

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

FDO [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is FDO [REDACTED] My maiden name was FDO [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1951 and I am presently 66 years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. When I was born, we lived in [REDACTED] Aberdeen. I have five sisters and two brothers. [REDACTED] was the oldest, then there was [REDACTED], then there was me, then [REDACTED], [REDACTED], FDP [REDACTED] and finally [REDACTED]. She was known as [REDACTED] My little brother [REDACTED] choked and died when he was only a couple of months old.
3. We also had a half-brother [REDACTED] who was older than us all. He was my father's son. He was lovely. He used to look after us a lot. [REDACTED] would fight our father to protect us.
4. We never used to have anything. My mother and father were always drunk and we used to not get much food and never had much clothes. They used to drink "VP"

sherry all the time and if they couldn't get that, it used to be "meths": methylated spirits. Our mother used to send us along the street with a bag to pick up cigarette ends, we called them "tabbies", for her to have a smoke. We also used to get old-fashioned pennies and file them down on the wall so they would fit in the meter for gas or electricity.

5. Eventually we moved to ██████████, Aberdeen. It was just the same there, our parents were always drunk. My sisters and me all used to sleep in the same big bed. There was three at the bottom and three at the top. One time FDP ██████ got her head split open while she was lying in bed. My mother was drunk and was ranting and raving, as she would. She had a poker in her hand and went to hit the end of the bed, but FDP ██████ head got in the way and she split it open. She had to have five clasps put in.
6. One time, I fell off a bike and split my eye open. I had to go to hospital and I remember I had no knickers and no socks on. We would cut off the sleeves of jumpers and use them for socks. The hospital gave me a little grey pinafore, a white shirt and socks, I will always remember that.
7. While ██████ was just a baby, our father came home drunk as he often did. Our mother was hiding behind the settee holding ██████ and he got hold of the bairn and chucked her through the window. Luckily she landed on a hedge, although her legs were all cut. She had scars for years.
8. The police were often round and would pick my folks up in the "black Maria". We girls would all be taken away by the social work department and put in Linn Moor Residential School at Peterculter. Our brother ██████ never came, I don't know where he went. I've never met him since.
9. I think I was in the home there two or three times. Eventually we were taken there again and that was it, we never went back to my parents. I would have been about seven then. All of us went there except ██████ She went to Craigelea Children's Centre, because she was only a baby.

**Linn Moor Residential School**

10. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
11. After about a year, we were shipped away to foster care in [REDACTED] Gardenstown. This was 1960 and I would have been nine at the time. We insisted that we would only stay there on the condition that our sister [REDACTED] came too. I think she would have been two or three when she joined us there.

**Foster care at [REDACTED], Gardenstown**

- 12: I wasn't aware that we were being fostered. We were just taken out of Linn Moor by a man from the social work. We used to call him the "homey man". We were taken to this farm and weren't even told that was where we were going to stay. We were told we were going for a holiday.
13. When we arrived, we were met by [REDACTED] FLW-FLX our foster carers. They were known as [REDACTED] FLW and [REDACTED] FLX but they told us to call them dad and mum. They must have been in their forties at the time. We were greeted with a massive spread of food on a table in the kitchen. We sat down with the "homey man" and had all this fantastic food. I thought it was great.
14. [REDACTED] wasn't a big farmhouse. I think there was two bedrooms upstairs, maybe three. I'm not sure because in all the time I lived there, I was never allowed

up the stairs. I slept in an old railway carriage out the back with [REDACTED]. There was a big bedroom downstairs that FDP [REDACTED] and the rest of my sisters slept in and there was also a bedroom that FLW [REDACTED] and FLX [REDACTED] stayed in, off the livingroom.

15. The only person who was allowed to sleep upstairs was FLW [REDACTED] and FLX [REDACTED] real daughter, [REDACTED], and her husband, a policeman called [REDACTED], when they came to visit.
16. The first couple of weeks was fine. It was only when nobody came to take us back that I realised we were staying and that we were just there to work. I know years ago everybody would have chores to do, but the work we did was farm work. It was hard, physical, adults' labour.

