

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FZW [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FZW [REDACTED]. I was born FZW [REDACTED] and when I married I became FZW [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1948. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background

2. I don't have any qualifications. When I left school I wasn't allowed to work. My father wrapped me in cotton wool a lot. There were five of us but I was his eldest daughter and I was a daddy's girl. When I wanted to work, he wouldn't let me. He owned businesses so I got to work in them. I worked in the chip shops and my mum and dad would be there but really I didn't work. I was just smothered and I wasn't allowed to work where my pals were working. They would say those jobs were beneath us, they were snobs. I went into the army as a store woman when I was in my late teens to get away from him. My parents didn't like it so I had to come home. They kept phoning every week. They were asking the officer in charge how I was and they wouldn't let me stay. I loved it, it was my first time away from home and it was great.

### *Becoming a Foster Carer*

3. I can't remember when I became a foster carer but I think I started when my son [REDACTED] was five or six years old. He was born in 1979 so it would have been roughly 1984 or 1985. I was a foster carer for between ten and twelve years but I'm not sure exactly. My husband at the time, FZP [REDACTED], worked at [REDACTED].

4. I think I saw fostering being advertised on television but I couldn't tell you who I first contacted. There must have been a phone number to call Aberdeen Council but I couldn't tell you which department I spoke to.

### *Training*

5. I think we went to classes on Queen's Road. They came to us to meet the family and to inspect us individually. I'm sure we also went to them and had meetings with other people who wanted to become foster parents. We were police checked. I would be telling a lie if I said how long it took to become a foster carer, I can't remember that.
6. I dealt with a lot of children who had been abused but I didn't really get any training for that, you had to use your instincts. I didn't receive any separate training on how to deal with short-term or emergency fostering or how to deal with kids with different experiences. There was no child protection training.
7. There were no written instructions and I wasn't given a handbook, you were just left to get on with it. There were no verbal instructions. Once you become a foster parent and they know you could manage, you never phoned up for help because you managed.
8. There was no continuous training. Once you became a foster parent that was it, you were left to get on with it. There were no assessments or checks. I was in the Foster Care Association [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] It's a big setup and we were able to speak to other foster parents. I came out of that because I was in a bad marriage. I didn't really want to come out of that but it was time to come out and I'm glad now.
9. They were sending social workers from university to me for me to teach them how to be a social worker and for them to see how I performed as a foster carer.

10. You couldn't discipline the children, that was a no. I didn't punish them physically or mentally. I sat down and talked to them. That was how I got through to the older children. I liked to talk to them and I did that a lot. I didn't need to handle them physically. There were angry children but you just speak to them in a quiet voice and that's how you got through to them.

#### *Foster Care Arrangements*

11. I liked the emergency side, it was good. I didn't say I wanted emergency when I started but I did want short-term. I liked emergency though. I wasn't asked to do long-term and I only fostered one child long-term. I never chose the children. As an emergency foster parent they would phone you and ask you to take a child. I would say that I couldn't because I had no room but they would tell me that I could manage one more so I would agree.
12. The police would just come to the door with social workers and drop the child off. It was just "here you are" and after ten minutes they would be gone and I would be left with the child. I managed and I loved it. I had one Christmas with six under twos, I had to put them on the carpet and change them one at a time. It was great fun. I love kids so it didn't bother me.
13. I had my own social worker and I think her name was Pauline. I don't remember her second name. She was my social worker throughout my time as a foster parent. There was a Susan Sloan who often phoned me about kids if Pauline was off and she was ok. I didn't have any other support.
14. I saw it as a vocation rather than a profession. I do think that foster carers should have child care qualifications. I was a registered childminder and I childminded as well. I had two children that I childminded privately and I did it for the social work department as well.
15. Maybe it's changed now but I thought the social workers hands were tied behind their backs a lot of times. I think a lot of people sit behind their desks in the council and

don't know what is going on in the real world. They should spend a day with foster parents and they would have their eyes opened.

