority. They wouldn't give us employment status. I am aware that this is a big bugbear for a number of foster carers. I classed myself as being self-employed but I was answerable to the Social Work department and Edinburgh Council. It was a bit confusing. Within the last ten years, I was on a course when there was talk of a document being taken to the Scottish Government to petition for foster carers to get specific training and a recognised SQA qualification in order to be classed as a professional foster carer. As far as I am aware, it didn't get passed by the Scottish Government.
20. FZS and I started fostering in 1996 and at the same time continued doing the day-care. Maggie Harvey carried on being my support worker. I have had several support workers since then, although nowadays they are called liaison support workers. Other support workers I recall having are: Lauren Moss, Lesley Davis, Liz Doull, and Hilary (whose last name I can't remember). Lauren Moss was around at the time when we had FZV. The last worker we had -who came after Lauren Moss – was Kerry Higgins. All of these support workers were my point of contact if I had any issues, complaints or difficulties. If they weren't available, you could speak to anyone from the children's practice team. These support workers came with me to any meetings like children's panels or Looked After Children (LAC) reviews.
21. FZS and I didn't specify the length of placement and we didn't choose between short, medium or long term. We just cared for the child until the child either moved back home to their biological parents, or were adopted. We had quite a few placements that were short term. When we had FZV we had a lot of short term placements at the same time, so she would have seen a lot of children come and go.

22. We were registered to care for children from birth to five years old. The terms of our approval were that we could only have two full time placements at any one time and one day-care. We did prefer that the foster children we were taking were babies. We asked for our first child to be cot-sized because we didn't have a spare room at that time, but there would be in a cot in our room. The first child we got was sixteen months old, and slept in the cot. We only really took babies up to five years old because we didn't have a spare bedroom at the time.
23. The oldest child we had was a boy called [REDACTED], who first came to us at eighteen months. He came to us initially as day-care and went back to his parents, but his mum couldn't cope with his care so he came back to us full-time. He later went back to his mum, but still came to us one weekend a month to give his mum respite. We did this until he was about eleven. We wouldn't normally have looked after children at his age, but we had known him such a long time that it made sense and we were happy to help.
24. In my opinion, foster carers should be recognised as professionals, like social workers, nurses and many others. This should be recognised Scotland-wide so that if you moved to different parts of the country, you wouldn't have to go through that local authority's specific training. As a midwife I had to do courses which ended up with me receiving SQA certificates, but there was nothing like that for foster carers. There should be some recognition of being a professional foster carer. We spoke and shared our experiences about our dealings with children at different meetings yet we were not classed as professionals and that, in my opinion, is wrong.
25. My view is that all foster carers should have to go through all the same compulsory training so they are trained to a certain standard and classed as a qualified foster carer.

Financial Support

26. As a foster carer, I was paid for each child that I had in my care. I normally received a fee and an allowance. In 1996 I was receiving £35 per week and I was taxed on that

because I already had a job. Nowadays, the government has decided that we could earn ten thousand pounds per year, and two hundred pound a week per child, before we pay tax. Nowadays the payments are £170 per week per child, plus an allowance of about £100. The allowance is supposed to be divided up into clothing allowance, pocket money and then the rest was for trips and heating the house. Because we had babies in our care, we put the pocket money part towards their clothes, or books to read to them. I know that private carers got a better rate of pay than I did, and specialist carers got a lot more. I never received any specialist carers money for looking after drug addicted babies which I think was wrong. It required specialist care.

27. Some children came to us with clothes, but others didn't. FZV parents gave her a lot because they wanted her to be dressed in the clothes they wanted. They gave her lots of toys at Christmas too. I received a Christmas and birthday allowance for each child. The money we got was the equivalent of one weeks allowance.

Your Foster Home Household

28. When we started foster caring, we were living at our current address at [REDACTED] Edinburgh. It is a detached house, with a nice-sized garden. It has four bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, utility room, bathroom and - for the last few years - a big conservatory. There are lots of toys kept in there, and they are still there because I look after my grandson one day a week.

Children Fostered

29. In all the time we have been doing day-care and fostering we have had 22 day-care children and 50 fostered and respite care children. Most placements have been short term. A lot of the babies I have cared for either went back home eventually, or were adopted within around ten months. The majority of children we had for about a year, maybe longer. Normally we would only ever have two children at one time.
30. FZV and one other boy, [REDACTED], were the longest placements we had. We had them both from birth until they were nearly 4, at separate times. FZV actually came

to us at 4 weeks old from the neo natal unit. She was born on [REDACTED] 2011, and we got her on [REDACTED] 2012. She was born premature at 31 weeks and only weighed four pounds at birth. She was supposed to be going home to her parents but there were issues at the hospital one night when they stayed overnight, which turned into a child protection issue. I went to a discharge meeting the day before she left the hospital, and she came to me. We then had FZV [REDACTED] until [REDACTED] 2015. [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED] 2003 and went for adoption in [REDACTED] 2007.

31. The first boy we ever took, [REDACTED], had a baby brother who was born a year later. They asked us to take his brother to keep the sibling pair together but this stretched our remit as, at that time, we were only approved to be taking one child. We agreed to take him and they both went for adoption after about a year. [REDACTED] slept in the bottom bunk bed in my daughter's room downstairs. His younger brother was in a cot beside us.
32. When we had FZV [REDACTED] we again took more than we should have because they extended our approval. For a while we had two other full-time placements and one other child on respite care. All of my own children had left home by then. My youngest daughter was the last to leave home, and she moved out when she was fifteen to live with my sister and gain a hairdressing qualification. That would have been 2004 so we had spare bedrooms by then.
33. In the time we had FZV [REDACTED] we had another girl - [REDACTED] - whose mum had to go in for a caesarean section for her second child. So we looked after [REDACTED] for two weeks in 2012. After [REDACTED] left, I was asked to pop in and visit the mum who stayed nearby, to make sure she took her medication. We also had [REDACTED] who stayed with us from [REDACTED] 2013 to [REDACTED] 2014. She went back to her parents. Another girl, [REDACTED] came in [REDACTED] 2014 and she was adopted at ten months old in [REDACTED] 2014. [REDACTED] came to us in [REDACTED] 2014 at ten days old. She left after FZV [REDACTED].
34. FZV [REDACTED] saw lots of other parents coming and going, and taking children away. She was the sort of girl that would have gone with any of these other parents in a flash. That

was just the kind of girl FZV was. She was a child that would have gone away with anybody.

Placement Preparation

35. When we were taking a newborn baby we were given quite a lot of notice that a baby was coming. The baby may have been in the neonatal unit for a while. The first foster child we got was a girl who was sixteen months old and we had her for a year before she was adopted. Our next child was a newborn baby boy. He was in the neo-natal unit for about nine weeks, so we knew well in advance that he was coming into our care.
36. We would normally be given background information on each child by our support worker, before we agreed to take the child. Sometimes paperwork came at the same time as the child if it was an urgent placement, but usually we would be given it in plenty time. We would get maybe a week to read through the file. We could then make an informed decision about taking the child into our care.
37. Because we were generally taking newborn babies there obviously weren't any pre-visits. Sometimes we would go into the hospital and meet the parents at the discharge planning meeting. At these meetings, there would be the neonatal staff, my support worker, the practice team social worker and the parents or other family members. Sometimes we took the babies home straight after the meeting. The decision had already been made by that time, that we were to get the child, and the purpose of the meeting was to decide on how and when it would happen.
38. We were always given the choice to refuse a replacement. There was probably only once that we had a placement thrust upon us that we shouldn't have accepted. My allocated support worker wasn't around at the time, and I got a phone call from another worker - who I knew - who asked me if I could take two sisters who were either two and three, or three and four years old. She assured us they would be no problem and very easy to look after. I didn't get any other background on them. They were brought

to us that Friday night after we agreed and the worker presented us with the girls and the paperwork.

39. I then read through the paperwork and realised that we shouldn't have agreed to take them. It was noted that the oldest girl didn't like men around my husband [FZS] age. I therefore couldn't leave her with [FZS] because she hit him and kicked him. It was awful. We only had them for around six weeks, but we couldn't cope, so we contacted the Social Work department and they arranged to move the children. Their removal was arranged within a week of me informing my support worker. Unfortunately, I later heard that they moved her to another couple who were exactly the same age as us.

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

40. When we became foster carers in 1996, I was still working two nightshifts at the weekend [FZS] was working as an insurance agent so he sometimes worked in the evening and worked different hours. It all fitted in, that one of us was always there.
41. When we started fostering, my husband and I had our own bedroom. My son [REDACTED] had the small bedroom upstairs, our twins were in a slightly bigger bedroom, and my daughter [REDACTED] was in the bedroom downstairs. We purposefully only wanted to take babies at that time because we didn't have any other bedrooms. There was a cot in our room for them. Nowadays, you have to have a spare room for the foster child.
42. When we started fostering, and my own children were still at home, our daily routine was just like any other normal family. We just fitted everything in around the children. When I worked nightshift at the weekend [FZS] looked after the children, although I was there through the day, sleeping in the house. If he needed anything [FZS] would wake me up. We managed the childcare together and there weren't any issues.
43. We have never had a foster child who was of school age, so we did not have to deal with a school routine. [FZV] was the only one who went to nursery before she left.

