

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FHV

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is FHV and my maiden name was FHV. My date of birth is 1938. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born in The Southern General Hospital, Glasgow. I have an RSA (Royal Society of Art) in shorthand and typing but no qualifications in child care. I also have an O'Grade in Spanish. When I left school I went to Langside College night classes and obtained RSA 1 + 2. When I left college I worked in the shipping industry with the Spanish and Icelandic Consulates.
3. I left shortly after I got married to FHW in 1960 who worked as a joiner throughout his working life. I worked in the office until six weeks before my daughter was born in 1961 to become a full-time mother. I have two other children who are who was born in 1963 and who was born in 1966. I remained a housewife until was six in 1972.
4. An advert in a newspaper lead to me getting a job as a secretary in the office I had previously worked and I had four typists under me. I stayed there until 1973 when I got a job with I was there for two years when I stopped in 1975 to become a foster mum which I did until 1990.

5. After that I did voluntary work in a community centre in Govan, Glasgow. Through that I was offered a job with [REDACTED] School in Govan helping children in community education.
6. I was a foster mother from 1975 till 1990 which was when the youngest of the three children, [REDACTED] turned sixteen. He wanted to be a chef and also did other jobs and continued to stay with us after he joined the army.

Becoming a Foster Carer

7. I became a foster mum because the mum of the children concerned had died. Their father, [REDACTED] was my brother. The children went into care and me and my family visited them for about a year, sometimes taking them out, and then my husband suggested we take care of them. We discussed this with our own children and they were happy, even enthusiastic, for the other three children to become part of our family.
8. The three children were [REDACTED] who was born in 1969 and who was born [REDACTED] but became [REDACTED] (my brother [REDACTED] wasn't her father. [REDACTED]'s mother had a relationship with another man during a period of separation from [REDACTED] from which [REDACTED] was born), [REDACTED] FHX [REDACTED] who was born in 1972 and [REDACTED] who was born in 1974. I had also applied to take their older brother [REDACTED] who was born in 1965 but he stayed with his maternal grandmother who had initially, I think, looked after the children before they went into care.
9. We spoke to the people in Lochgarry Children's Home in Clevedon Drive where the children were and they gave us the necessary information about how to foster the children. Mrs Little from social services came to see us. I didn't get any advice but Mrs Little said our house was suitable and also arranged for us to get a spare bunk-bed.
10. I then got a letter from Crookston Social Work Department saying I could pick up the children from the home. I do not know what, if any, checks were carried out about me and my family but the whole process took several months. This was in 1975, I think

██████ I had actually stopped smoking so as I would have extra money for the children coming into our home.

11. The foster people told me about a foster parent's meeting held regularly in Crookston Hall and I attended it once a week for quite a while and spoke to other foster parents. The three children settled in to their new home quite quickly, probably because we had been visiting them for so long.

Training

12. We were not given any advice about fostering, not even booklets, and there was no training whatsoever. I had come from a big family so increasing my family to six didn't pose a problem for me.

Foster Care Arrangements

13. There was a social worker, whose name I don't recollect, who came to check up on the children to make sure they settled in properly. I myself didn't receive any support from social workers but, to me, I was taking in my brother's children rather than fostering. My actual status when fostering the children didn't enter my head. I wouldn't have been interested in fostering other children, it was only my family I wanted to take care of.

Financial Support

14. I didn't receive any payments for six months due to papers concerning the children going missing. I only ever got an allowance for the children of around £2 per week per child. I wasn't paid anything else to look after the children. Because I was a relative I wasn't sure if I was due any sort of allowance and when I did apply for it it was backdated six months.
15. For me it had never been about the money. I just thought it would be better for me to take the children rather than leave them in a care home. I applied for the allowance

because someone told me I was entitled to it. I never considered whether or not the allowance was sufficient, to me the children just became part of the family.

16. The fostering allowance was paid into my bank account. I think there was also a clothing allowance and a holiday allowance which we had to apply for. The clothing allowance was spent on the children. I know that when the children were older I took them abroad and I got an allowance to help out with that.
17. While the social workers arranged for us to get a set of bunkbeds when the children arrived, they didn't give us blankets or anything else and we even got the pram and cot for young [REDACTED] ourselves from relatives. I didn't consider the possibility of social workers helping us more as I was happy with what I had.

Your Foster Home Household

18. We stayed at [REDACTED] Glasgow which was a safe area for children to play away from traffic. It's a 3-bedroom maisonette house with twelve houses on the landing, six at number [REDACTED] and six at number [REDACTED]. The living room and kitchen were downstairs with the bedrooms and bathroom upstairs.

Placement Preparation

19. I couldn't comment about how the children were prepared for moving in with us. To me it was just young children, who were related to me, coming to stay with us and getting out of a care home. The children called us mum and dad though they called my husband "Big Dad" and their own father "Wee Dad".