#### *Financial Support*

16. I was a voluntary worker for Aberdeen Council. I wasn't paid for it. I was given money to feed them and if they needed clothes then I had a chitty for them but if they needed anything more then I paid for that out of my own pocket. If they needed more then you had a fight on your hands with the social work and in the end you just bought them yourself.
17. I had money put into my bank once a fortnight to feed them but that was it and it wasn't much. Anything else came out of your own pocket. I can't remember how much it was. The amount you were paid depended on the child's age so the older they were the more you were given to feed them. We spent it on food and when I went to the supermarket I came back with cart loads of stuff to feed them. We didn't get anything for toys. A lot of the kids used to steal our girl's clothes and they thought it was ok to steal my daughter's clothes. I gave the children pocket money every week and they were all given the same amount.
18. The financial support wasn't enough. You were paying out for them all of the time. You were always short, all of the time. It was hard but we managed and I did a lot of baking. They liked my rock cakes and Victoria sponges. I made my own loaves. I had learned that from my parents when I was younger.
19. You didn't get any holiday money for them at all. They would give us a minibus to use for a holiday but nothing else. Social workers would have given us more but higher up wouldn't. I think that was due to their bosses in the social work department.
20. I asked for a bigger house and they wouldn't give me one. There was a four bedroom house further down the road and I asked and asked for it but the council wouldn't give me it. The Council wouldn't help at all.

21. I think the social workers hands were tied by higher up. They would do their best for you but their hands were tied. Pauline could only do what she was allowed to do. It was the ones who were higher up in Aberdeenshire Council who tied their hands and weren't giving me the freedom to look after the kids properly. I treated the kids as part of my family. Instead of bringing up your own three kids you were bringing up eight.

#### *Foster Home Household*

22. We lived at [REDACTED] in Aberdeen which was a council house. I never changed address while I was fostering. Downstairs there was a sitting room and a kitchen. Upstairs there were three bedrooms and a toilet.
23. I had three of my own children, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who were five, eight and eleven. [REDACTED] was my youngest. A social worker came and spoke to them before we started fostering. I don't know if they were really prepared for the stealing. They used to sleep with their good stuff in their pillow cases so they wouldn't disappear by morning. At five and eight years old they didn't really understand, maybe by eleven years old there was a bit more understanding. The younger ones just thought it was kids to play with.

#### *Children Fostered*

24. I fostered 296 children, or something like that. I took in all ages and both genders with no notice at all. I didn't have a maximum number. I think the most I had was eight or nine at one time, as well as my three. In an emergency I would have my house full and they would ask me to take one more. They said that they knew that I had enough but that they had nowhere else to put them so I just had to do it.
25. The youngest child I fostered, [REDACTED], was about six days old. I have always remembered him. I had [REDACTED] for a couple of weeks and then I was given [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I had [REDACTED] for about 12 months and then he was adopted.

26. The oldest child I had was a boy who was in [REDACTED] for pinching his father's bank card and flying all over the world. He landed in Aberdeen with me. I think it was just for one or two nights. He was sixteen, seventeen or eighteen. I had them right through the ages. I didn't know any of the children before I fostered them. They were all placed with me by Aberdeen Council.
27. I had one long-term foster child, [REDACTED]. I wouldn't have adopted her but keeping her long-term wasn't a problem. She came to us when she was eleven and she is now forty five. She had been badly sexually abused by her father before she came to us. She was born in 1978 and was a year older than my son, [REDACTED]. She changed her name to FZW-FZP [REDACTED] she was sixteen. That was her decision. She is part of the family. I can get in touch with her at any time on Facebook.
28. She used to run away all the time and she would jump out of the bedroom window but then she just stopped and grew up. One time I went to Glasgow on the train to take her home again. Her and her pals had hitch hiked to Glasgow and she was in the police station. Her pal was in the station as well but I wasn't allowed to take her back up the road because she had parents. I don't know what happened to her pal, the social worker wouldn't tell me.