44. We had a routine which we established for all the children. It all revolved around the babies being fed and changed, and giving them play time. During the week I took FZV (and any other children I had), to playgroups twice a week. This was either to Inch Community Centre or Goodtrees, and allowed me to meet with other foster and day carers. There were six or seven other carers who formed a close group and we regularly met up.
45. FZV sometimes went to other carers for respite, and I wrote out her routine to help them. I remember doing it again not long before she left. I had written that she had a bath at 6:30 pm, a story and then bed just before 7:00 pm. She went to bed with her rabbit (which she had since she was born), and her dummy. She usually slept until between 7:30 am to 8:30 am. She had her breakfast, which was either Weetabix with milk and sugar, or Frosties along with juice or a small cup of milk and buttered toast. For lunch, about 12 noon, she liked boiled ham or chicken slices, with buttered bread and a small Fromage Frais yoghurt. For dinner, at 5:00 pm, she liked pizza, pasta with grated cheese, chicken or potatoes with butter but I suggested she try anything because FZV was quite a fussy eater. I explained that she had contact with her mum once a week, at Gilmerton community centre, and that she would be collected and dropped off by the Social Work department. I gave them the health visitors and the social workers' names. I told them that FZV goes everywhere with her rabbit and dummy, especially on contact visits. I also explained that FZV had very tuggy hair in the morning and the only way to get it out was to spray it with water and brush it. I remember writing this around 2014.
46. FZV went for respite care quite a few times. We had quite a few weddings, but FZV was too young to come with us. I have recorded in my own notes that she went for respite care in 2012 for a few days, because I was on a trip to Paris. We had two children at the time and I couldn't leave FZS to look after them both. FZV went to stay with [redacted] and [redacted]. [redacted] was a day-carer for the Social Work department. Still in 2012, FZV went back to [redacted] because FZS and I were in York. This trip was organised before FZV came to us.

47. In [REDACTED] 2012, when we went on holiday, she went to stay for two weeks with [REDACTED] and her family. They were foster carers. In [REDACTED] 2012, for two days, she went back to [REDACTED] because it was my son's wedding. In [REDACTED] 2013 she went for respite for one week at another couple, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED] FZV and [REDACTED] went to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for two weeks while we were away. There were probably a couple more occasions.

Mealtimes

48. At mealtimes, I prepared the food. FZV was a fussy eater and often didn't eat what we were having. If she didn't want something, I would make her something different that she would eat. I picked up as we went along what she would and wouldn't eat.

Leisure Time

49. FZV loved walking so we went out for a walk quite often. If I had a baby in my care at the time, it was good for getting the baby to sleep and FZV burnt up some of her energy. One of her favourite things to do was getting her Peppa Pig wellies on and splashing in the puddles and coming back home soaking wet. She loved seeing the Highland cows and looking for snails. FZV was an energetic girl and was on the go all the time. FZS usually came with us on our walks.
50. We bought FZV a wendy house and she often played in it with my grand-daughter. She enjoyed feeding the birds in the garden.

Trips and Holidays

51. We asked for a passport for FZV so she could travel abroad with us to our son's wedding in Cyprus, but no one from the Social Work department arranged it for us. Because of that, she couldn't come with us. When we got back we had an evening at a golf club so that she still had a chance to wear her party dress.

52. We took most of the foster children we had to Coupar Angus, where we stayed in my sister's house. My sister stays there, so we either went for a weekend or the whole week. We would have taken some of the children abroad, but it was difficult to get permission to do that. We wanted to take [REDACTED] abroad, but the Social Work department wouldn't let us because it was too close in time to him getting adopted.
53. My sister in Coupar Angus was a school teacher so she had her Disclosure Scotland clearance. My other sister went through training as a respite carer so that she could be left with children in my house. The Social Work department took so long to get her through the training - and didn't even finish it - but still allowed her to look after a child when we were away. She too had Disclosure Scotland clearance because she had been a teacher. I preferred not to pass children about when we were going away without them. It was always better if they stayed in our house, which was familiar to them. We always had to tell the Social Work department if we were going away because they needed to know where we were taking them, or who was looking after the children.

Healthcare

54. I did most of the healthcare stuff with the children, which involved either taking them to the doctors, dentists or health visitors. On occasion, I had to take them to the hospital for a couple of weeks at a time. The health visitor would do routine health checks on the babies when she visited. Some of the drug-addicted babies were dealt with by an organisation called Prepare, which had been formed at some point. There was a health visitor attached to this team and the health visitors would usually come together on a joint visit. If we had any worries about the children not reaching their milestones, we would highlight this to the health visitor. There was nothing set in stone dictating that routine health checks should take place after a specified period. If babies came from the hospital with particular issues, there would be follow up visits to check on their progress.
55. I recall that FZV [REDACTED] was referred to a speech and language specialist. I can't remember which health visitor it was but, at one of FZV [REDACTED] visits, the health visitor thought she

wasn't sounding out words as she should have been at her age. This wasn't long before FZV left us. I took FZV to the medical practice where she had a hearing test and saw a specialist. There was nothing wrong with her hearing. A lengthy report was compiled by the speech and language expert. It was noted that FZV who was put in a room with toys, was more interested in the voices she could hear outside. This expert pointed out that if you wanted to speak to FZV you had to stand in front of her and be at her level for her to listen to what you were saying. They didn't say if there was a reason for this.

56. I remember I was upset one day when FZV came home from nursery and she was crying. She said she was crying because she never got a sticker at nursery because she was too busy doing other things and either not hearing or not listening to the nursery staff. FZV often didn't get a sticker, and I was told that it was because she wouldn't help tidy up. I told them that FZV probably didn't hear being asked and I had to tell the nursery staff how best to communicate with her.
57. A similar thing happened when FZV was going to gymnastics when she was three. I was pulled up by the teacher who said that FZV wasn't doing what she was told. I knew another woman who helped at this class so I told her again about how to communicate with her. She said she would watch out for FZV. Any noise or other distraction really affected FZV. Chris Jack would have been aware of this issue with FZV

Christmas and Birthdays

58. Christmas was just like anyone else's house where there were children. They each had a bag with their name on it, and we filled it with toys. We treated the foster children like we did our own children. Either me or my sons cooked Christmas lunch and we had a lovely day.
59. For birthdays we had a big celebration. We had a special birthday cake with candles. There would be presents and most of my family came round to celebrate with us. This wasn't so much for the babies, more for when they got older.

Discipline

60. We had a lot of training on discipline in the placements. We were not allowed to smack a child, and we were taught to use positive re-enforcement. We were not to reward negative behaviour and instead reward good behaviour. Obviously, this did not relate to us a lot of the time because we only had babies. When they became toddlers and did something naughty, I would make them stand beside me. They would do this roughly for the same number of minutes as their age. We were told about making children take a 'time out' but this was something we very rarely did. Most of the time we used distraction techniques to take them away from whatever it was they were doing.
61. We never sanctioned or punished any of the children we fostered.

Relationship with Foster Children

62. My wider family had a great relationship with all the foster children we had. My family were all brought up with other children and there were never any issues. We always treated the foster children exactly the same as our own children. We didn't ask them to call us 'Mum and Dad', because we weren't their mum and dad. Some of the children called us 'granny and grandad' because they had heard our grandchildren calling us that, and some called us "mum and dad" having heard our children. FZV called us FZT and FZS.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

63. Most of the children we fostered had contact with their biological family. The practice team organised this and arranged it along with myself and FZS, my support worker and the parents. A lot of the contacts were done in our house, or outwith at different places. Particularly in relation to drug addicted babies, it was not fair to keep moving them about so early in their lives so we had the contacts in our house. It would usually just be me - and sometimes FZS - and the child's parents. The social workers were not always present.

64. We had a lot of contacts in our house, although some parents didn't want it. Some parents were hostile because they didn't want their child to be in care, so we didn't have them at our house. Only a couple of times were certain foster children allowed to be taken out by their biological parents and have unsupervised contact with them.
65. Occasionally there were issues when the parents were late back with the child. In those circumstances I would contact my worker, the child's worker or the practice team to let them know. If it was out of normal hours, I had to contact the emergency social work team to get advice. This didn't happen very often.
66. FZV parents were allowed contact three times a week. This contact was initially once at our house and the other two times were at Westfield house. Around 2012, when the parents were in my house for a visit, they took a picture of a roll-up cigarette in the conservatory. They then made an allegation to the social work department some weeks later that it was cannabis. I think the practice team manager decided that they were not allowed back in my house after that. I understand that the Social Work department suspected that FZV parents had planted it, but I knew it was my nephew's cigarette and I knew that it wasn't cannabis. They wanted to test the cigarette, but I am not sure what that would have proved. I didn't let this affect my relationship with FZV parents.
67. Before FZV went to the contact visits with her mum and dad, I would write down for them what her routines were. I would say when she had been fed and when she was due her next bottle or food. One time when I went to collect FZV from Westfield, they had given her a feed and I said that she didn't need it then. The grandmother flew off the handle saying that the mother can feed her child when she wants. The grandmother was taken away and I was told to leave with FZV for my own safety. We weren't asked to supply the parents with this sort of information but I did it to help them look after FZV.
68. I don't think that anything should be changed in relation to how contact visits are arranged. Provided it suits every person, then there are no issues. Parents were often

more comfortable coming to our house rather than feeling judged by members of the public in a contact centre.

