

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FFO

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FFO, I prefer to be called FFO. My maiden name was FFO. My date of birth is 1939. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I can't remember my life before being in care. I have one sister and six brothers. I didn't meet my brothers or my sister until I was in my twenties. I went into care when I was two or three because of cruelty. My dad worked on the trams. My mum left us and went to London or Glasgow and left my siblings and me on our own. We were staying in Niddrie somewhere. I was in the Eastern General Hospital, along with my brothers and but then we got separated. I don't know where any of my siblings went. I was in Redhall Children's Home and some other places in Edinburgh which I don't remember, I was too young. I didn't even know when my birthday was. I then went to Montrose when I was seven or eight. That's the first clear memory I have of childhood.

Dorwood House Montrose 1946 or 1947 to 1950 or 1951

3. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Dorwood House

36. After being removed from Dorwood House, I got to stay with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]. Mr [REDACTED] was a minister. They were lovely people. The other girls went to other local houses or to Aberlour Children's home. I wasn't able to stay with the [REDACTED] for long, just a week or so. After that, I was fostered by Mr and Mrs FFR-SPO [REDACTED]

Mr and Mrs FFR-SPO [REDACTED] Foster Care, [REDACTED], Banffshire 1947/1948 – 1949/1950.

Routine at Mr and Mrs FFR-SPO [REDACTED] Foster Care

First day

37. Mr and Mrs FFR-SPO [REDACTED] came and got me from the foster carers I was staying with. I had no involvement in the decision to place me with them. I can't remember the FFR-SPO [REDACTED] first names. I had to call them mum and dad. We were introduced and they took me away. I hated them straight away, I just had a feeling. I can't remember how long the journey was from Montrose, maybe an hour or so. It was the first time I had been in a car, it was a big shock to the system. Their house was near [REDACTED].
38. The FFR-SPO [REDACTED] had two children of their own, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] her brother. The FFR-SPO [REDACTED] fostered me and another girl, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had been in Dorwood House with me. She was about three years older than me and was a great knitter. I had been there a couple of weeks before [REDACTED]. I was over the moon when she arrived.

39. I hated it at the [FFR-SPO] I was frightened of Mrs [FFR]. Mr [] was a lovely man. He was a shepherd so he was away a lot. I was with the [FFR-SPO] for about a year. Mrs [FFR]'s father stayed with them too, I hated him.

Mornings and bedtime

40. Mr and Mrs [FFR-SPO] had one bedroom and their kids had the other. Me and [] had to sleep on the kitchen floor. We had to wait until the [FFR-SPO] had stopped using the kitchen when they went to bed, and then we could go to bed. We had a blanket to lie on and another one on top of us.
41. I also had to sleep in the barn. There was a thing on the barn wall that I was afraid of, I thought it was going to eat me. It was a stag's head, but I didn't know that at the time. I was made sleep in the barn twice.

Mealtimes/Food

42. The food at the [FFR-SPO] house was better than at Dorwood House. Mrs [FFR] cooked the meals on the fire. During the week, we had lunch at school. Mrs [FFR] had tick, credit, at the baker's. One time me and [] ordered a load of cakes and ate them. We got battered for that.

Washing/bathing

43. The [FFR-SPO] didn't have running water in the house. They had a tin bath that we bathed in. I collected water from the stream and it would get heated by the fire.

Clothing/uniform

44. I took some clothes with me but the [FFR-SPO] bought me new clothes. The Edinburgh authorities used to bring a big bag of clothes. The social worker would tell us that she had brought clothes for us. I used to think I was going to look great, but Mrs [FFR] gave those clothes away, or she sold them. Mrs [FFR] made us

tell the social worker that we were getting the clothes. I think I wore [REDACTED]'s hand me down clothes. She was a couple of years older than me.

School

45. I can't remember the name of the school I went to. We had to wear a uniform. I hated school at the FFR-SPO [REDACTED]. We had to walk miles to get there and it took about 45 minutes. The social worker got bikes for me and [REDACTED], but we never got to use them because Mrs FFR [REDACTED] sold them.

Chores

46. We used to have to cut peat for the fire. There was no water in the house, I had to collect water from a stream. The water tasted lovely. I had to carry it in a bucket but I spilled most of it.
47. I didn't have to do any other chores but [REDACTED] did. She had to do cleaning.