#### *Placement Preparation*

29. The children weren't prepared to come to me because they were emergency placements. They were lifted from their home by the police, handed to social workers and then handed to me. I never met a child prior to fostering them.
30. Our children almost always knew if there were children coming in but sometimes they woke up in the morning and found extra kids who had come to us during the night. That happened a few times.
31. Ninety percent of the time you were given a phone call before the child turned up at the door. The other ten percent of the time, they turned up at the door in hope. I could have said no but I never turned kids away. Sometimes they came at midnight and



wanted me to keep a child until 9 am when they opened in the morning. They wanted them to be fed and even just have a lie down on the sofa. They weren't matched to me, it was just whether I had room or could make room.

32. I had background information on the kids ninety percent of the time but I didn't have schooling or medical information. I never saw any records, I just had what I was told by the social workers. I was never given a care plan.
33. The most difficult age to settle in was six to nine. The babies were fantastic and the older ones were good as well but children aged six to nine want their mum and dads. You had to handle them differently and be so gentle with them. After a couple of weeks they were fine but to start with they were bewildered. They didn't know what was happening in their lives. They were just suddenly uprooted. I think my own kids made the settling in process easier. The foster children saw that our kids were happy.
34. It would be very difficult to change anything. You can't prepare a child to go into foster care when it's emergency foster care. You don't know what's happening in their house. A child might suddenly be orphaned and suddenly be in foster care. You just have to react to different things and you can't prepare for that.

#### *Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements*

35. Upstairs there was a boys' room, a girls' room and we had our own room. The boys and girls were warned not to enter each other's rooms. We had to get bunkbeds for the foster children and we had to pay for those ourselves. They had their own drawers for their things and they were given pocket money every Saturday. They were given identical pocket money to my own kids. They could please themselves what they spent it on. If they wanted to save it they could and if they wanted to spend it in one day then they could. We had a shared garden with [REDACTED] so we could only hang washing two days a week. The condition of the house was ok.
36. I got up about half past six or seven o'clock. I would get the bairns up, washed and dressed. The ones that went to school had breakfast and then went away to school

where they were given free dinners. You just fed them and looked after them and that's it.

#### *Mealtimes*

37. Everyone in the house sat down at mealtimes. I did all the cooking and although I wasn't the best cook, I always fed them well. We all sat round a big glass table, about ten of us. I always fed the kids first and the adults later. They were given a choice and I usually cooked four different meals for them to pick from. I am a fussy eater and think it would be wrong for a foster child to eat something they didn't want. It wasn't a problem if they couldn't finish it, it would go in the bucket.

#### *Washing and Bathing*

38. I washed the little ones but the older ones washed and showered themselves. They could do that whenever they wanted. The door locked so they had privacy.

#### *Clothes and Shoes*

39. We had a chit from social workers. The chit was for certain shops and it was normally Marks and Spencer. It was no use because they wanted clothes like my kids were wearing so they would often wear my kids' clothes. They wanted to be the same and to fit in with the crowd so clothes that were old fashioned were no use. In the end I used to just buy them clothes. They never shared clothes, that wouldn't be right. They had their own clothes and their own cupboards.

#### *Leisure time*

40. There was the park across the road from us that the older ones could go and play football in. I always crossed the road with them and put them in. They had toys, books and television. We had a shared garden that they could play in as long as there wasn't washing out.



41. There weren't any clubs for them to go to back then. The kids seemed to know when the ice cream van came round and they got ice cream.

*Trips and holidays*

42. We took them on holiday once a year when we could get the minibus and they all came with us. We would go to cottages because there were that many of us. When we were there we could go out in the minibus on picnics and things like that. We had permission from the social workers to bring the children on holiday with us but I don't know if they asked the parents.
43. We couldn't take them on trips because we couldn't get a minibus and the car wasn't big enough for all of us. There were buses at the school that we could use through a summer club and we used to take the kids to different parks in those.

*Schooling*

44. I can't remember if any of them had to change school. The older ones went to Northfield Academy. Some went to Hazelhead Academy. My kids went to Northfield. Some of the children came from far away from where we lived but I think they stayed at the same school and used taxis. There was always two or three taxis in the morning and they were paid for by the social work.
45. I don't know if their education was affected. When they came home they did homework at the dining room table and I helped them if they needed it. I love reading and I used to read a lot to them.
46. [REDACTED] went to Redden which was a special needs school. He met Princess Diana and there was a photo of him with her. I felt I was able to support him and he wasn't a problem.