Visitors

69. The foster children's social workers were required by law to visit every so many weeks. Most of the time the child's social work came very regularly. They didn't come to the house all the time. Sometimes we would drop the child off for contact visits so the child would see them then, or sometimes they would pick the child up and drop them off at my house. The only one of FZV social workers who I didn't see - for about eight months - was Chris Jack. He may have had phone contact with us, but I can't remember. We did however often see Maxine, the social work assistant, who picked up FZV to take her to her contact visits.
70. Rachel King was FZV social worker when she first came to us but she went on to do something else and Chris Jack inherited FZV case around 2012. Rachel King visited FZV regularly. She always asked how FZV was and if we had any issues or concerns. She would ask how FZV was after contact with her parents and general stuff about her routine. Rachel visited FZV to the letter of the law and she took notes. She was in our house quite a while and probably observed a lot of how we were doing things.
71. FZV was quite happy to go to the contact meetings to see her parents, but when she came back she was often grumpy, tired and angry. I think she just didn't understand what was going on and was confused. We often had to try and distract her when she came back. I shared my observations with my social worker and with Maxine who was FZV social worker's assistant. I would also bring this up at the children's panel.
72. Throughout FZV placement, we had unannounced visits. The last one I had was in 2018 or 2019 and it was the social workers who visited. It was either Lauren or Kerry Higgins. It didn't happen very often. I don't think they did unannounced visits when we first started and they seemed to be more frequent just before we stopped fostering. No one else came to inspect the house. The only external inspection we had was in

relation to day-care. Someone from the Care Commission came out for that inspection. That would have been before 2003, when we stopped doing day care. They checked to see what we were doing with the children and they had a look at our diaries.

Review of Care/placement

73. There were official foster carer reviews which took place every three years in front of a panel. Each review was written up and recorded. Decisions would be made as to whether you were still fit to foster; whether the number - or age - of the foster children should change, or; whether to make any other recommendations. The panels would have records of what training I had done and if they saw blanks on my record, they wouldn't be very happy. Between these reviews there were less formal reviews with my support worker. Any training needs would be identified at these reviews, and I would be advised of what training courses were recommended and encouraged to complete them. The amount of training that was done probably depended a lot on how good the support worker was. If you had a good one, which I did, they would keep you up to date with what training was available.
74. Our social worker would do reports at the end of each child's placement with us when the placement came to an end. They would document everything about the child and how we were cared for them; whether we had suitable safety equipment in the house -like stair gates, or barriers for the bed if required- and; whether the house was in good order. I had a stair gate which we had fitted at the bottom of the stairs, to prevent the children from going up the stairs unsupervised. We felt we didn't need one upstairs.
75. I suppose that, at the carers review, if my training was not thought to be up to date or inadequate, then they might have stopped me from fostering but that never happened.
76. LAC reviews were supposed to take place every three to six months to review the child who is in care. I went to the hearings. FZV was subject to a permanency order which went through the court in 2013. This permanency order meant that she could go for adoption. FZV parents and grandmother fought the permanency order at every stage. When the permanency order finally went through, the Social Work department

appealed the terms of the order because it dictated that, after adoption, the parents were entitled to have contact with FZV four times a year. The Social Work department didn't want that. The lawyer acting for the social work department came and spoke to us about it.

77. At the reviews we were given a chance to speak. They would ask us how the child was at home with us, and how the child was before and after contact with their parents. The panel always listened to what we had to say. If there was anything needing changed in relation to any of the contact meetings, we couldn't just change it ourselves. It had to go through the children's hearing system and everyone had to comply with what had been decided by the panel. The child was sometimes present at the hearings, but not if they were babies. FZV never went to any of the hearings.
78. We were never asked for our views on whether we thought a foster child was suitable for particular adoptive parents, or whether there should be contact with the birth parents once the child had been adopted. We were not privy to those discussions or decisions. We weren't asked about any child's demeanour after a contact with their parents and whether, as a result, we thought it was suitable for the child to be returned to their birth parents. They may have got that sort of information from the social worker who was supervising the contact but not from us.
79. I know that in March 2014 Elspeth Kemp (a psychologist) was going to be present during a contact meeting with FZV and her parents to observe their interactions. I believe the parents didn't turn up on that occasion.

Records

80. Every year the social work department gave us a diary. Initially - right up to 1996 or 1997 - we would record notes in there about the children. If I had more than one child there would be notes in there about both children. However, this meant that if I went to court, there were notes in there that weren't relevant and shouldn't be seen by anyone else. Because of that, we moved to individual folders for each child where we kept notes, hearings reports and anything else.

81. I had a diary for FZV where I recorded lots of things. I would record when FZV contact visits were with her parents, and I would note what she was like when she came back, and lots of other bits and pieces about her. I tried to get FZV parents to write things down before I collected her. Sometimes FZV dad wrote things about monsters and did drawings and put it in the diary, but I took it out because I thought it wasn't suitable for her to see or hear.
82. I always kept notes about the child in a file and recorded any accidents in there. We were never told to do it when I started, but as time went on we were going to study days where we were getting told what we should be recording. This included their daily routine and anything else significant that happened. Also with these notes were all the notes from the LAC reviews, and social work reports. I kept all these notes in a locked metal cabinet. No one else ever read these notes, not my social worker or the child's social worker.
83. As soon as a child left my care, the child's social worker should have come and taken these notes to go into that child's file, but they never did. When I was de-registered, I put all my notes in a black bin bag and asked my support worker what I was supposed to do with all the babies notes. She got a shock and couldn't believe they hadn't been taken away. Sharon Burns was my support worker at this time. They were then all collected.
84. I believe I was supposed to duplicate all the records I made and keep a copy for myself but I didn't. When the records were taken away in the black bag, I didn't have any left for myself. This means I don't have any records that I can refer to or fall back on. The Social Work department should have them.
85. We had a form that we filled in for an accident report. In the event of any accident, I would always call my support worker or the practice team and let them know. I would also complete a form which was just kept in my records. It was really just a piece of paper and, like all other important things, they were documented. Latterly with FZV I kept a diary for her and she would put stickers in it. That diary went with FZV when she left.

86. I took a lot of notes from the coordination meeting when FZV was leaving, but all these notes went to the social workers so I don't have them now. I had notes for any contact meetings I went to, because I had made them, but if I wasn't present I was never given any notes on how that meeting went or what was discussed.
87. When we started fostering there was no training given in relation to record keeping. There is training now, as things have improved drastically. Training in record keeping has to be mandatory, as it is essential in foster caring. Specifically there must be instruction on the completion of accident reports and all other aspects of caring for a child.

Moving Placement

88. Quite early on, when we were initially fostering, there were matching panels where potential adoptive parents were matched to children in foster care. Sometimes there were several families invited to these panels and they were all vying for one child. It was, in my view, ludicrous. I was allowed to go and meet the individual parents and - despite being told beforehand that we wouldn't be asked - we were asked by social workers who we thought the children should go to. It was awful because they appeared to take cognisance of my views and following one opinion I gave, a boy went to the couple who I thought was the most suitable and that adoption broke down. I was never asked again and I understand they do it a different way now.
89. In total we have taken in around fifty children, either as foster children or for respite care. Of that number, fourteen children were adopted, seventeen went back to the parents or kinship care and the rest went to other respite carers. Before we had FZV ten children were adopted
90. Whenever our first child left us to be adopted I followed the 'Vera Fahlberg' method which involved introducing a dolls house to the child and we played with the dolls. We called the new parents 'forever parents' and not 'your new mummy and daddy' as we used to say. This was done close to the time the child was leaving and the period of time this was played over depended on the age of the child. We laid paper footsteps

on the floor between one house and another gradually bringing the footsteps closer together explaining they were going to live with someone else. We also showed them photographs of their new house.

91. Quite recently talking books were introduced so the child actually heard the new parents voices. Sometimes it was done on a DVD which we put on the television. Both of these methods worked well, especially the talking book, where we could point out the parents in the photographs. In the meantime, we would collate information to pass on to the parents about the child's routine and anything that will help them and give the child some regularity. We even gave the new parents the child's bedlinen so that it would be a familiar smell for the child. Most of these ideas came from the Social Work department.
92. I recall that FZV got her talking book from Chris Jack on a Friday, and FZU first visit was on the Monday, so I had very little time to prepare FZV. Normally I would get the books a week or two before the first visit.
93. When FZV left, I compiled a memory box for her, as I did for most other children. This was my idea. She didn't get it straight away. Within the box contained her hospital discharge outfit, her other favourite outfits, blanket, photographs of her life from when she arrived until she left. There was other stuff I thought would be important or nice for her to look back on.
94. I wrote a letter to FZV which was put in her memory box. I still have a copy of this letter. In it I told FZV that she is a very special girl, will always hold a special place in our hearts, and that we would never forget her. I went on to talk about how she came as a tiny baby and how she developed and grew into her lovely clothes. I also told her about the things she liked to do, like jumping in puddles and looking for snails. I ended the letter by saying how much we loved her and would miss her.
95. Sometimes FZV could be naughty but she was a lovely child and always had a sparkle in her eye. FZV slept better than any other child I have ever had. She slept all night and insisted on her bedroom door being shut. She never got up through the

night and in the morning she would shout on us and tell us it was time to get up, or she would knock on her door.

96. After foster children left our care, we would always try to visit them at their house when they were with their new parents. I think it is important to do this so the child knows that we are still about and that we weren't going to go out the door and disappear on them. Otherwise, they might always wonder where we had gone and then they might worry that their new parent was going to do the same thing. The follow up visits are probably the most important part of the child going to new parents. Sometimes it is good for the child to see that we hadn't disappeared out of their lives.

Coordination meeting

97. Before a child leaves to go to adoptive parents, there is a coordination meeting. The meeting had a chairperson, the child's social worker, the child's new parents, myself and FZS and our social worker. At this meeting, gradual contact with the new parents is plotted out. For the age group of the child leaving us, it was usually about a week. It can be shortened or lengthened and tailored to suit the individual child. Every child is different and some need a lot less time than others. FZV was an unusual girl as she would have gone away with anyone else in a flash. She was very agreeable.
98. After FZU had visited FZV a few times during the coordination week, we went to visit them in Stirling. When we got there, FZU wasn't there, despite the fact I had sent her a text to say we were on our way. She arrived back five or ten minutes later, and said she had run out of toilet rolls so had to go and get some. That day FZV was supposed to come home with us, but FZU persuaded us to leave her to stay with them. FZV was fine with this and her bedroom had been done up really nice. A couple of days later, FZV wanted to stay with us. FZV was obviously very confused so that is why we shortened the coordination week.