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

20. My daughter [REDACTED] had a bedroom of her own. Social workers suggested we put two sets of bunkbeds in another room where my sons [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] used one set while [REDACTED] and FHX slept in the other. [REDACTED] was just a baby and slept in a cot in our room

until he was 3 1/2 . After that [REDACTED] and FHX moved into our room and me and my husband moved down to a bed settee in the living room while [REDACTED] moved in with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Washing and Bathing

21. Friday night was bath night for the girls and it was Saturday night for the boys. I would help bath the girls when they were younger then get them into their pyjamas and give them supper.

Clothes and Shoes

22. I bought the children clothes twice a year for summer and winter. What I got from the clothing allowance wouldn't have covered what we bought the children but I never thought of that as a problem.

Mealtimes

23. I would sit with the younger children at mealtimes because often the older children would have part-time jobs or studying and would be eating at different times. I always enjoyed cooking and had a well-stocked freezer. If the children didn't like something they would swap it with each other though sometimes I would find that they had hidden maybe some vegetables they didn't like.

Chores

24. The children rarely had to do any chores. When they came to stay with us I was always in the house for about the first six years. I had to go into hospital in 1985 with a back problem and was laid out in my bed for a while so the children would help out with small jobs. They never did any cooking as my mum came up and helped out. They didn't do any of the ironing and I did all the washing of the clothes.

Leisure Time

25. The children could watch TV and they always had lots of books and comics to read. They played all around the [REDACTED] and had bikes that I bought for them. Their mum's parents bought their first bikes, tricycles, but I bought them bigger bikes as they grew up. As they got older, at about sixteen, they would go to the young discos especially The Arches just off Argyle Street in Glasgow.
26. The boys were in the Scouts and the girls played netball in a local community centre. From the centre we learned about The Washington Arts Centre where I took the girls on a Saturday. There [REDACTED] learned classical guitar and [REDACTED] also had music lessons. The children also learned to ski and went as part of a group to the Cairngorms.
27. My husband gave the children pocket money which I think was age related. When I started work again the children would help out with emptying the bins or doing the dishes and things like that so I opened bank accounts for them and put money in every month. They would take money out of these accounts for holidays and to buy presents for friends at Christmas and on birthdays.

Trips and Holidays

28. We took the children to Scarborough, The Isle of Man, Morecambe and Lancaster. We would also go to Largs and my husband would take the boys fishing. I would take the girls berry picking from which we would make jam.

Schooling

29. [REDACTED] had just started school so I had to make arrangements with the local primary for her. I had no background information about how [REDACTED] had got on in her previous school but she settled into her new school just fine. The children went to St Saviour's Primary then to St Gerard's Secondary. From Primary School I would pick them up and bring them home for lunch.

30. The children seemed to get on well at school, especially FHX worked hard at school but not so much, he wasn't good at concentrating. I would help them with their homework which they did at the table in the living room, usually after dinner.

Healthcare

31. The children got an annual health check. I would get a letter to remind me of them but though I took them along for these check-ups I wouldn't see any of the reports. wasn't a well-child and needed a lot of attention when young due to bronchial problems. Sometimes in the morning I would hear a wheeze from him and would take him to the doctor.
32. The annual check was checking height, weight and testing their chests. This was with the family doctor, Dr Duff in Govan Health Centre. The children got their teeth examined at school. I wasn't required to keep any notes of the children's medical records as the doctor sent reports to the social work.

Christmas and Birthdays

33. The children got all sorts of gifts at Christmas. My sisters and brothers would also buy them presents and we would have to hide the presents in my brother's house to prevent the children seeing them before Christmas morning. Christmas was celebrated in my house and my sister and my mother would join us for dinner. When it was each child's birthday we always bought a cake for them and celebrated their birthday.

Discipline

34. I came from a family of seven children and learned from that. If two of the children were fighting we would talk to both and listen to both sides of the story. We had a naughty chair in the living room but as the children got older we would perhaps ground them. As young children we never had to discipline them as they really were good kids.

Relationship with Foster Children

35. I think we had a great relationship with the children. They were part of the family and treated that way and I never once regretted taking them in. I would give them hugs and kisses regularly and basically I treated them just the way I did with my own children. Even after [REDACTED] and FHX [REDACTED] left they would come back to visit and I would sometimes babysit for FHX [REDACTED] wee one.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

36. I regularly took the children to see their mum's parents so as they would stay in touch with that side of their family. Their maternal grandparents didn't visit us as they didn't like us having the children at first but I don't know why. I think the children stayed with them before being taken into care. Their dad remarried and they would go to see him most Saturdays.

Siblings

37. The children's older brother [REDACTED] stayed with their maternal granny and he would come and visit them now and again. I got on well with [REDACTED] and he was always very pleasant when he visited. He worked in a circus for three years then spent ten years with The Foreign Legion.

Visitors

38. The lady who looked after the children in Lochgarry Children's Home came and visited the children from time to time. This was more about her just visiting them rather than checking up on them. I can't remember her name.

Review of Care/placement

39. The social workers visited only very occasionally if something happened like when [REDACTED] was in hospital. When they did come they would just sit and have a cup of tea

and could see that the children were doing well. At the annual review it was only me who attended, not the children. At these reviews the panel would say that they had received and reviewed various reports and that they were happy with the children's progress. I thought these reviews were important for the continual progress of the children.