47. I went to the parent's evening for all of the children. I drove to the schools for parent's evenings and school events. It was great to go and cheer them on and they liked that. The children weren't taught skills for adult life but they learned from our kids.

#### *Healthcare*

48. I dealt with any health issues. I took them to the doctors without the social workers. They didn't register with my doctor so I would take them to their own doctors and to the dentist. I didn't keep any records of medical issues.
49. There was one child, [REDACTED] who I brought to London for operations. Most of the time we went to Sick Kids but the surgeons were in London so they would fly us down and then someone would pick us up and take us to the hospital down there. We shared a room overnight and then he would see the surgeon and we would fly back up the road. I did that a couple of times with him. [REDACTED]'s healthcare went through the social workers and if anything like that came up then you would tell the social workers.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

50. We had great Christmases. I had a big dining table set up and I made trifles. You should have seen the kid's faces, they loved it. They were always given the same number of Christmas presents.
51. On their birthdays they were given cakes and presents. You couldn't give one without the other. Fostering is the same as parenting your own. I usually made the birthday cakes and I had the balloons up for them coming home from school.

#### *Discipline*

52. I dealt with the kids, not my ex. If a child continuously misbehaved then I would phone the social workers and ask them for advice. They told me to use discipline but I wouldn't follow that advice. All I would do is say that they were having a pound off their pocket money this week if they didn't do something. They had to take turns washing

and drying the dishes to earn their pocket money. If I asked them to do the dishes and they refused then I would say they weren't getting any pocket money. I prepared the supper then one had to wash dishes and one had to dry. That was the only thing I asked them to do. If they weren't going to do anything to help then they hadn't earned their pocket money. If they saw other children getting pocket money and not them then they didn't like that. They always got something in the end.

53. Two of the girls came back from the shops with pockets full of sweets they had stolen so I just took them straight back to the shop to hand them back and made them say sorry.
54. I made some of the toddlers sit on the bottom of the stairs until they behaved. The kids weren't physically punished. I didn't physically punish my own kids. I never kept any records of punishments like losing their pocket money.
55. I never really had bad kids. I am a great believer in talking to children and getting to the problem. There must be a problem if they are doing something wrong whether it be from school, in their minds or something that has happened at home. If you talk to them gently and quietly then they often tell you what is wrong with them and it's not their fault.
56. A lot of children wet the bed and in the end I just put covers on to protect the mattress. That didn't bother me either. I would say it was going in the washing and that was it. If you have a child of three or four years old peeing the bed then they can't help that. You have to give them more love and say that there's nothing wrong and if you want to pee the bed then I will just wash it. If I let them think that it's ok to pee the bed and you aren't bothered by it then they will stop peeing the bed. I told them to come through to me day or night and I would see to them because it wasn't a big deal and they would stop. If you get on to them for it then they'll never stop peeing the bed.

*Relationship with foster children*

57. I loved my foster kids. There were good ones and some who came in and thought they could rule the roost but I spoke to them. I loved them all. Some were mentally scarred and you had to talk them round to the way you wanted them to see life. I just gave them the love they needed. I showed affection and gave them emotional support. I was there 24/7. I was there for them and they knew they could come to me. If they wanted a shoulder to cry on then I was there. If they wanted to speak to me in private then I was there and they always came to me, especially the older ones. The little ones were little innocent souls.
58. My own kids were good. They put up with a lot. They came to me with the stealing and I would tell the child to give it back. If they wanted one then I would get them one but they weren't to steal. The foster children were never treated differently from my own children because if you bring a child into your home then you have to treat them the same.
59. My ex, <sup>FZP</sup> [REDACTED] didn't have much to do with them because he was working all the time but he was good with them, especially the boys. I dealt more with the girls and he sometimes dealt with the boys when we brought them out. He's good with kids as well and he was really understanding with them.
60. The foster kids were treated the same as our own kids by everyone in the household. My ex was really good, maybe not with me, but with the kids. He used to play football with them. We took them on holiday to Cornwall one year and he played football with them every day.
61. I was [REDACTED] mother of the year. I had a photo with my kids and the kids that I childminded privately. The foster kids couldn't be in it. It was in the [REDACTED] I couldn't tell you what year but I have the piece of paper in the house.