Leaving the Care System

99. We stopped fostering when we were deregistered in November 2021. We went to a fostering panel and, on the first occasion, they couldn't unanimously agree to deregister us. The agency decision maker decided we were to be deregistered. We requested a review of this decision and a second panel took place and it was decided we were to be deregistered.

Complaints

100. If I had any complaints about anything, I would have spoken to my own worker. I never complained at any time about the local authority in relation to their procedures or practices.

Convictions

101. I did not have any criminal convictions before I became a foster carer. I do not have any criminal convictions at this time either.

Allegations of Abuse

Awareness of Abuse

102. I never saw anything that I considered to be abuse of foster children whilst they were in my, or anyone else's, foster care. I never had any occasion to report any abuse to anyone because I was never aware of anything that I considered to be abuse. Even looking back now I don't think I ever witnessed or became aware of anything that constituted abuse.

Reporting of Abuse

103. I presume there would be information in the carers agreement about who any abuse should be reported to. I think if there had been anything that I thought was abuse I would have reported it to my worker for them to deal with, but there never was.

Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no criminal conviction

104. The only complaint that was ever made against me – prior to the specific allegation by FZV [REDACTED] mother - was regarding a little girl [REDACTED]. Her mum complained to the social work in 2014. The complaint was in relation to the lack of care given to [REDACTED], by not providing a vest in [REDACTED]'s bag. It was investigated and the complaint was answered by the senior social worker. There was no action against me and nothing else happened.

Reporting to Police/Criminal Proceedings

105. Apart from the complaint made by FZU [REDACTED], I am not aware of any other complaints being made to the police regarding alleged abuse of children in my care.

Specific Allegations Against you that have been made to the Inquiry

106. After FZV [REDACTED] left our care on [REDACTED] 2015, we were supposed to be going to visit her on [REDACTED] 2015. Between these dates, FZU [REDACTED] had made the allegations against us.
107. FZU [REDACTED] in her statement, says that at the first official meeting after the matching panel which was with only myself, "One thing that struck me about that meeting, and my social worker reflected on it too, was how negative FZT [REDACTED] was about FZV [REDACTED]. That isn't what you expect from a foster carer, especially if you want to adopt a child. What FZT [REDACTED] was saying about FZV [REDACTED] the social work profile of her and the videos I had seen of FZV [REDACTED] didn't match up. For example, she said FZV [REDACTED] was a rogue and a terror. FZT [REDACTED] said it in a joking, but not really joking, way. FZT [REDACTED] asked if I was adopting on my own and said I wasn't going to manage FZV [REDACTED] because she was a hurricane."

I did not say these things and they are not true. I told FZU that FZV was on the go all the time and that sometimes she FZU would need eyes around her head. FZV was a lot of work but was a lovely child. I never painted the picture that she was horrendous. She was a child that needed a lot of attention and a lot of looking after. She wasn't a child that would sit on her bottom for any length of time. But, on saying that, she slept well.

108. The next step, as described by FZU in her statement, was to have a co-ordination meeting. This took place on 2 October 2015. She lists those present at the meeting and that is correct. FZS wasn't at this meeting, just me. FZU says *"the Chair brought up my financial status when FZT was there, which was very inappropriate and something that FZT then quizzed me about during the coordination week at her home"*.

This discussion with the Chair was in relation to the adoption allowance. I did not quiz FZU about it during the coordination week at her home. I knew about the process, and that all families get an adoption allowance. Her financial status was of no interest to me. That is not true in the slightest.

109. At the second official meeting FZU states *"[the Chairperson] suggested Chris Jack take me to the foster carer's house and introduce me on the first day. FZT flipped and said, 'Nut, nut, nut, that's not how we do it,' and banged her fists on the table. FZT was very aggressive and then she started crying and shouting. Sarah and I thought she must be finding losing FZV more difficult than other children but, in hindsight, it was because she didn't want a social worker to come to the house."*

This did not happen. A suggestion was made that Chris Jack be present at the first visit, but that has never happened in any of the previous ten adoptions I had been involved in. At the first meeting, there is never a social worker present. It is usually just the prospective parent who should meet the child and not be judged by a social worker. I felt it would be too disruptive for Chris Jack to attend at that time because FZV didn't know Chris Jack, because he hadn't been in my house for eight months. This was all that I was trying to convey at the meeting because I didn't want the first meeting to happen this way. I did not behave in the way she describes, though I did provide my opinion on how the first meeting should be conducted.

110. FZU [REDACTED] suggests that *"Whatever FZT [REDACTED] wanted, she got. FZT [REDACTED] held the social work department to ransom."*

That is, in my view, a ridiculous statement. I am not sure how I could possibly hold them to ransom. I was not pandered to as FZU [REDACTED] suggests.

111. FZU [REDACTED] first came to visit FZV [REDACTED] on the [REDACTED] and she says *"The idea was that I spend an hour with FZV [REDACTED] but I didn't get to because FZT [REDACTED] wouldn't let me. She was in my face, talking really fast and loudly. FZT [REDACTED] talked about her children. She wouldn't let me sit beside FZV [REDACTED] without her being there. FZS [REDACTED] was talking to me as well. When FZV [REDACTED] talked to me, they talked over her. I almost physically couldn't leave because I was in a corner and they were standing over me, talking at me and questioning me. It felt like an interrogation."*

All I can say about this part of FZU [REDACTED] statement, is that none of that happened.

112. FZU [REDACTED] says *"FZT [REDACTED] and FZS [REDACTED] had another foster child called [REDACTED] who was about eighteen months old. They let [REDACTED] crawl around the floor but I felt I had to spend most of my time stopping [REDACTED] from putting things in her mouth. They told me things about [REDACTED] family which I thought was inappropriate and FZS [REDACTED] said she would end up being nothing but a hoody."*

I did not talk about [REDACTED] family like that and this is not true.

113. I thought that FZU [REDACTED] and I got on well enough at that meeting, and my impression was that she had a strong personality like I have. I didn't like the way that she did what she wanted, and didn't follow the plan of the coordination meeting. Even after the first visit, FZV [REDACTED] wanted to go away with FZU [REDACTED]. That was the kind of girl she was, and she had seen other parents taking other children away.

114. FZU [REDACTED] also says that at the first meeting *"They had done FZV [REDACTED] nails and she looked beautiful. She had on new clothes. I didn't like the clothes because I thought they were inappropriate for her age. She was wearing an animal print dress. It was almost like the dress was sexy. It's my personal view and someone else might think differently. All of FZV [REDACTED] clothes seemed to be black, grey and animal print. Normally, the wee girls you see have colourful clothes."*

This was not true. I can't remember what she was wearing that day, but it may well have been an animal print dress. In my eyes it was a nice dress and not inappropriate.

115. She also said "*FZV clothes came in the standard black bag that you hear about foster children having. Her clothes had holes in them, were covered in stains and the seams were coming away. It painted a horrible picture. She came with toys but most had been given to her by her birth family.*"

This is not true. FZV mum and dad bought a lot of clothes for her but I bought some too. I often got the children's clothes from Next or from a French catalogue called La Redoute. I always got new clothes for FZV. We spent a lot more than what we got for her clothing allowance.

116. I have a number of photographs of FZV wearing bright colourful clothes including her pink Peppa Pig wellies. These show that it wasn't all dull and animal print. When she left she also took a lot of her toys with her. When children started to leave us to be adopted, we would get them to stand on a compass in our garden. The compass is like a platform. We would get them to face in the direction of where they were heading to their new home, and we took their photograph. Before FZV left we took a picture of her standing on this compass. We did this with all the children.

117. In relation to the allegation about the standard black bag with her clothes that is not true. We always bought them suitcases or proper bags to take. FZV did not have a black bag.

118. On FZU second visit I let her take FZV for a walk on her own from the house. For some reason, FZU put FZV in the car and took her away and brought her back a while later. I knew FZV wouldn't have been upset as she was that kind of girl. However, I was still FZV foster carer at that time, so it did concern me.

119. FZU says "*During the co-ordination week, FZT said they hadn't had a home visit or an unannounced home visit for about 10 years. It was an off the cuff remark in response to me making small talk and asking how often social workers visited them. I*

found that striking and surprising. FZT said to me they hadn't done any training in ten years. That is unbelievable but not surprising. If there is mandatory training for foster carers, there is no consequence if they don't do it."

I never said that to FZU. A year never went by that I didn't have some sort of training. I had training right up to 2019. That isn't true either about not having a home visit. Every liaison worker that I had visited every two to three weeks, so I wouldn't claim to have not been visited for ten years. My fostering records would speak for themselves.

120. In her statement FZU says that when she visited, "FZS described the bath time routine and I sat on a stool in the bathroom. FZV went in the bath with the baby. FZS filled the bath like a puddle and the water didn't even cover her legs. There were no bubbles or toys and the water was cold. FZV was allowed to pee in the bath. After that, FZS gave FZV her toothbrush and she dipped it the bath water and brushed her teeth."

The only comment I want to make about that is to say that it didn't happen. I was always around at bath time. The children never bathed together. FZV was always in the bath on her own, because FZV was older. There was a box of bath toys and there were bubbles in the bath. FZS wouldn't just have a puddle of cold water in the bath.

121. FZU states "FZS washed FZV with a cloth, when she could have washed herself. I had an uneasy feeling and it was horrible to watch. It was odd but I didn't say anything because it was FZS's house."

