

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FEM
[REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is FEM [REDACTED]. My surname when I was born was FEM [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1964 and I am presently fifty-four years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in a house in [REDACTED] in Glasgow, which is near Barlinnie. My parents were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My mother's maiden surname was [REDACTED]. I have an older brother FCP [REDACTED] and an older sister [REDACTED].
3. I have since found out that the reason my brother and sister and I were put into care was because my mother and father took the three of us to a park in Glasgow and abandoned us there. I was only in a pram at the time and my sister was a toddler. I think FCP [REDACTED] was about five.
4. I think my brother knew that we had an auntie living in the vicinity and he took us there. We must have stayed there for a while before we went into care. I don't know whether the social work were involved at that time or not.
5. My brother says he can remember coming to see me at some point and I had tubes coming out of me. I've no idea what age I was, but I've had plastic surgery on my foot

because apparently I put a gate through it. I don't know if I was in a hospital for a while at first and that was maybe when [FCP] was brought to see me.

6. It was only when I was between the ages of four and five that I became aware something wasn't right, although I had no idea what. I was in foster care at that time with a family called [REDACTED] who stayed in a tenement in Glasgow somewhere.

Foster care with the [REDACTED] family in Glasgow

7. I was on my own with the [REDACTED] family and I thought the boys and the girl were my own brothers and sister. I just adored them, I thought they were my family and I remember feeling wanted and loved. I don't remember a great deal about the [REDACTED] family and I'm not sure what their names were. The girl was maybe called [REDACTED] and the brothers were possibly [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
8. They were a catholic family and I remember being curious about the things they had on the wall that they dipped their fingers in. I realise now it was holy water.
9. Another memory I have is of walking up the winding stairs in the tenement because the brothers were up there. I got a row and was taken back down because I was so wee.
10. When I was about five and just about to start school, I was sitting in the livingroom playing with my dog when two people knocked at the door. Nothing was explained to me, all Mrs [REDACTED] said was that I was to go with these two people. I don't know who they were, whether they were social workers or what.
11. I don't remember exactly what was said, but it was dark and I was put in the back of a car and I never saw the [REDACTED] again. I was absolutely devastated.
12. I was taken to [FJD/FJF] and told that was where I was going to live from then on. They were an older couple, probably in their late-thirties at that time.

Foster care with Mr and Mrs [FJD/FJF] in Motherwell

13. My brother and sister, [FCP] and [REDACTED] were already staying with the [FJD/FJF]. They had been fostered first and then I think social work must have contacted the [FJD/FJF] and said there was another sibling.
14. When I arrived at the [FJD/FJF]'s house, [FJF] took the wee suitcase that I had my teddy in off me and binned the lot of it. She immediately stuck me in a bath and told me it was because the [REDACTED] were filthy. Then she told me that [FCP] and [REDACTED] were my brother and sister. I refused to believe her and told her she was lying. I remember feeling confused and not knowing why this was happening to me.
15. I referred to them as mother and father, because I think they asked me to. I certainly never called them that out of affection or anything and now I refuse to call them that.
16. I stayed with the [FJD/FJF] from then until I got married at the age of twenty-two.

Routine at Mr and Mrs [FJD/FJF] in Motherwell

17. At first we lived at [REDACTED] which is in [REDACTED] in Motherwell and was a two-bedroom flat I think. We all slept in one room and Mr and Mrs [FJD/FJF] were in the other. After a couple of years they got a brand new house at [REDACTED] Motherwell and [FCP] got his own room.
18. The house at [REDACTED] was on two levels with three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. Downstairs, when you went in the back door, the kitchen was to the left and the stairs were to the right. Straight on was a big long livingroom, a hall and the front door.

19. I sometimes wonder now if the reason Mrs FJF took us was to get a brand new house because before they had been living in a horrible flat.
20. When we were younger Mrs FJF never worked. Later on she got part-time jobs. Mr FJD worked shifts in Ravenscraig steelworks.