### *Contact with family*

62. They went to visit their parents while they were with me. Taxis would come and the social workers would take them. I never took them. When I went to panels the parents would be there but that was the only time that I saw them. I didn't meet the children's previous foster carers.
63. Other than [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I didn't have any kids long-term so I didn't have contact with parents. There was one, I can't remember her name, who I took to Glasgow to meet with family members. Normally I wouldn't have contact with family. [REDACTED]'s mother came with a social worker on a few occasions to my house. We had to watch how she was handling the wee baby. She wasn't good at handling him at all.
64. Emergency foster parent's names and addresses are not disclosed. The parents couldn't phone my house and the kids couldn't phone their parents from my house. Everything had to go through the social work. I was never asked by the social workers to encourage contact with parents.
65. I wouldn't like families to know my address because they might come, knocking at your door at 3 am, drunk. You do not want that, you want a safe home. The child might be scared of the parents. I had a lot of children so if I had one father coming to the house drunk then you will scare all of them.

### *Siblings*

66. If I knew siblings were in care then I would probably know the foster parents and I would ask how they were getting on. If they were worried then I would let the foster child know how their sibling was getting on.
67. I had a lot of brothers and sisters. There was a family of three kids, two boys and a girl, and I had all of them three or four times. They came from Northfield and until I moved I saw them a lot.

68. If the sibling wasn't with me then some of them still had contact with their siblings through the social work. They had to go to a contact centre to meet up with their siblings. The social worker would come and take them to that which is wrong because the child might be scared of being taken in a taxi. A social worker, who they don't really know, turns up at the house, where they are safe, and takes the child away. A young child is being pulled away from a place of safety. I think the foster parent should be involved in them meeting up with their brothers or sisters.

#### *Visitors*

69. A lot of the children had the same social workers. I worked with different social workers but one social worker might have one hundred kids on their hands. I might have two or three with the same social worker in my house.
70. The social workers didn't visit except for when they dropped them off and took them away. They phoned me but they didn't really see the children. I didn't speak to the social workers regularly. If I needed something then I phoned them. The kid's social workers visited very rarely and my social worker, Pauline, didn't visit much.
71. My house was a place of safety. I think the kids were fine so why would they bother me. Social workers would scare the kids, they are the baddies. It is the social worker who is taking the child away from the parents. Young children love their parents, it doesn't matter who the parent is, there is still a lot of love. If a social worker comes to my house which is a place of safety then the kids would be scared. If they want to come then they should phone ahead so you can tell the child that their social worker is coming for a cup of tea.
72. Trainee social workers came into my house to watch how I fostered. They came from university wet behind the years and came to my house to learn about fostering.

### *Review of care/placement*

73. I don't remember any reviews. I didn't have any input into the children's care plans. I wish I had. I attended a lot of panels but they're a waste of time. We didn't even have a say in the matter. They just asked if we would still keep the child and we would say yes. The foster child was sometimes at the panel, depending on their age. I wasn't kept up to date about a child after they left.
74. Some children were happy in care and some were unhappy, it depended on the age of the child. If a child is brought up being hit by a parent then they don't know anything else and they think that's love. I had to teach the child that was wrong. I never asked the children for their views and I don't think social workers did either. I don't think foster parents were listened to, they were just told what was happening and that was that.
75. I told children that they could tell me things and I would pass it on to the social workers and see if they would listen. I would tell social workers things the children had said they would like but it was a waste of time. I still did it for the sake of the child. I always made a point of listening to my kids and passing on the messages.
76. After the children left, you would like to know what has happened to them but you have no rights as a foster parent. Some foster parents would like to know and some wouldn't.