#### **Routine at [REDACTED], Gardenstown**

17. Every morning in the winter, before school, we would get up at half-past-six, seven o'clock and I would have to clean out the stables and sort out the chickens. My older sister [REDACTED] would milk the cows and my younger sisters had the housework to do.
18. In the summer and springtime my jobs were planting potatoes and cutting the tops off the turnip. We would come home from school and have to stack the harvest. We would have to do all the fields and our legs would be cut and bleeding from the corn.
19. We also would have to do the fire and clean the rugs in the mornings. All the time we were doing this, FLW [REDACTED] and FLX [REDACTED] were still in bed. FLW [REDACTED] would get up when we came back and got his breakfast ready.
20. FLX [REDACTED] had a lot of hens that stayed in two old railway carriages. All the birds had to be let out every morning and then gathered in at night. They also had to be mucked out every few months. It would take hours and was a horrible, hard job.

*Food*

21. The only thing **FLX** did was make our food, but it was terrible. If you didn't eat your dinner, you got given it for your breakfast. I used to hate new cheese, which came from a cow after she had just had a calf. I just couldn't eat it, but if I didn't eat it, **FLX** would keep putting it in front of me till I did.
22. Sometimes you were that hungry, you would just eat what you were given. Sometimes it would be mouldy old baps. We would have to pick the mould off and eat them. Some of the food we got was inedible.
23. When we went to bed at night, you could smell **FLX** and **FLW** cooking for themselves. **FLX** had every up-to-date gadget you could imagine. They would be cooking up chips or bacon for themselves. Never for us.

*Schooling*

24. The best time was when we were at school. In all the time I was there, I never had a day off school. We went to school at **██████████** in Gardenstown and, although I liked it, we were treated abominably by the other kids. Most of them were all Brethren and they would call us names, saying we were full of maggots and fleas. We had no friends and we weren't even allowed to play with anybody.
25. We walked to school across the fields every day, it was maybe about half a mile. It didn't matter if it was winter and there was six feet of snow. We would come back at dinnertime and get fed at the farm.
26. If we had been given a chance at school, we would have done better. We were put forward to do Scottish dancing, because we were good dancers. **FLX** wouldn't let us though. She wouldn't pay for us to do anything like that.

27. The best thing at school was the sports. We were all good at sports, nobody could ever beat us, probably because we were so fit from working on the farm. The other kids used to absolutely hate it because we could beat them.

#### *Clothing*

28. At home we used to wear old boys clothes. We would wear vests that had buttons at the front, a shirt, old dungarees and hob-nail boots. The pants we wore were boys' too that had been sown up the front. They were always hand-me-downs, we never had new clothes.
29. The only time we wore girls' clothes was for school or kirk, although we had to wear brogue shoes to school. **FLW** would put tacks round the toes and on the heels to stop them wearing down. It just made you feel different from all the other children.
30. When we went to church we wore a dress and a hat. As soon as we got home we would have to change back into our working clothes.

#### *Washing and bathing*

31. We used to get bathed about once a week out in the washhouse. **FLX** used to have a bath, then **FLW** and then all of us, all in the same water. We were washed in washing powder and carbolic soap.

#### *Pocket Money*

32. We got some pocket money from **FLX** and **FLW** but not much, maybe a sixpence or a threepence bit a week. If any of us had done anything wrong that week, **FLX** would take it back. I was always doing something so I never got any.
33. We would all be sent out to gather potatoes from other farms and would get paid for that. All the money we made had to be handed back to **FLX** though. We never got any of it. We did that the whole fortnight we were off school, every single day.

*Contact with natural parents*

34. We had no contact with our natural mother and father while we were there. No contact with [REDACTED] either. We weren't allowed. If I ever said I wanted to see my natural mother, [FLX] just told me she didn't want us. The last time I saw my mother was when we were taken into care. I have never seen her since.