40. The social workers weren't really involved with me and I just got on with living life as a family. One day a social worker, a nice lady, came to the house and said she was our social worker and spoke of us having five previous social workers for the children. I had never met any of them. The lady said she now wanted the reviews to be every three months instead of annually.
41. I think there were two or three three-monthly reviews before I questioned this and objected to it because, for me, organising things for these reviews required a lot of toing and froing for both me and the children between talking to the schools and talking to the doctor to organise reports. Because of this the social worker agreed to keep the reviews annual. I was never told why they had considered making the reviews every three months.

Records

42. I didn't keep any records nor was I asked to. I didn't see any need for them, the children were just part of the family.

Leaving the Care System

43. ■■■ left us when she turned sixteen and got a job. As the girls got older they wanted to go out more on their own. As ■■■ got older she would try and pick a fight with me so as she could walk out and not come back but I would recognise the signs. One day I sat her down and asked her where else she had to go.
44. She said she had nowhere to go and started getting cheekier and cheekier so I locked the door and told her she was grounded. ■■■ pushed me to the floor in an attempt to

get the door keys from me. At that point my husband arrived home. I told him what had happened and he let [REDACTED] out and she stayed with a friend that night. She came back the next day with a social worker and collected her things. That was her leaving for good and, to me, it was like a bereavement in the family.

45. [REDACTED] stayed with friends but it didn't work out and she phoned me one day for help because a friend was keeping a video recorder of hers. I told her she needed to call the police. I went over and met her with the police. At that point she had a flat in Rutherglen which my husband helped her decorate. She was sixteen or seventeen at this point.
46. To me [REDACTED] was just being a typical teenager. We would visit her in Rutherglen and she visited us. This went on for a while but stopped because we didn't like her boyfriend. [REDACTED] once said to me "Don't tell me what to do, I'm not your family". I actually smiled at that because it showed I had treated her as one of my own.
47. When [REDACTED] left [REDACTED] stayed on but with her it was different things. She was starting to get cheeky. One night she didn't come home. She had lost her house keys and I sent her out to look for them but she didn't come back home. I reported it to social workers and the police at Govan. It turned out she had stayed in a community flat just next to us. After that we changed the lock on the door and didn't give her a key.
48. When [REDACTED] was fourteen or fifteen she asked to be taken back into care. She had been organising a sponsored walk and, although she collected the money, she didn't do the walk and spent the money. I know that in those days people would smack their children for such things but I didn't though we did have a big row about it.
49. My own children studied and went to university but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] refused to stay at school. I didn't like it when [REDACTED] said she wanted to leave the house because she was part of the family. There was a meeting with me, my husband and social workers from the home [REDACTED] went to.

50. FHX didn't come home one time and I then got a call to say she was in a children's home. We got asked to a meeting and that was when allegations were put to us that FHX had made. She said she was forced to do everything in the house and was treated like Cinderella.
51. I said there was an element of truth but explained that all six of the children helped out especially now that I was working. FHX was asked if that was true and she ran out of the room. FHX stayed in care until she was sixteen when she got a house in [REDACTED]. She didn't contact us until one night she had a party during which a door got broke and she phoned to ask if my husband could fix it. We then stayed in touch for quite a few years.
52. [REDACTED] and FHX would come back for Sunday dinners. If they needed help they knew they could contact me. When [REDACTED] and FHX left I felt there wasn't enough time put in by the social workers to sit and discuss it to try and work things out. They should have involved mediation and they didn't hear our side until everything had been decided. FHX got a furnished flat from social workers. [REDACTED] got her flat herself but social work gave her an allowance for furniture..
53. FHX had a social worker who, when FHX got pregnant, tried to make her have an abortion. FHX asked me to speak to the woman whose name I don't recall as FHX wanted to keep the baby. When the baby was born I helped her get a pram and things and even babysat for her now and again.

Complaints

54. I don't feel it's for me to say if there should be things put in place to complain about social workers.

Conviction

55. I have never been convicted of any offence concerning the abuse of children.

Allegations of Abuse

56. I can think of nothing that I witnessed that would be considered abuse that happened to [REDACTED] FHX or [REDACTED] while they were in my care. If the children ever had anything that worried them they could always speak to me if need be. Nobody has ever accused me of being abusive.
57. I did have a visit from the police about seven years ago, two female officers. I assume they came from [REDACTED] Police Office but I don't know their names. According to the police FHX had been sexually abused in my house by my son [REDACTED] I was in a bit of a shock when they were questioning me and I don't recall what was said in my statement though I didn't believe the allegations and I still don't believe them. [REDACTED] was charged and went to court and I was called as a witness but the case didn't go ahead and no trial took place.

Helping the Inquiry

58. I can't think of anything else I can say that would assist the Inquiry into looking at how foster care was dealt with in the past. I was a foster parent in name only as to me it was looking after my family. I wouldn't have been involved if it was other children that were looking to be fostered. I took the children in as a family and to me we were a family unit.

Other information

59. 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.

Signed.... [REDACTED] FHV

Dated..... 11th March 2022