### *Records*

77. I used to keep books on every child I fostered. I wasn't allowed to keep any information, that was against the law, but if I looked back and could see how long I had had a child in my care then, for me, that was interesting. I would write the date they came to me, their ages, how they got on, when they left and if they went home or to long-term foster parents.
78. I never showed those books to the social workers. I was the only one who had access to that information and no one else read it. I kept it hidden in my bedroom. The children



didn't go into my bedroom. I never locked my bedroom door, or any doors in my house, in case they wanted me during the night but they wouldn't go raking through things anyway.

79. Later, after I had finished fostering, we moved to a one bedroom pensioner's house because of my illness. We had a caravan that my parents had bought me but my ex had pinched it. He stayed in the caravan in Suffolk from April until September and then he decided to come back up the road and he needed that house. I signed it over to him and the social workers got me out of that house and into sheltered housing so he couldn't get near me. When I left my ex I had to leave that house with one suitcase so all of the records were destroyed. I burned them. I left with what I could carry because I was too scared to stay there.
80. I wish I'd kept them now. I think you should be allowed to keep notes on children that come into your care. In two years time you might get the same child back and then you can look back on your notes and see how that child reacted to you

#### *Moving placement*

81. There wasn't a process to prepare kids to leave me. If it was up to me they would let the kids know where they would be going next. I used to have to tell them when and what was happening in their lives. They were moved from me because I was emergency care, twenty one day orders. A lot of them went to short-term, long-term or adoption from me. They wanted me to be kept empty for emergencies. A lot of the kids were moved on quickly. I kept some but there were always spaces.
82. The kids weren't involved in the decision, they were just told they were moving. If they were involved in the decision then I'd still have them now. They were never asked where they wanted to move. Some of them stayed in contact with us and we are still in contact with the girls.

*Leaving the care system*

83. If they were leaving care all together then I wouldn't be involved in that. I don't know how accommodation was found for children. I wasn't aware of any steps taken to find further education or employment for older children. It felt as if they were being thrown on to the street which was wrong. I wasn't aware of any financial support being arranged for them either.
84. A lot of them went to children's homes and then they were moved to flats. If a child lived with us in a loving family home and then they were placed in a home because they were a certain age then that was an issue. Then they are thrown into a flat with a certain amount of money each week and told to get on with their lives. That's cruel. I never kept in contact with foster children after they left care but I know some of them kept in contact with my girls.
85. Leaving care is bad and I think it still is. They are thrown out into the world with no training and no parent figure to lean on. It's all social workers and that is not the same, they need a parent figure to guide them along. Teenagers still need their parent's views. If you're thrown into that kind of situation then that is cruel.
86. I would go into one of those homes and make it into a home. I would act more like a mother to them and start training them like I did my own children. I taught my son how to iron. They still need love to move on and to get into a stable relationship as they get older but they're not getting that. It makes me angry. A lot of social workers don't know the children, maybe because they go through such a lot. A lot of them are mothers and fathers and they should understand children. They should love the child no matter whose child it is. They expect foster parents to do it and they should do the same. They should be able to nurture children and move them on at a gentler pace into the world.
87. I think social workers would have acted differently if they were allowed to. They said it was higher up that wouldn't allow things. The social workers did their jobs and worked

hard. The ones I dealt with did their best for the children but they couldn't overstep the mark or their hands would be slapped.

### *Complaints*

88. There wasn't a process to complain about the social work department that I came across. I didn't deal with social workers much, they knew I could do the job and they left me to it.

### **Convictions**

89. I have never had any convictions.

### **Allegations of Abuse**

#### *Awareness of Abuse*

90. I wasn't aware of any abuse of children who were with us. If I had been aware of any abuse out with our care then I would have reported it. If I thought a child hadn't been treated properly then I would have reported it. I tried to report that a child I fostered, [REDACTED] was being abused at his parent's home.
91. I don't believe in hitting children, I never hit my children or any foster children. There are other ways like stopping pocket money or treats. There is always a reason for a child being naughty and if you find out the reason. It might be the way I do something that they don't like and then it is up to me to sort myself out so the child feels more comfortable with me. Children aren't bad, they are just naughty.