*Relationship with foster parents*

35. I never got on with [FLX]. She was a cruel woman and I would tell her I didn't like her. She was the one who gave us all the work to do. The only one she ever showed any affection to was [REDACTED], the youngest one. Never to any of us older ones. It made us a bit jealous, I suppose. We had to kiss them goodnight every night, but we never got even so much as a cuddle back.
36. [FLW] was a quiet man and just had to do what he was told. I found him alright, but he never stood up to [FLX]. He would just drive the tractor and not say very much. He wasn't mentally cruel to us like [FLX] was.

*Visits/inspections*

37. The "homey man", our social worker, used to come round once a year, while I was there. He must have phoned first to arrange it, because we had to put on our good clothes and there was a big spread of food put out. He would never speak to us and we were never asked how we were. I think it was the same man that came although a woman sometimes came later on.

*Birthdays/Christmas*

38. I can't remember birthdays ever being celebrated. At Christmas there would be a tree and decorations put up and for presents we would get given our school clothes. Boots, a kilt and a hand-knitted jumper. We also got one orange and an apple.

39. Another thing we used to have to do at Christmas was kill the birds. [FLX] used to keep capons to sell and we used to have to kill them, put them in boiling water, clean them, gut them and pluck them. She also kept turkeys and geese and we used to have to do the same with them. That was a terrible job because they had to be dry-plucked. We would be sitting there crying while we were doing it.

*Trips and holidays*

40. We only ever went away a couple of times and even then just for the day. They had this old Volkswagen [REDACTED] and they would put us all in it and we would go for a drive somewhere.

*Church*

41. We went to church every Sunday. [FLX] and [FLW] weren't Brethren and that's why all the locals used to treat us as they did. They only took us to church because of how they would be perceived.

*Healthcare*

42. I never really had any health issues all the time I was at [REDACTED]. Like my sisters, I used to get cuts on my legs from doing the harvest, but I never went to the doctor. We also used to get cuts on our hands and occasionally [FLX] would have to see to them. She would put a poultice on them with bread or whatever. I don't remember seeing a doctor or a dentist at all.

**Abuse at [REDACTED], Gardenstown**

43. We were only at [REDACTED] to work. We were treated as if we were inferior.



44. We girls were doing everything on the farm. If there was snow on the ground, we used to have to dig the road out. That was a big job for children. We also used to have to gather all the turnip in to feed the cattle in the winter. We would be freezing cold. Our feet would be freezing and soaking wet and we never used to get to change our clothes. We were just left like that and we had to get on with it.
45. All the potatoes had to be planted by hand. Whole fields of them. We were only children.
46. When we first went and stayed at [REDACTED] there was no toilets. [FLX] and [FLW] used to have one just next to the house, but we weren't allowed to use that. Our toilet was in an old shed, right across the yard, in the trees. We used to have to take the bucket and empty it in the "midden", where all the farmyard manure was piled. If it was dark we used to have to do the toilet in the midden. We were never allowed to use their toilet.
47. When I was about twelve, [FLX] got a proper bathroom put in the house. Again we were never allowed to use it and still had to go outside.
48. I would stand up to [FLX] and tell her I didn't like her and she would punish me. One time she told [FLW] to hit me, but he wouldn't do it. She made me go on my knees the whole night and I had to write a letter apologising for telling her I hated her, before she would let me go to bed.
49. Another punishment was she would make us stand in the corner, facing the wall with our hands behind our backs. We would have to stand there for hours sometimes, until she told us we could move. She would be watching the telly and if you moved she would roar at you. It could be two or three hours. I was in the corner a lot.
50. If you had been really bad she would make you stand on the midden with no shoes and socks on and a sack over your head. You could be there for an hour or two hours until she decided you could come in. That happened quite a lot. It used to make me feel really angry. I just hated her. She never, ever said she was sorry.