We washed FZV and that was it. We washed her face, arms and legs, I suppose. Bathing FZV that evening was not a notable event so there isn't anything else I can say about that.

122. We would have received some guidance from Social Work on bathing. The safeguarding training said that male carers shouldn't really bath females, but these were babies we were looking after so if I was out shopping or otherwise unavailable, then there wasn't another option. The way we did it, because we were joint carers, was I would undress FZV and FZS bathed her while I was looking after the baby. FZV had a bath every night about 6:30 pm. All the time, the bathroom door was open

and I would be popping in and out. I always took her out of the bath and dried and put her nappy on and dressed her in her pyjamas. FZS and I shared the routine because we were usually both there.

123. FZU says after bath time *"We went back into the living room after FZV got out of the bath and FZV was running about naked. FZS put her pyjamas on her. FZV was still running about and it was chaotic."*

That is not true because I put on her nappy and vest whilst FZU came with me and watched me do that. She also said *"FZT said she had to dry FZV hair and tried to get FZV to come to her and calm down. You could see the stress on FZT face. She started shouting at FZV grabbed her by the top of her arm, pulled her over and jammed her in-between her legs. Ruth put the hairdryer on and FZV was crying. FZT made no attempt not to tug FZV hair."*

None of this is true. I can't remember if I used a hairdryer to dry FZV hair but what FZU describes did not happen.

124. FZU in her statement says *"Considering there were only two of them in the house with FZV and another baby, it was a hectic house. The house was covered in months of dust."*

That was not true. If my house was covered in dust like she describes, my allocated worker would have noticed and said something to me. FZS and I shared the tasks of Hoovering and dusting.

125. FZU also says *"FZV bedroom was narrow and looked a bit like a cupboard. There was a single bed on one side and stacked up chairs and tables on the other side. It wasn't safe. FZT said she had meant to move the stuff out. FZV had soft toys and a night light but the room was scarce. There was nothing on the walls. It was a bit sad."*

Yes, FZV room was small but it wasn't as FZU described. FZV room had been my daughter's room previously. There were two chests of drawers in this room, and there was no other furniture piled up in there. The walls were decorated with posters about counting, and there were Peppa Pig stickers around the walls. She had some toys in there, but most were downstairs in the conservatory.

126. FZU states in relation to the coordination week *"The fourth day I went for dinner and bath time to understand FZV routine. That's when it all changed. Dinner was fine but FZV didn't eat again. It came to bath time and I was surprised to hear that FZS was responsible for all personal care, bathing, washing, changing of nappies and pull up nappies, dressing and undressing. When I was going through the adoption process, I had been told that foster carers are supposed to safe-guard themselves. For example, if you have foster carers of each gender then they should bath the same gender and the door should be ajar, or at least these tasks should be shared. FZT and FZS were doing the complete opposite which seemed strange."*

Yes, FZS did bath FZV but as I have described, I undressed her and got her ready for her bath. I was always there when she was getting bathed. Afterwards, I would put her nappy and pyjamas on. I always changed her nappies if I was there. FZS is a male carer but is allowed to change a baby's nappy. If I am at the shops, he has to be able to do it. The child cannot be left in a soiled nappy. In relation to the bathing a child of the opposite gender, my understanding is that this guidance relates more to caring for older children, not to babies and children as young as FZV. My support worker knew what the bath time arrangements were. The social workers were never present during bath time nor would have seen the night time routine. However, they know what our routine was.

127. FZU says *"On the fifth day FZV visited me at my house for lunch. FZT and FZS brought her. The visit was for a couple of hours and I had the upper hand because it was my home. It was a bit easier going and really nice to have FZV in my house. FZT interrogated me about very personal matters, for example me being single and my financial position. She still made negative comments to FZV, saying she would be spoiled. FZS and FZT couldn't be happy for her."*

I remember this day because it was a Saturday, but it wasn't the fifth day as she describes. We didn't stay for lunch on this occasion, but stayed for lunch another time we were there in 2017, when we were invited back. What she says here didn't happen.

128. FZU states that when she had FZV *"on the sixth day FZV didn't make it to the toilet once. FZT hadn't given me a change of clothes or let me know that FZV was still learning to go to the toilet on time. When we got back, I said to FZT that FZV had a wee"*

bit of pee in her pants. FZT said she would get that later. I said FZV pants were wet but FZT let her sit in wet pants."

That did not happen on the sixth day, because we went to Stirling, and FZV went away with them on the seventh day. The day FZU is talking about must have been the second day when she took her out in her car. FZV did not come back with wet pants, and what FZU has said did not happen. FZV was a little slow in her potty training and sometimes did have little accidents if I didn't remind her. If she did, I would just change her pants without any fuss. I wouldn't let her go about with wet pants.

129. On the [REDACTED] during the co-ordination wee, FZU [REDACTED] changed everything and I let her. She phoned me at 7:30 pm in the evening and told me she had a funeral the next day, so she couldn't come as arranged. She shouldn't have changed plans and disrupted the coordination week like this. I told my worker and I understand she spoke to FZU [REDACTED] worker.
130. FZU [REDACTED] appears to be a bit confused about the events of the coordination week. Her recollection of the days is very different to mine. She has muddled up when she came for lunch, because she actually came for tea she stayed on and that was when the bath "incident" was. This week was interrupted with the funeral that FZU [REDACTED] went to. It is possible we are talking about more or less the same events, but perhaps in a different order.
131. FZU [REDACTED] states that her social worker suggested that we ask if FZV [REDACTED] if could move in earlier with her, since FZV [REDACTED] was asking to. FZU [REDACTED] states "I asked FZT [REDACTED] if we could change the plan when I dropped FZV [REDACTED] off. I said I couldn't do Friday and, before I could say why, FZT [REDACTED] flipped. She started shouting at me."
- That is not true.
132. FZU [REDACTED] then states "I then said my social worker had suggested maybe FZV [REDACTED] could move in with me on Sunday instead of Tuesday. FZT [REDACTED] said FZV [REDACTED] was just a kid, you couldn't listen to what she was saying and she made things up. That seemed an odd thing to say. FZT [REDACTED] said the plan couldn't be changed just because I wanted to change it and FZV [REDACTED] wouldn't be moving in with me earlier."

That conversation did not take place. FZU would not have been able to change the plan. It was all arranged at the coordination meeting, and she wouldn't be allowed to make changes. It is up to the Chair to decide what changes can be made. At the second coordination meeting it was brought forward because we said that FZV was now wanting to be with her new mum. FZV was getting confused so we agreed that it would be better for FZV to move in earlier, on the Sunday, rather than the Tuesday which is what was originally planned. However, the conversation FZU describes did not take place and we had no power to make an agreement on when FZV would move.

133. In FZU statement she says that she requested that I didn't attend the third meeting and the Chair agreed. I never attend the third meeting because the child has normally left by then. This was after FZV had left, so I wouldn't attend this meeting anyway.

134. FZU states *"From day one, I noticed things that were worrying. There were things like FZV shouting at the cat using adult language such as, "How dare you," and "Get down from there, you're a stupid cat" and having aggressive body language when she did this.*

I never heard FZV use any such language when she was with me.

135. FZU states *"I was told FZV was fairly toilet trained during the day but not at night time. I noticed in the mornings that, perhaps understandably, FZV was too scared to come out of her room. FZV would sit in a corner and defecate in her pull up in the morning when she was awake. She wasn't incontinent at night".*

This isn't correct. She had a nappy at night and didn't have 'pull-ups' because I never used 'pull-ups'. She didn't come out her room in the morning, and would shout out our names and tell us it was time to get up then we would play a game knocking on her door. That was her routine. FZV didn't 'poo' anywhere other than in the toilet. She didn't do what FZU described at all, during our care.

136. FZU states *"FZV was out of the pull up at night within a couple of weeks of being with me. My social worker gave me some great tips on how to stop FZV being scared to come out of her room. Within a week, FZV would skip out of her room and come into my bed like a normal family would".*

When she was with us, it wasn't that she didn't want to come out of her room, this was just what she did. She shouted on us. We didn't shut her in her room.

137. FZU states 'FZV would be playing with a baby doll and, in an affectionate way, say things like, "Come here, you wee bastard." Another day, FZV said to either a doll or the cat, "Come here, little tits." Both times, I asked what she'd said and she said it again. Both times, I asked where she heard that and FZV said that was what FZS calls . She said FZS called "little tits" when he was giving her a bath."

None of this is true. She never used any language like that when she was with us and no one in my house used any language like that. If FZV has said that then I would consider it to be inappropriate but she didn't say that within my house. I can't speculate where she may have picked up this kind of language.

138. FZU said "If FZV spilled a glass of water, she would cower her head and start shaking. It was like she was waiting for a consequence and there was a fear reaction. It was the same if there was a loud noise or a gasp."

I never saw any behaviour like that. If she spilled a glass of water at my house we would just wipe it up. It would just have been treated as an accident.

139. FZU says "When FZV first moved in, her toenails hadn't been cut. The nails were curling in because they were so long."

This is not true, at all.

140. FZU states "one night I was giving FZV a bath. I can't remember the date but it is in an email. FZV had to get out to go to the toilet. I was helping her get back in the bath and she slipped because she was wet and soapy. I put my arm out and caught her, on the buttocks. My arm just touched her. FZV got really upset and started screaming. She was saying, "Mummy, you smacked my bum." It was a disproportionate reaction to what had happened. I was confused as to how FZV knew what smacking a bum was and why she was interpreting what had happened as a smack. A child of that age wouldn't know unless they had been smacked. I explained I was trying to catch her and said I was sorry. I asked if anyone had smacked her bum and she said FZT and FZS both smacked her bum."