### *Reporting of Abuse*

92. If a child had any concerns about abuse in my house then they would definitely come to me. I always spoke to all of the children either on their own or together. They knew they could come to me with anything and I would sort it out. I gave them no reason not to trust me and if you have their trust then they come to you.
93. I wasn't given any written or verbal guidance on how to report abuse. If I thought a child who came to me had been abused then I would go to Pauline, my social worker. When I reported that [REDACTED] was abused we went to the head boy because he wanted to see us. That was the only incident that I had to report.
94. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were among the first children that I fostered so it must have been around 1988 or 1989 that [REDACTED] died. That experience made me more determined to help children. I've had babies that I couldn't even pick up because they have been covered head to foot in bruises. Toddlers that were black and blue but that's an emergency foster parent for you. It was bad with the [REDACTED].
95. The boys had been sexually abused by their father but every week [REDACTED] and his younger brother, [REDACTED] went back to the parents. They came back from their parents sore and they couldn't walk. Their little tails were bleeding and we had to take them to the Sick Kids every Sunday night. This is on record at the children's hospital. They were there every weekend, seeing the same doctors. I reported it to the social workers and I phoned up out of hours. [REDACTED] shouldn't have gone home but the head boy in the social work department, who is away now, kept sending him home. When they sent them home I tried to fight it and I went to see the head of social work but I was told to shut up. [REDACTED] died in a house fire within a month of going back home. His father set fire to the house.
96. I was told to zip it. We were asked to go to a meeting and when we went to see this boy he told us to shut up and not say a thing. He said we would be in trouble if we ever mentioned it again and we would be thrown out of fostering if we ever mentioned it. He was the head social worker at the time, he was in charge here and then he moved

to Glasgow. I don't remember his name. He worked in a multi-story office years ago and that was where we went to see him. It wasn't the building on Queens Road.

97. That was the only bad experience that I had. [REDACTED] died in a house fire and there was no need for it. [REDACTED] had all sorts wrong with him after the fire and he was in a wheelchair. I think he was adopted in Peterhead. I can't remember how long I had been fostering them for but it must have been months. They both came on holiday with us.

98. Both [REDACTED] and their sister died [REDACTED] later on. She was also sexually abused by the father. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He had been going into other people's buckets and feeding the kids out of the buckets. He got thousands of pounds after her death even though he was the cause of it. I hated that man for doing that. They had other children, maybe five. I don't know if the mother is still alive, she moved to Edinburgh.

99. We had been told to shut up so we couldn't say anything. [REDACTED] dying in that fire was horrendous. I don't think there was police involvement with the abuse. I never saw a policeman at all when I had him. I couldn't go to the police, all I could do was report it to the social work and tell them to speak to the Sick Kids where the doctors could tell them if it was happening to them. The doctors were ready for them on a Sunday night.

#### *Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no Criminal Conviction*

100. I've never received any allegation of abuse of foster children against me.

#### *Reporting to Police/Criminal Convictions*

101. My son was supposed to have done something that he couldn't have done because he wasn't in the house at the time. I had a boy in my house that I didn't want there but they begged me to take him for a couple of days. This boy said that my son had sexually attacked him and the police, from Bucksburn, were involved. I asked the boy

when it had happened and he told me. I said but my son wasn't even living here and it was during the day. Nothing came out.

102. The boy went away, I got him out of the house quick. The CID came to the house. They took a statement from my son and that was it. The case was thrown out. He was never charged. If someone isn't there and the house is full of kids then how could it have happened? The police were nice. They interviewed us and other boys in the house. We had three boys there and they said it was a heap of lies.
103. My son wasn't in the house, he was at his girlfriend's house when this was supposed to have happened. He was still staying with me but he wasn't in. We knew it was a lie. I don't remember the foster child's name. The social paid me to take him overnight. No one else would have him because he caused so much havoc and trouble in other houses. He was about twelve or thirteen. He was trouble with all of the other children.
104. That was when I stopped fostering, I was sickened. I didn't hear a word from any social workers, no apology or anything when they found out it had nothing to do with my son. My own social worker, Pauline, didn't speak to me. We just stopped, the children were taken away and that was the end of it. That was the decision of both the social work and me. It sickened me, they believed him and not us. I had a house full of boys but they believed him and not the other kids. To me it was all wrong, they didn't even ask us. I had been fostering for twelve years and this was like a slap in the face. There had been no previous reports.
105. I haven't given any other statements to the police and I haven't been asked about allegations of abuse carried out by other people.