Mornings and bedtime

21. When we moved to [REDACTED] my brother FCP got his own room and I shared with [REDACTED], my sister. We just got ourselves up in the morning, I don't think Mrs FJF ever woke us. I don't remember her making breakfast and as we got older we never saw her in the morning. We had to get ourselves washed, dressed and ready for school.
22. Other than breakfast, we were well fed by Mrs FJF. We also got free school lunches because we were in foster care.
23. At night we all had to be in early and get ourselves ready for bed. Every night, whether there was school or not, we all had to be in our beds early. The only times we were allowed to stay up late was when Mrs FJF was drunk and we were kept up for entertainment. There was a lot of drinking done by the FJD/FJF.

Washing and bathing

24. FJF made me wash at the kitchen sink, even when I got to be a teenager. I was in full view of the next door neighbour going in and out of the house. She wouldn't let me use the bathroom, although I don't know why. I remember doing so even when I was wearing a bra and FJD was going about. It was humiliating.

School

25. At first I went to Muir Street Primary School in Motherwell. I remember my brother and sister being at the school there too until they moved up to the high school. FJF

- FJF never took me to school, my brother did. When he went to the high school, I used to have to wait for him walking over when he'd finished his classes.
26. We would walk home and often have to stand and wait outside if the FJD/FJF were out. None of us were allowed a key and we would have to wait outside, whatever the weather. I think I was about eighteen before I was given a key.
27. After primary, I went to Dalziel High School in Motherwell. My sister was already there, my brother was at Braidhurst High. I don't know why he went to a different school.
28. I was a very average pupil at school, although I did manage to get my exams. There was no support with our schoolwork from either of the FJD/FJF she just kept pressuring me to get a job as soon as I left.
29. The other children knew we were fostered because we got free meals. I tried to keep it quiet, but they found out and I would get called names or whatever.

Leisure

30. When we weren't at school, we were sent out to play in the morning and told not to come back till it was dinnertime. After dinner we all sat down in the livingroom and the telly was muted while they both took a nap. We just had to sit there quietly and not say a word.
31. I remember going to the Brownies, but that was only when I was wee and I never went to the Girl Guides. When I got to high school I joined the volleyball team.
32. I wasn't allowed to take my friends back to the house. She didn't want any other kids there. There were no sleepovers or anything like that, although she would allow me to go to my friends' houses for a sleepover.
33. At the weekend, we would all have to sit in the car outside the pub while Mr and Mrs FJD/FJF were inside, getting drunk. We often sat in the car for hours and they might

sometimes bring us out a juice and a packet of crisps. Eventually they would come out and Mr ^{FJD} would drive us home drunk. He had to stop the car all the time so that Mrs ^{FJF} could vomit.

Trips and holidays

34. The ^{FJD/FJF} had a caravan and used to take us away in it for holidays. The holidays were great, but the sleeping arrangements were horrible. There were only bunk beds for my brother and sister and I had to sleep with the ^{FJD/FJF}. Eventually ^{FCP} said he would sleep in a tent outside so I could get his bunk and that was better.

Religious Instruction

35. Mrs ^{FJF} made us join the church, but she never walked us there either. It was up to my brother to take us everywhere. As well as church, we were made to go to Sunday school.

Pocket money

36. Mrs ^{FJF} was generous, we had pocket money and she would buy us clothes and stuff as well. We were never neglected that way at all.

Chores

37. Mrs ^{FJF} was obsessive-compulsive and the house was immaculate. Everything had to be perfect and we were treated like skivvies to keep it that way. We each got given jobs to do and they had to be done perfectly. It could be cleaning the bathroom out, or pulling everything out of the kitchen cupboards and cleaning them till they were spotless. The livingroom was the same, it had to be cleaned from top to bottom.
38. She was so bad that, for example, only two pieces of toilet roll could be left hanging after we had been to the toilet. If everything wasn't perfect we would get it.

Birthdays/Christmas

39. Birthdays were celebrated, we got a cake, cards and presents. Christmas was too, it was her thing. It was a bit weird because normally she was this mad woman and then when it was someone's birthday or it was Christmas, she would be all happy. It was like she was a different person.