The only thing I can say is that we never smacked her bum. The only way that FZV might have picked up on the word "smacking" - if it was from us - was probably my

fault. When she went to bed we would go upstairs and I would walk behind her and I would playfully tap her bum with my hands and say "smack a bum, smack a bum" to keep her moving along. I know I shouldn't have used the word smack even when playing but I did. It is a word I grew up with and didn't think to moderate it around FZV

141. FZU says "Chris spoke to his line manager. The FZS-FZT were interviewed on 28th October 2015 by their social worker, Lauren Moss and Eric Harper, about the concerns raised by FZV against them."

Lauren had phoned me earlier that day so I knew they were coming to speak to me about some allegations. At this meeting, I said that it might have been myself that played the bedtime game with FZV and did the 'Smack a bum' thing when she was going upstairs. During this meeting, was not mentioned. As far as I remember they got in touch with s social worker that day and she said she had no concerns about being with us. remained in our care.

142. FZU said "FZV repeatedly described being smacked or hit in the foster home by FZT and FZS. She said FZT would tug her hair and hit her on the head with the hairbrush when she was getting her hair brushed. When I asked why FZT did that, FZV said it was because she was annoying and stupid."

That is not true, I didn't do that and I would never call a child stupid or annoying.

143. FZU said "FZV said she was not allowed to come out of her room in the morning. She said she would tiptoe into FZT's bedroom, would get a smack and be sent back to her room. FZV repeatedly described her bedroom door being locked and, at my house, was terrified of the door being shut. The hall light always had to be on."

There is no lock on her door and none of what she said happened. FZV slept well throughout the night, and liked her door closed. When she woke up between 7:30 am or 8:00 am she either shouted for us or get up or knocked on her door so we knew she was up. It was like a game for FZV

144. FZU says "FZV repeatedly described being shut behind the gate at the top of the stairs. The toilet was downstairs in FZS and FZT's house and FZV wasn't allowed

out of her room or past the gate to go to the toilet. That was why she had a pull up nappy on at night."

We didn't have a stair gate at the top of our stairs, and all of that is not true.

145. FZU [REDACTED] Says "FZV [REDACTED] has a scar below her bottom lip and on her chin where she had plastic surgery for a burst lip, when she was two and half years old. This wasn't in the social work records and I wasn't told about it until I met the foster carers. I was told she was standing on a stool, washing dishes, and she slipped off and bumped her mouth".

That is exactly what happened. She wanted to help me wash the dishes. I have two sets of steps and she chose the biggest ones. She stepped backwards, fell off and her chin hit the stool. She bit through her bottom lip and there was a flap. We took her to the sick children's hospital straight away.

146. At the hospital we were told we had to go back the next day for an operation to get it sorted under general anaesthetic. A senior social worker came to sign the anaesthetic forms because it had to either be the birth parents or a social worker. He phoned FZV [REDACTED] parents and they gave consent over the phone. Her lip was glued. I filled an accident form for that which was kept in my files, but the Social Work department were also definitely made aware of this incident. There will be a Social Worker's signature on the medical consent forms.

147. FZU [REDACTED] says "That's not the story FZV [REDACTED] tells. She is very distressed and unclear about what happened and gives different versions of where and when it happened. One time, she said it was outside in the garden on a hard bit of pavement and she was pushed. Another time she said it was in the kitchen and she was pushed."

None of these happened. She fell off the step in the kitchen.

148. FZU [REDACTED] says "In November 2015, FZV [REDACTED] started to meet some of my close friends. One of my male friends came to meet her and brought her a big teddy. FZV [REDACTED] was excited to meet him. I left them in the living room while I made coffee and I heard my friend shouting for me. I ran back in. FZV [REDACTED] was standing in front of him, had pulled down her pants and leggings and had bent over to display her bum to him. My friend panicked and didn't know what to do."

I never saw any behaviour like that when she was with us. I never had any male adults in my house, just my children. She never displayed this behaviour when she was with us. I

can't think she would ever have been anywhere with us that she would have picked up on this sort of behaviour.

149. FZU [REDACTED] says *"In January 2016 when FZV [REDACTED] was four years old, the nursery teacher at FZV [REDACTED] nursery asked to speak to me. She said there was an incident where FZV [REDACTED] grabbed a little boy in his privates, over his clothes"*

I never experienced FZV [REDACTED] doing anything like that to any other children or saw any behaviour like that.

150. FZU [REDACTED] says *"FZV [REDACTED] said to me that FZS [REDACTED] came into her room, did a 'roly-poly' on her and it really hurt."*

I have no idea what she means by that. FZS [REDACTED] wouldn't be in her room and FZS [REDACTED] didn't get her out of the bed in the morning. It was normally me, or she came out the room herself when we opened the door.

151. FZU [REDACTED] says *"As we got into 2016, the behaviours continued. FZV [REDACTED] talked about weird things. For example, she said to me she was going to stab me in the bum hole or she was going to get a fork and stab me in the heart. FZV [REDACTED] talked a lot about monsters. I wondered what she had been watching on TV at the foster carers. FZV [REDACTED] was terrified of the police and said the police would come and get her if she was naughty."*

FZV [REDACTED] never talked about monsters when she was with FZS [REDACTED] and I, and we never used the police as a threat against her. She never said anything about stabbing and I have no idea where she would have picked up on the language she is said to have used. It was definitely not from her time in our care.

152. FZU [REDACTED] says *"I noticed that when we were in the company of men, FZV [REDACTED] was overly touchy and affectionate with them. Examples are FZV [REDACTED] sitting on men's knees when she doesn't know the man, trying to put her hands in the man's pockets to feel their privates or putting her hand down their shirt."*

I never saw any behaviour like that. FZV [REDACTED] wasn't strange with men or women, but she wouldn't have behaved affectionately like that. She would be comfortable sitting on FZS [REDACTED] knee.

153. FZU [REDACTED] says *"We went on a trip to Butlins and stopped overnight at my male cousin's home. FZV [REDACTED] wanted to sit on his knee. She was crawling all over him and tried to feel his genitals."*
Nothing like that ever happened when FZV [REDACTED] was with us.
154. FZU [REDACTED] says *"In late 2016, FZV [REDACTED] complained about having sore and itchy privates. I took her to our General Practitioner. The GP didn't want to examine her unnecessarily and said it was common for girls FZV [REDACTED] age to get vaginal thrush because their hygiene isn't always great. The GP asked if FZV [REDACTED] had a history of sexual abuse and I said no."*
FZV [REDACTED] never complained to me of anything like that. I never had to take her to see our GP for anything like that, and I never had to put any cream on her for any other issues like that. FZV [REDACTED] had several visits from health visitors.
155. FZU [REDACTED] says *"When FZV [REDACTED] started school, some things started to change. One day after school, we were watching TV. FZV [REDACTED] mounted my leg and rubbed her vagina on it in a sexualised way."*
I never saw FZV [REDACTED] do anything like that. I have heard from a friend about a little girl they looked after who behaved like this, and it was passed off as being normal self-soothing behaviour. However, FZV [REDACTED] never did this in my house or anywhere else in my company.
156. FZU [REDACTED] says *"FZV [REDACTED] was also having night sweats and would be soaked through during the night, as if she'd been in the shower."*
This never happened to FZV [REDACTED] when she was with us.
157. FZU [REDACTED] says *"The GP said she would refer FZV [REDACTED] to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service because there might be some night terrors going on."*
I was never aware of FZV [REDACTED] ever having any night terrors.
158. FZU [REDACTED] talks about the reunion with FZS [REDACTED] and myself after FZV [REDACTED] had been with her for a year. She says *"We met them in a park. The FZS-FZT [REDACTED] told me not to worry and there were lots of false allegations against foster carers."*
I believe that there can be false allegations against foster carers, but I don't remember saying such a thing to her. I wouldn't have said this to her. I would have had no reason to

say this. We had not been subject to any allegations ourselves, and FZU was not a foster carer.

159. FZU went on to say *"They told me who they had fostered since and who they had now, including two sisters who were older than they normally have, about three or four years old. Normally they only fostered babies. The fostering of the sisters hadn't worked out. I thought that was strange."*

This would have been the sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We might have said we had them but didn't have them anymore. This was because the oldest girl didn't like men of FZS age, so I couldn't leave him alone with these girls. This was the only placement which we regret taking. We had not been provided with the information in advance, as it was an emergency placement.

160. FZU says *"we met them that day and another day for lunch in a family pub but then didn't want to see them again."*

FZS and I saw them four times. One was at my house and I saw her with my sister a further time, so I don't know why she is saying it was only twice and doesn't mention the other visits. In the meantime, she sent me many photographs of FZV and kept me up to date with what FZV was doing. In April 2018, the last time we saw her, FZU told me she was going into the Western General hospital to have an operation on her back and asked if we would be able to help her afterwards. We agreed and told her just to get in touch with us, but she never asked for our help and never got in touch again.

161. FZU says *"FZV referral to CAMHS was in 2017 but the first appointment came in 2018 when FZV was six years old. I went with FZV and met Emma Stockton. She was a mental health worker who had trained as a social worker. I went back for a further two appointments and took a lot of the paperwork which I have, including the email with the responses from FZS and FZT about the earlier allegations made by FZV. Emma read the email and said she was concerned because there were a lot of red flags about what FZS was saying. For example, there was an excuse for FZS to give FZV a bath. It was at the third appointment in July 2018, that Emma said she thought FZV had been sexually abused."*

I have never worked with Emma Stockton and presume she works in the West. It was not until July 2019 when Neil Bruce, the senior social worker, contacted us where we were told there was a sexual component to the allegations. Kerry Higgins and Sharon Burns came to my door and they took the child we had at the time out of my care. That was [REDACTED]. We were subsequently contacted on the telephone by Police Inspector Cooper to arrange for us to go to the police station and be interviewed.