51. Another cruel thing, I thought, was that we were never told about anything when we came to puberty. When my periods started, she just gave me one sanitary towel and that had to last me. It was never enough and I used to have to find old cloths to rip up and use as sanitary towels. She would make everybody aware it was your time of the month and you were dirty.
52. My eldest sister [REDACTED] was a nightmare, she used to be awful cruel. My other sister [REDACTED] used to wet the bed she shared with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] FDP She couldn't help it. [REDACTED] would take [REDACTED] outside if she did and give her a hiding with [REDACTED] FLW slipper. If she didn't have a slipper, she would get a belt or a stick or whatever she could find. [REDACTED] FLX knew what was going on and partly encouraged it.
53. Even when [REDACTED] was eleven or twelve, [REDACTED] FLX used to get rubber sheets and rubber pants and make her wear them if she wet the bed. She would also put big nappies with great big safety pins on her, even at that age. It was degrading.
54. We were never allowed long hair. [REDACTED] FLX used to get a bowl, put it on our heads and cut around it. [REDACTED] was the only one that was allowed long hair and she had this lovely plait down her back. She asked me to cut it off one day so she could be like the rest of us, so I did. I got in real trouble that day and got sent to the midden again.
55. In the summertime we never had shoes, we used to go round in our bare feet. Our shoes would be put back for the next school term.
56. The abuse we suffered was mainly mental. It was a daily occurrence. [REDACTED] FLX would always put us down, tell us we were ugly and that nobody would ever want us. [REDACTED] FLX had such a hold over us. When my sister [REDACTED] FDP was little, she choked on a potato. [REDACTED] FLX got it out but after that we were always told the next time any of us choked we would die. To this day, I can't swallow pills and there's food I won't eat: anything I think I might choke on. She drummed it into our heads that we would choke.

57. There was electric fencing put up to keep the beasts in and FLX used to make us all touch it. She would get us to see how long we could touch it. I don't know if it was a punishment or just some sort of game.

*Running away*

58. I ran away once, but I was caught just up the road. I got the usual punishment of standing in the corner and in the midden. I had to do it every night for a week. She took my shoes away as well, so I couldn't run away again.

**Leaving foster care**

59. I came home from school one day at Easter and just never went back. I would have been fifteen-and-a-half at the time. I was taken to a farm near [REDACTED] and put straight out to work as the housemaid. I got home to [REDACTED] once a fortnight. In the end I just never went home because there was no point.
60. I had no clue I was going. I had to live in the attic and do all the chores, cleaning the rooms, polishing the floors and helping with the cooking. I got paid £2.50 a week. FLX had arranged it and I think it was to get rid of me. I don't know if she was still getting paid to be fostering me. At that age, I didn't know that they would still be responsible for me.
61. I never saw a social worker after I left at fifteen.
62. FLX told me I was only allowed back once a fortnight and my sisters were not my sisters anymore. Anytime I went back, which was only two or three times, I just went for the day and caught the bus.
63. I was probably there about eighteen months and then FLX got me another job on another farm, looking after an old woman. There was two brothers that ran the farm

and I helped in the house. I was there until I was seventeen and I got paid £3 a week.

64. Nobody ever told me if I was still under the care system or not.
65. [REDACTED] was still at home when I left. She had been put out to work too, just down the road, but she kept coming back. She always wanted to be the top one and [REDACTED] favourite.

### **Life after being in care**

66. I was married by the time I was seventeen. [REDACTED] had told us if we weren't married by the time we were nineteen nobody would want us. I met my first husband when I was at the first farm near [REDACTED]. He had a car so after I left there he would come and take me out on a Saturday night.
67. When I got married, I moved to another house on a farm and then to a council house in Peterhead. I worked in the Woollen Mill first and then in other factories. My husband was a digger driver and also had a job as a taxi driver at night. We were quite comfortably off.
68. I left my first husband when I was twenty-one, which was when I met [REDACTED] my children's father. He was in the RAF and got moved to Weston-super-Mare and I went with him.
69. [REDACTED] and I had three children together, although sadly only one, my youngest daughter, is still alive. She is now forty-two years of age. My middle daughter died in 1980 on the operating table when she was just six years of age. She had Downs Syndrome. She would be forty-four now. I lost my son four-and-a-half years ago, he died of a pulmonary aneurism. He would have been forty-five.