Healthcare

40. I was never hospitalised while I was with the [FJD/FJF]. I remember having a really sore and swollen finger when I was young. Mrs [FJF] kept telling me to put it in hot water, but eventually she was forced to take me to the doctor. The poison was travelling right up my arm and I remember the doctor asking her why she had waited so long. I got it off her when we left because the doctor had been angry at her for leaving it that long.

Visits/inspections

41. Only very rarely was there any contact with the social work department. I'm not sure where they came from, maybe Glasgow. There was no one person that came, no dedicated social worker or anything. I never knew any of their names and never even got a phone number to contact them if I needed to.
42. They possibly visited once a year, but I was petrified to tell them anything. They only spoke to us with Mrs [FJF] there and I knew that even if I had told them what was happening, they might not have taken us away. We knew that if they didn't take us, she would know we had reported her and that would be it.
43. I did think about saying something, but I was too scared. I had no trust in anybody, so why would I trust the social work?
44. I was never aware of there being any review of our care at any time.

Siblings

45. Through time I came to realise that FCP and ██████ were my brother and sister. I got fond of FCP quite quickly, but I hated ██████ That stayed the same right through most of my life.
46. FCP left straight away at sixteen and ██████ when she was about sixteen or seventeen. As soon as we could leave, we all did.

Relationship with foster parents

47. At no time was there ever any reassurance or a hug from either Mr or Mrs FJD/FJF. None of us was ever shown any affection. Their attitude was that we just had to get on with it. I tried for some affection when I was young, but she just rebuffed me so I gave up. The only time I might get a wee cuddle when I was young was when she was drunk.
48. I had a breakdown at the age of seven when we moved to ██████ I woke up every morning at the bottom of the bed, howling my eyes out. I could hear Mr and Mrs FJD/FJF talking, saying they would need to put me back to the home again, although obviously I had never been in a home. There were no words of comfort or reassurance that they would make it better for me.
49. My brother spoke to me and told me that he didn't think I would want to go to a home. He said it wasn't nice there. I'm not sure where he had been, maybe Elderslie in Glasgow, which I think was a Barnardo's place.
50. FJD ██████ was actually quite a gentle man. I would describe him as a silent bystander. Mrs FJF ██████ would tell him to punish us, but he stopped doing it. He never hit me and I only recall one time that he hit FCP and ██████ I think he just couldn't

tolerate it, but he was obviously doing what she told him. She then took over, but he never tried to stop her.

51. I think [FJD] was as frightened of his wife as we were. He told us just to agree with her and do what she said.

Abuse at Mr and Mrs [FJD/FJF] in Motherwell

52. I remember very little about my first two years with the [FJD/FJF] although I do remember my brother and sister screaming and crying in the bedroom. I asked [FJF] what was wrong and she said it was because [FJD] was belting them. She told me if I was ever bad that was what would happen to me. I remember being pretty scared at the time.
53. Not long after I first went to stay with the [FJD/FJF] I started to wet myself. I don't remember doing it before at all. Mrs [FJF]'s answer was to "leather me" and put a nappy on me. She would have me wearing the nappy with frilly pants on top sticking out beneath a wee short dress. She told me I would have to wear that until I stopped peeing myself and that I would have to go out and play so "all the other boys and girls could see me and laugh at me". She told me I was a "big baby" and a "dirty girl".
54. All I could do was stand against a wall. I think I stopped wetting myself pretty quickly after that.
55. Mrs [FJF] took over the physical punishment and sometimes it was horrific. She would start off hitting me with a flat hand and then when her hand got sore she would move on to a slipper, or whatever she could find. I can remember us all getting hit, but I'm not sure if I got it more than my brother and sister.
56. One time she burst my nose. She sewed and had made me a skirt, which she got me to try on. I can't remember what I said, but I must have annoyed her and she punched me in the face and burst my nose.