162. FZU [REDACTED] says "we moved house in March 2019 when FZV [REDACTED] was seven years old. After we moved, the really horrible stuff started happening and FZV [REDACTED] started disclosing sexual abuse in detail. FZV [REDACTED] has told me in the last few months that, during the co-ordination week, FZS [REDACTED] told her if she told me anything, he would come to the house in the middle of the night, break in, stab me in the heart and kill me and FZV [REDACTED]."

All I can say is this didn't happen. During this coordination week I spoke with FZV [REDACTED] about her new mum, where she was going and what was happening, but FZS [REDACTED] never had any conversations with her without my presence.

163. FZU [REDACTED] says "At school, they had a visit from the National Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) to educate them on our private parts, why they are private and that people shouldn't touch them. This was a turning point for FZV [REDACTED] because, to her, it was bizarre that private parts are private. FZV [REDACTED] became uncharacteristically quiet for a few days and I was worried about her."

I never had any chats with FZV [REDACTED] when she was with me about private parts being private, or other boundaries. We probably got some training about teaching children about their private parts, but this was for older children. FZV [REDACTED] was still only three when she left us, so we wouldn't have said anything to her about that.

164. FZU [REDACTED] says "FZV [REDACTED] made comments about men which were sexualised. For example, she said men on TV were handsome but they were all middle-aged men and older. It was as if she was sexually attracted to these men."

She never said anything like that when she was in our care.

165. FZU [REDACTED] says "I was tucking FZV [REDACTED] into bed. This was the first detailed disclosure but FZV [REDACTED] was talking about it as if it was a dream. She said she'd had bad dreams and didn't want to go to sleep. The bad dreams were about men making her lick their bums. I asked who was making her do that and she said her friend [REDACTED] I said, "Oh really, [REDACTED] was

making you?" and FZV said no, it was FZS and he had a really hairy willy. A child that age is not going to dream about that out of their imagination."

I can't explain why she would be saying these things.

166. FZU says "On 4 June 2019, FZV was feeding her rabbits and asked me if boy rabbits had willies. She repeated that FZS had a really hairy willy. She said, "You can't even see his willy, it's that hairy and it's grey."

There is no comment I can make about that. She never used such language when she was with me.

167. FZU says "FZV said when she was having a bath, FZS took his clothes off, came into the bath and peed in the bath. She said he put runny soap on her hair that came down onto her face and into her eyes. FZV said she didn't like FZS "

There is nothing I can say in response to that. FZS would not have had the opportunity to do this outwith my presence.

168. FZU says "On 3 July 2019, we were in the car. Subsequently, a lot of disclosures took place in the car where we didn't have eye contact. FZV said she had a day dream of a speech bubble with FZS face in it. She said it was a warning FZS was going to come and get her. FZV said FZS made her angry and that he made her unconscious. She told me unconscious meant you felt uncomfortable and weird."

We never had a conversation with FZV about the meaning of the word unconscious.

169. FZU says "The police interviewed FZV on 9 July 2019 and, after they left, she said that FZS had touched her privates in a bad way. FZV demonstrated by pulling her trousers up really hard at the groin area. She said FZS would pull on her privates really hard and it really hurt."

I can't say anything in response to what FZV has said but it's not true. It didn't happen. There was no opportunity for this to happen outwith my presence.

170. FZU says "On 11 July 2019, we were in the car and FZV asked me to play a song that the NSPCC taught them in school. It's called The Pantasaurus Song and is about a dinosaur teaching you that what is in your pants is private. FZV asked me if it was okay that she saw my privates. I said it was okay when we got changed but it wasn't okay to

touch someone's privates without asking. FZV said it was okay for me to touch hers, if it was sore. I said it was if she needed cream but I would have to ask her first.

171. FZV then told me that FZS hurt her privates. She said FZS and FZS cousin touched her privates, together, and FZS told his cousin to touch her vagina. She said FZS cousin touched her vagina and it really hurt. FZV then said that FZS cousin told FZS to touch "where her baby comes out of". She said FZS pushed in with his fingers hard and it really hurt. FZV told me she cried and they told her to go to bed, nothing happened and stop whining. She said FZS cousin came round to FZS house a lot and this happened more than once."

FZS doesn't have a cousin, or any other adult male who visited the house. FZV didn't say anything like this to me when she was with me.

172. I know from FZU statement that FZV was interviewed by the police on 9 July 2019. FZU says 'FZV was able to tell the police what she had told me. She said FZS cousin was called [REDACTED] but I wasn't convinced and felt she thought she had to say a name. FZV couldn't describe him because he always wore a hoody and kept the hood up.'

The name [REDACTED] doesn't mean anything to me. I know my own daughter was asked about this too, when the police interviewed her. We don't know anyone called [REDACTED]. The police and social work interviewed both my sons and my daughters and in fact the police told them a lot more about the allegations than I was ever told. I never even knew the allegations were about FZV until Inspector Cooper phoned to arrange the police interview.

173. FZU says "On 13 July 2019, FZV was quiet and tired. She said she couldn't sleep because she couldn't get it out of her head. She demonstrated by taking her pants down, saying FZS took his trousers and pants down and grabbed her. She said she tried to get away from him but couldn't. She said he put his willy in her bum cheeks and she demonstrated a thrusting action. FZV said he was slow and then went fast, it was really sore and she couldn't get away. Then, FZV said FZS told her to go to bed, say nothing happened and be quiet about it to FZT. This happened when she was watching children's television and FZT was out for a walk. FZV told me that she told FZT what happened because she was upset and crying. FZT said she was talking rubbish and she was to go to bed."

I did not have any conversation like this with FZV. FZV never came to me and told me she was sore down there. I never went out for a walk and left her alone with FZS

174. FZU says "On 24 July 2019, the night before the second police interview, I checked with FZV that she was still okay to talk to the police. FZV repeated what she had disclosed already but in more detail. She told me FZS cousin came into her room and kept touching her vagina. She said FZS and his cousin took turns, in a pattern. FZV put her hands over her vagina and they pulled her hands away."

There were no male visitors to my house.

175. FZU says "FZV said FZS hurt her bum while watching TV every day. She said he went slow then fast until he was "done", when he would "wipe the goo and walk away". FZV said the goo was on her bum and she knew when he was finished because he would walk away. FZS said to her nothing happened and she wasn't to tell anyone. When she told FZT FZT said she would have seen it happen and FZV must be making it up." This didn't happen. Not at all. She never used language like that when she was with me.

176. FZU says "On 9 December 2019, FZV began to disclose more in terms of physical abuse. She described FZS picking her up by the hips, throwing her in the air and landing on a table. This happened in the living room. FZV described the pattern of the table and what it was made of. FZV told me FZS threw her against the wall in her bedroom. She said she had shower gel deliberately put in her face and eyes at bath time because she was being naughty. FZV said baby spoons were forced in her mouth and throat to make her eat. She didn't say which of the FZS-FZT had done that." All of that is not true. I don't know why FZV would be saying these things.

177. FZU says "FZV made a lot of disclosures in December 2019, when she was almost eight years old. She said FZS had slapped her on the face all the time. She repeated that FZS had thrown her against the wall in her bedroom when she was naughty and against the "flat wall". FZV repeated that FZS had done a roly poly on her." I never witnessed any such behaviour.

178. FZU says "FZV said FZT shouted and threw plates in the kitchen. One time the plate smashed on the floor. FZT made FZV sweep it up with her bare hands and

withheld the dustpan and brush from her. FZV cut her hand and has a scar on the palm of her hand from that."

That is not true. I can't remember if FZV cut her hand at any time. If she did, it didn't happen the way she has said. I did not do what she has said. If FZV had cut her hand, this is the sort of thing that would be recorded in her notes on an accident form. However, I don't have her notes anymore and I can't remember if I completed an accident form for an injury to her hand.

179. FZU says *"Since I last spoke to the police, FZV has disclosed that FZS performed oral sex on her. There are other disclosures which are of the same nature as previous disclosures but slightly different. FZV has begun to disclose psychological and verbal abuse. When I sent FZV the photo album before adoption, FZS and FZT said her new mummy was ugly and fat. They said I had blue eyes and she had brown, so everyone would know I wasn't her real mummy. After I met FZV the first day, FZS and FZT said to her that I was never going to love her."*

That is not true. I did not have a conversation with FZV about eye colour. I have four children and some of them have blue eyes and some have brown eyes, so what she has says doesn't correlate. I know the biological concepts, so know what she says isn't true. I never said anything to her like that. I had no reason to

180. FZU says *"FZV describes sexual abuse and rape by FZS as part of her daily routine. She has described how she doesn't like having catarrh in her throat because it reminds her of FZS goo. She says he would often insert his penis down her throat and push it back and forward until she couldn't breathe and then his goo would come out in her throat. FZV says when he did this she thought she was going to die. She would choke on the goo and gasp for breath. FZV has a continuous tick now of clearing her throat and nose."*

There is nothing I can say in response to that. FZV did not have a tic when she was with us.

181. FZU says *"FZV describes FZS being heavy and lying on her when he put his penis in her vagina. She says she could not move or breathe and that FZS was so heavy that it hurt."*

I can't say anything in response to that.

182. FZU [REDACTED] says "FZV [REDACTED] describes being force fed with a baby spoon on a regular basis. The spoon would be shoved down her throat. At other times FZS [REDACTED] and FZT [REDACTED] would not bother giving her food. She was always hungry."