*Specific Allegations Against you that have been made to the Inquiry*

106. FZX [REDACTED] has given a statement to the Inquiry that includes the following allegation "I was on my periods when I was at FZW-FZP [REDACTED] We didn't have the fancy pads you have nowadays so I just ripped them up and put them down the toilet. One day I'd done that but it hadn't flushed away right and [REDACTED] found it. Mr FZP [REDACTED] went



*absolutely ballistic with me and I remember I was so scared that I wet my bed. I just slept in it all night as I was too scared to tell them about it. I did change the sheets in the morning, but I didn't let on about that. Mr<sup>FZP</sup> was shouting and swearing and screaming at me for that. He was a strange man to me. I thought<sup>FZW</sup> might have told me to be more careful. I didn't expect that from him, I'd only known him a couple of weeks."*

107. I can't mind her at all. I couldn't picture her and I don't remember when I had her. I don't remember anything about her at all. The only thing I remember, which I think might be her, is that I had a child come to me from the police, I think she was fourteen at the time and I was told she was a child prostitute and they had picked her up from the harbour. One day she went to the toilet and, half an hour later, I couldn't get the door opened. I was told by social workers to get the police so the police knocked on the toilet door. I gave the police her name and they said they knew where to find her, at the harbour. It might not be her but putting two and two together, it sounds like her. I can't remember if I took her back after that. She was never sanctioned or punished in my house. I never abused her.
108. My ex was marvellous with the kids and he would have come to me. He would never have spoken to a girl, he would speak to me and I would speak to the girls. It's a total lie. Not in a month of Sundays would he have done that to a girl. I dealt with the girls and I was there 24/7 so there is no way that happened. Peeing the bed and not being able to tell me? I had never bothered about bed wetting. I know my ex, I was with him for nearly forty years and he would never speak to a child like that. He would never have done that. He left everything like that to me. I would have been the one to see about that, not him.
109. I don't know why she is saying these things. I don't have a conservatory, it's a council house, so I think she's forgetting things or she wants more money from the council. If a child was treated that way then I would be very angry about that. I would accept that would be abusive.



## **Lessons to be Learned**

110. Looking back, I think social workers should behave more maternally towards the children. If you love children fostering is like a calling. I like to speak to children, you just speak to them in a different way.
111. Social workers were sending kids home who shouldn't have been going home. We had to go to panels and ask them not to send them home but I don't know if it is just about money because they always put them home. It was a disgrace. I could see what was happening. I had to protect the children from everyone, even the social workers. Half the kids shouldn't have been sent home and then they came back into care worse off than they had left. Sometimes I would have the same children twice or even three times. It was a shame. Why they were put back I don't know. They were harming the kids. The kids then had kids who went into care and it was a vicious circle that needed broken.
112. There have been a lot of bad foster parents who have slipped through the net over the years and I think they need to be trained better but the social workers need to be trained better too. They need to be able to recognise a good foster parent and know where their hearts are. The caring needs to start at the top and go down to the foster parent and the child. In the eighties that never happened. I would be given a child with a name and age and that was it. I was expected to get on with it. I don't know if it is better these days but I would hope it is. I would hope training is better, more for social workers than foster carers.
113. Adults are cruel to children. A lot of people high up in the social work department shouldn't be social workers because they don't seem to care like I used to care. A child was just a pest that they wanted to get into a foster home and out of their way. That was how I saw it. That was forty years ago and I hope it's changed. I'd like to know it's changed. You need people who really care and social workers need to have the training to be able to walk into a foster parent's house and have the instinct to know that the person cares about a child. I cared for my kids, and still do.

**Other information**

114. 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..........

Dated.....31/5/22.....