57. I remember one time we were sitting in the car outside the pub when my brother and sister started fighting with each other. They were knocking lumps out of each other so I went into the pub and told the FJD/FJF. They really got it from FJF for that because she couldn't stay in the pub. She was really laying into them.
58. FJF always sat next to me at the dinner table and if I ever said I didn't like anything, she just smacked me. I would then be crying so hard that I couldn't eat my food. She never force-fed me, but she made me eat things I didn't want to.
59. The more she hit me and wanted to make me cry, the more I was determined not to. I never fought back though, even when I got older, I was too scared of her.
60. We were never allowed to shut our bedroom door, even when I was a teenager, she wanted to keep a constant eye on me. One time I dared to shut it to get dressed and FJD walked in. It was innocent, he wasn't that sort of man. I told him to get out and he apologised and did so. The next thing FJF came in and battered me, saying "Don't you tell him where he can go in his own house".
61. My brother tried to commit suicide later on while I was still there. Mrs FJF just said he was an idiot, she never did anything to reassure or console me.
62. The verbal abuse was bad as well. She would tell me I was useless. She would say that it was no wonder that my mother and father didn't want me. She would tell me that she and FJD didn't really want me in the first place and that she only really wanted my brother. She would tell me my mother was in jail because she owed money. She constantly told me I was worth nothing and she was as nasty as she could be.
63. My sister was allowed to wear her hair right down her back, but Mrs FJF cut mine like a boy. She said I wasn't pretty enough to have long hair.

64. Even when I was grown up, she continued to abuse me. Not long before I was due to get married, when I was twenty-one, she told me to go away on holiday with my soon-to-be-husband. When I got back we must have had an argument about something and she called me a whore for going away with somebody I wasn't married to. She slapped me so hard and I remember going out and telling my fiancé later on. He was angry and wanted to speak to her, but I told him not to, I was still so scared of her.

Leaving foster care

65. I left school at sixteen and took a couple of youth opportunity jobs until I found out that I had got into nursing. Mrs FJF kept getting on at me to get a job all the time I was waiting to go on the nursing course. She wanted me out basically. I started studying to be an enrolled nurse at Law Hospital when I was eighteen and stayed in the nurses' home, rather than stay with the FJD/FJF.
66. I went back to stay with the FJD/FJF for a short time after a couple of years because I'd had enough of nurses' home.
67. At no time was there any contact from the social work when I was due to leave. I was never told I was no longer in their care or anything like that.

Life after being in care

68. I met my husband [REDACTED] when I was twenty-one and we got married when I was twenty-two. The FJD/FJF came to my wedding and I remember my husband saying on the day that he'd never seen a mother so happy to get rid of their child.
69. I continued nursing for a couple of years and we had two sons together, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who are now twenty-eight and thirty. By the time I had my second child I had stopped nursing. What I would have to pay in childcare just wouldn't be worth it. There

was no way I could go to Mrs FJF for help looking after them. She didn't want to have anything to do with my kids.

70. I did tell my sons that the FJD/FJF were their grandparents, but they never had much of a relationship with them. They never took them anywhere or looked after them overnight or anything like that.
71. I kept in contact with the FJD/FJF on and off. She would do something and then I would stop speaking to her until guilt kicked in and I contacted her again. It was like I had set a pattern of falling out with her and then feeling guilty and contacting her again. It was like I was a moth to a flame.
72. Our relationship ended after I had been on holiday for two weeks and FJD's father, who was a lovely man, had been taken into hospital. I waited for a couple of weeks before contacting her after I came back and it was only when I did that she told me he had died. They buried him while I was back in the country without letting me know and I flew off the handle.
73. I told FJF that I was finished with her and her response was "thank God, I've been trying to push you away for years".
74. Originally I did psychiatric nursing and then I re-trained and now I am a state-registered general nurse.
75. I also now have a granddaughter called [REDACTED] who is going to be three soon. She wraps me round her little finger. I hug her constantly and she is like a medicine to me.

Reporting of abuse by Mr and Mrs FJD/FJF in Motherwell

76. I still wonder why our neighbour didn't report Mrs FJF. She must have heard us screaming, we were getting leathered all the time. I think they were probably scared of her, everybody was.