I presume she means little plastic spoons, but we certainly didn't force feed her or shove anything down her throat. It's not true. Neither is the fact that she was always hungry.

183. FZU [REDACTED] says "FZV [REDACTED] has been having difficulties with toileting and bowel problems and has been seeing a paediatrician at the hospital for this. Since this has been ongoing she has disclosed that FZS [REDACTED] would not let her go to the toilet and she would then defecate on the floor. FZS [REDACTED] would get angry and hit her and shout at her. He would lift her and throw her down on the toilet seat with no child seat. At other times when she needed to defecate she would be put on the toilet without a child seat and would fall down the toilet and land in her own faeces. Then FZS [REDACTED] would hit her. She said at other times he would shove objects that she describes like sticks up her anus and tell her it was to stop the poo coming out. She said this hurt a lot."

I have no idea what she is talking about and what she has said is not true. We do have a toilet seat and a potty, but what she has said is not true. I was always around when she went to the toilet.

184. FZU [REDACTED] says "FZV [REDACTED] and I were writing Christmas cards in December 2019. I asked FZV [REDACTED] if she wanted to write a card to anyone and she said FZT [REDACTED] FZV [REDACTED] said FZT [REDACTED] wasn't bad all the time and sometimes she was nice. FZV [REDACTED] then said FZS [REDACTED] hurt people with his willy. I asked what she meant and FZV [REDACTED] said they would have bath time and she would run up the stairs because it wasn't bath time, it was, 'willy hurting time'. FZV [REDACTED] said FZS [REDACTED] put his willy in the baby's bum and then demonstrated, with a dolly, FZS [REDACTED] raping the baby. She made a facial expression that could only be described as an erotic expression. She said the baby was crying and that FZS [REDACTED] did this to the babies, turn by turn. She said this happened a lot."

That is not true. I don't know why she would be saying these things about FZS [REDACTED] FZV [REDACTED] would hardly ever be left alone with FZS [REDACTED]. If I was out shopping I would take FZV [REDACTED] with me or she would be at nursery. FZS [REDACTED] wasn't left alone as often as FZU [REDACTED] is saying and none of what she is saying is true.

185. FZU [REDACTED] says "FZV [REDACTED] went for a forensic examination and gave a blood test. She was so brave. Sadly, the report was definitive. It said the examination found signs of sexual

abuse and penetration and FZV had damage to her vagina and anal canal. Chris Jack explained to me that it was rare to get a definitive report and the examinations were normally inconclusive."

There is nothing I can say in response to this. I have no idea how FZV could have sustained these injuries. She never complained about soreness in these areas when I was looking after her and I never saw any visible injuries. In the time she was with us a social worker assistant came and took FZV for contact visits and this worker never found anything wrong or reported anything wrong with FZV.

186. FZU says "After the results of FZV forensic examination came back, I asked the police why FZS hadn't been arrested because they had all this evidence from FZV and a positive forensic test. The police explained the law about corroboration and said they couldn't arrest him without corroboration. They said if FZV was in England FZS would be arrested and charged. I think, and the police and social workers think, that the reason FZS and FZT only fostered pre-verbal children was that the abuse couldn't be corroborated. The reason they didn't want FZV to be adopted and tried to put me off adopting her was because she was older and she could talk."

There is nothing I can say in response to this.

187. FZU says "A few months after FZV third interview, Chris Jack had told me that was displaying behaviours of the same nature as FZV and the little girl who was removed because of FZV statement, had a forensic examination which wasn't as definite as FZV but was questionable, as in maybe she had been abused."

There is nothing I can say to this.

188. FZU says "On reflection FZT and FZS were behaving in an obstructive manner as if they were not ready for FZV to leave despite being experienced at having children move on. The dates of the co-ordination week had had to be changed and Chris had had to go out to see them because they weren't happy about the dates. The dates had been moved back several times because FZS and FZT weren't prepared."

That is not true. We have no say of when coordination meetings will be done. This is all decided at the coordination meetings.

189. FZV was a happy little girl but had no concept of danger. FZV had to be watched all the time. When we were out walking we had to keep reins on her almost up until

she left us. Without reins she would just run and keep running. We had been told by the speech and language expert not to shout on her to come back we were told to just shout 'Stop'. I told all of this to FZU. We tried to tell her not to run off but she would often just do her own thing because I am not sure it registered in her head. She would also go away with anybody. She had no idea about 'stranger danger'. This was all documented and passed to FZU. FZV was supposed to get a follow up with the speech and language expert after she left me but I don't know if that happened or not.

Contact after adoption

190. FZV left us on 2015. I received a letter from FZU but it is not dated and I am unsure exactly when we received it. It was possibly early 2016. In this letter FZU tells us that FZV is doing brilliantly, and was gaining weight and thriving. She says that initially she was a bit unsettled but is now obviously missing both FZS and I. She thanked me for the photo albums I had compiled and the memory box. She goes on to talk about all the different activities she was doing, had made lots of friends and was looking forward to starting nursery. She says that FZV talks about us all the time. I replied to this letter.
191. FZU wrote a further letter on 24 October 2016, which I also still have. This was a year after FZV moved in with them. She says that FZV is finally experiencing a healthy loss for us both, something she expected much sooner. FZV was apparently expressing this loss well and was missing us both deeply and has expressed on a number of occasions that she would like to visit us which FZU thought would be a good idea. She says that FZV was confused for a while because she was still having contact with her birth parents and had been through a tough time. FZU then asked if she could come and visit realising that it might be difficult for us because of the time that had passed, and the allegations that had been made and her refusal to see us both until that point. She said that FZV now wanted to see us. FZU said she would understand if we declined, and asked me to call her to discuss.

192. After the second letter from FZU I contacted my social worker and sought advice from her. She got in touch with Sarah Goulding, FZU social worker, who worked for St Andrew's Adoption Centre. Her social worker knew nothing about FZU letter to us.

Police investigation

193. The social workers, Sharon Burns and Kerry Higgins, came to my door in July 2019 and told me that allegations had been made and - who was in our care - was to be removed to go to respite carers. Nicky Hunter was worker and she came and took away. That was on the 2019. They left us leaflets which were from Edinburgh Council, and related to allegations being made against carers. I wasn't aware of who the allegations related to or what they were. Social workers would not tell us.
194. Neil Bruce, the head of the Children and Families Unit subsequently visited. The first time he came, he was looking for contact details for our children and grandchildren. He told us that an allegation had been made and that it would be advisable for the grandchildren not to be left solely in our care without them (our children) being present. We were both very upset because we didn't know what the allegation was and we were supposed to be looking after our grandchildren the following day. We were advised to make other arrangements for their care. We did as we were told. It was on the second visit on 7 August 2019 that Neil Bruce and Kerry Higgins told me that the allegations against us were of a sexual nature, but that was all they could tell us. They said they would keep in touch.
195. I tried to contact Neil Bruce on 9 August to say I was upset that updated information on the allegation had been given to my children before I had been told. I couldn't get in touch with him. Kerry Higgins occasionally kept in touch with us after that.
196. Inspector Cooper contacted me on the 3 October 2019 and said the allegations were in relation to FZV. That was the first I knew about it being FZV. He said he

wanted to arrange interviews with us, and I told him I would need to seek advice from my lawyer first. We were subsequently interviewed separately on the 14 October 2019 at Livingston police station and were released without charge. We were told we shouldn't hear any more from the police and we didn't.

197. Our lawyer kept us up to date with what was happening. On 29 September 2020, I received a letter to say that the enquiry was still ongoing and that a PC Caballero was interviewing other children who had been in our care. On 9 March 2021, I spoke to our lawyer and he said that he had spoken to the Child Protection Unit at Fettes and they advised him that the enquiry was now complete; that no charges will be brought in respect of all the allegations; that there would be no proactive enquiries undertaken by the police, and the case was now closed.
198. We asked for a meeting with Neil Bruce and Sharon Burns and they tried to persuade us to retire. We didn't want to retire at that time, as we wished to wind down our role as foster carers gradually, on our own terms, rather than have the allegations end our careers. We asked if we still had jobs as foster carers. Neil said that we didn't and that we would have to be deregistered. He said he was going to recommend that we were deregistered. We were really upset at this.
199. There was a panel held in September 2021 and the three panel members said they wanted more information before they would deregister us. Unfortunately the decision maker in this process was the representative from the agency and she said we were deregistered.
200. We appealed against this decision and there was another panel on 5 November 2021, but we knew as soon as it started that their intention was to deregister us. The decision was to deregister us and there was nothing we could do as this was the appeal. The only good thing, although it didn't matter to us, was we still received the payments due for [REDACTED] and we received financial support all the way through until we were deregistered.

Helping the Inquiry

201. I think the support I had when working as a foster carer was good, but as soon as the allegations were made, it stopped. I think there should be extra support made available to foster carers during this very difficult and upsetting period. We felt we were left in limbo a lot of the time. The Fostering Network, which was the agency we used, and their lawyers, were brilliant with us because they believed in us. The process was just so incredibly slow. Every time I tried to contact my social worker I just kept getting told that they couldn't tell me anything.
202. I can't think of anything to say on how to protect children in the future because it never happened in our house in the first place.

Final comments

203. FZV was away from us for almost the same number of years that we had her in our care. We were not there whilst she was in someone else's care, so we cannot speculate as to whether some of the things that have been described may have happened elsewhere. I would like to categorically state that we did not do anything that was alleged in the statement of FZU.

Other information

204. Day-care doesn't exist anymore, which is a real shame as it prevented a lot of children from having to go into foster care. It was stopped years ago.

205. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

FZT

206. Signed.....

207. Dated..... 26 09-22 .