70. [REDACTED] and I were together for about eight years and are the best of friends now, but it just didn't work. His life was the RAF and I just never saw him.
71. I came back up to Scotland with [REDACTED] in 1978. That was the first time I'd seen my sisters since I'd left FLW and FLX at fifteen. I had found [REDACTED] somehow, I can't remember how. When I got up to Scotland I managed to find [REDACTED] and FDP [REDACTED]. It was great to see them again.
72. I met my third husband, [REDACTED] after that and we were married for eighteen years. I was never really accepted by his mother though because I had kids already. [REDACTED] was okay to start with, but he was quite a control freak and I always had to do exactly what he said. I'd had enough and one day I just told him and we split up.
73. I went up to Scotland again while I was with [REDACTED]. I went to see [REDACTED] and the next day I packed my bags and went back down to England. I was so distraught at what I'd seen in [REDACTED] house. There was no food, no furniture, nothing. It traumatised me for a long time. I thought that was the cycle repeating itself. It reminded me of life with my natural mother.
74. I lived in England for about thirty years in total. After Weston-super-Mare I moved to RAF Uxbridge, then to Ipswich and after that to Stowmarket, where I lived for nineteen or twenty years.
75. The best thing that's ever happened to me was meeting my current husband, [REDACTED]. We have been together for sixteen years and have been the best of friends since the day we met. [REDACTED] and I moved back up to Macduff after coming up on holiday a couple of times.
76. I have never been out of work my entire life. If my children were in bed at night, I had a job. When they were at school, I had a job between nine and three. I am still working even yet. I am a carer for [REDACTED].

**Reporting of abuse at [REDACTED] Gardenstown**

77. I have never reported any of the abuse I suffered at [REDACTED]. I felt I couldn't report it because that was our home. We needed a place to live.
78. In my job as a carer, I sometimes have to go to Gardenstown. People have asked if I was one of the girls that was fostered at [REDACTED]. When I have said I was they say "what a life you must have had". I ask them if they did anything about it, but obviously they didn't. I tell them it's a bit late now, they should have reported it at the time.

**Impact**

79. When my little girl died on the operating table, I had nobody, I was on my own. There was nobody to put their arm around me. It was heart-breaking. I have a family, but that family is so torn apart through the fostering. Not one of them sent a card or anything.
80. I went on the drink for a while, but eventually I realised I had to get myself back together again. I felt I had no support, but I realised I wasn't being much of a mother to my own kids.
81. I moved back up to Scotland hoping I would get my family back. I think it was the way we were treated in foster care that has made us the way we are. [REDACTED] FLX told me I had no sisters anymore when I left at fifteen.
82. I don't mix with folk. If I go somewhere I think people are looking at me. I feel so insecure. I think that's because of the way we were treated in foster care and by the kids at school.

83. I am frightened to show the affection I want to show in case I am shunned.
84. I have problems with my back and my neck from the hard, physical labour we had to do as children. I was told it was because my bones hadn't been given enough time to develop.
85. Even now [REDACTED] is a cruel, jealous woman. One time, just a few years ago, she asked me if I remembered the time she threw a knife at me. She was laughing about it. I had made a beautiful dress at school and [REDACTED] had taken a knife to it and cut it into strips. She reminded me about it and was just laughing.

### **Records**

86. I tried to get my records from the adoption and fostering place in Aberdeen, but they said they couldn't find them. I know my sister FDP [REDACTED] got some records and we at least learned who our father was, because we didn't know. We found out that our father was actually our great-uncle. None of us were aware of that before.

### **Other information**

87. My mother died when she was forty-eight, when I was in my late-twenties. I only found that out fairly recently on the internet. My father lived till he was about sixty-eight. Again, I only found that out on the internet.
88. I had no contact with [REDACTED] since I went into care either. I have tried to find him but not managed to.
89. I found out when I came back up to Scotland that FLX [REDACTED] sister fostered children on a farm near us and they were treated exactly the same.

90. 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..... 22 . 2 . 18 .....