77. I never spoke or reported what had happened to me in foster care to anyone because I was just too petrified. At the time I couldn't speak to teachers as children are taught to do today. I got on well with my teachers, especially when I was in primary seven, but I could never have mentioned anything to them. I've never reported it as an adult either.

Impact

78. I have never been emotionally stable and I had to get therapy as an adult after my time in care. I blamed myself for going through that door and leaving the [REDACTED] for the FJD/FJF [REDACTED]. I thought that if I had kicked up a fuss, cried and said I wasn't going with them, I could have just stayed. Of course I know now that I would still have had to go.
79. I stopped talking to FJF [REDACTED] when I was about thirty years old and I started having nightmares. I was crying all the time. Eventually that eased off, but then I had a panic attack and for months I wouldn't eat in front of anybody. I went to my G.P., who gave me some medication and sent me for counselling. I realised that I must have been having flashbacks to my time with the FJD/FJF [REDACTED].
80. Still to this day, despite getting the counselling, I have a fear of eating in front of anybody. I know that this stems from having to sit at the FJD/FJF [REDACTED] dinner table and getting hit if I didn't like anything. When I'm nervous, one of the consequences is that I can't eat in front of people.
81. I stopped socialising for years, because not only was I abandoned by my real mother and father, but my next mother and father in my eyes, the FJD/FJF [REDACTED] didn't love me. Then [REDACTED] and I were married for twenty-two years and he walked out on me. In my head I was worthless and nobody wanted me.
82. I thought about taking my own life, but I'm not brave enough.

83. My health took a total nosedive and it got to the point that I was off my work for about a year and I couldn't even get out of bed. About a year ago I was sent by my friends in occupational therapy to an amazing counsellor. She has been helping me tremendously.
84. I know that some people who have been abused can go on to abuse others, but I went the other way with my sons. I was far too soft with them. When they were bad I tried to hit them, but instead of them being hurt, I would start crying, so I stopped doing that.
85. I see me in people who are unwell or who are vulnerable. I go over and above with my caring and attempts to protect and help them. I don't like to see anybody like that at all.

Records

86. I have never tried to access my records.

Hopes for the Inquiry

87. All I ever wanted from the [FJD/FJF] was a cuddle, some affection and some reassurance that I was going to be looked after. I know I wasn't her real daughter, but it is possible to be a nice carer.
88. I was never allowed to build up a relationship with the [FJD/FJF] before I was taken away from the [REDACTED]. I didn't even know I had a brother and sister.
89. Social work should have had more of an influence and should have done more to gain my trust. It is important that there are clear lines of communication for children in care. I might then have had a pathway to speak to someone. I feel really let down by the social work department and I hope they have moved on massively. I sincerely hope they would not take a child away as I was from the [REDACTED].

90. FJF ██████████ had no skills for looking after children whatsoever. I don't know what sort of vetting the social work did before someone could become a foster carer, but she was not fit.
91. Foster carers are equally as important as the children and social work should be there to assist them too. They should ensure carers are given proper training and make sure it's possible for carers to say they are not coping. Carers should be able to hand children back without shame or guilt. The emotional needs of a child are too important to be forgotten.
92. The child should be able to say it's not working as well and should have an appointed key worker who they can contact day or night.

Other information

93. I made contact with my brother FCP ██████████ through his daughter on "Facebook". She was delighted to hear from me and eventually FCP ██████████ and I messaged each other. We never actually met up though, it was painful to speak about what had happened, it was like ripping off a bandage. We still keep in touch every now and then.
94. I contacted my sister ██████████ through "Friends reunited" and we spoke for a brief time as well. I cut her off though because every time I talk to them it's like reliving things.
95. Instead of us three siblings being together, what FJF ██████████ did was tear us apart.
96. FJD ██████████ is dead now, but I think FJF ██████████ is still alive.
97. I never saw my parents again after they left us in the park and I've no idea if my mother is still alive or not. My father is living in York somewhere with a new family. I think he might still be alive, but he said he didn't want anything to do with us.

98. 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..... 7.1.19