Leisure time

48. I got on well with the FFR-SPO [REDACTED] daughter, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I would muck about together. I didn't get on with their son, [REDACTED]. He used to suck on a sweet, then offer it to me when it was half done. I didn't have any toys at the FFR-SPO [REDACTED]. I have never had toys in my life.
49. FFR-SPO [REDACTED] had a cow called Jessie. I used to go and look at Jessie, I loved her.

Religious instruction

50. There was no religious instruction at the FFR-SPO [REDACTED], they didn't go to church.

Birthdays and Christmas

51. I can't remember Christmas at the [FFR-SPO] I think that's partly why I went crazy about making Christmas great for my kids when I had a family of my own.
52. I didn't know about my birthday at the [FFR-SPO] I remember when I had grown up, I met a man and told him I was 22. I was actually 24 but I still hadn't found out my correct date of birth even at that age.

Visits

53. I didn't see a social worker before I went to the [FFR-SPO] At the [FFR-SPO] the social worker did visit us a couple of times. She was lovely and she gave us sweets. Mrs [FFR] told the social worker we slept in their best room but we slept on the kitchen floor. The social worker didn't believe me when I told her that.

Abuse at Mr and Mrs [FFR-SPO] Foster Care

54. I had to call Mr and Mrs [FFR-SPO] mum and dad. There was one time Mr [REDACTED] came back and asked me where my mother was. She was in bed with the butcher, and I told him that. I didn't understand what it meant. Mr [REDACTED] chased us all out of the house. I don't know what happened next. Mrs [FFR] battered me for that.
55. Mrs [FFR] used to say she was going to see the Queen when she went out. She would lock us in the house. She locked her own children in too, not just me and [REDACTED].
56. If I did something wrong Mrs [FFR] would slap me in the face. It was a life of hell. In terms of people who abused me, Mrs [FFR] was the worst of the lot. She used to hit me with a belt, the type you use to sharpen razors. I have still got a scar on my leg from where she cut me when she got caught in bed with the butcher. I don't know how many times she hit me. I would be screaming when she did it. Belts terrified me.

57. She used to get nylon stockings from men, it was just after World War 2. She put nylon tights on me, it was to try and hide the bruises.
58. Mrs FFR beat me every other day. Mrs FFR beat her own daughter too. She didn't beat [REDACTED], [REDACTED] was timid.
59. I remember that the Queen or someone in the royal family was getting married, or engaged, or something. Mrs FFR was watching it on TV with her pals. I said something and she picked me up and dropped me on the floor. I had a sore bum for days.
60. The FFR-SPO s' got me up in the middle of the night once. It was because I had taken the end of a shepherd's crook to help get apples off the trees. One of my friends had marvellous apple trees at her mum's house. I left the end of the crook in a tree. Mr [REDACTED] asked me where it was. I told him someone had put it up in a tree. He said he would see them about that but I think he knew it was me. He didn't batter me, and he wouldn't let Mrs FFR batter me.
61. There was an incident when Mrs FFR stripped me naked, strapped me and then threw me into nettles. I can't remember what it was for. She dragged me out of the nettles and hosed me down. There were three men working there at the time and they were disgusted. That was one of the times that I had to sleep in the barn, scared of the stag's head.

Reporting of abuse at Mr and Mrs FFR-SPO Foster Care

62. I told the social worker the truth about what it was like at the FFR-SPO s but she didn't believe me. She would say, "Oh, you're an awful girl." I don't think the social worker wanted to know. Even though she didn't believe me, the social worker must have said something to Mrs FFR because I got beaten by her after the social worker left.

Leaving Mr and Mrs [FFR-SPO] Foster Care

63. The social worker took us away from the [FFR-SPO] I think she must have seen the bruises on my legs after Mrs [FFR] beat me and threw me in nettles. I was taken away about a couple of weeks or maybe a month after my last beating. The social worker came for me and took me away on a train to Aberlour Orphanage. She didn't say why but I think those three guys reported the [FFR-SPO]
64. Mrs [FFR] used to have a saying. She would say, "If you don't behave, you'll go to Aberlour." So I thought Aberlour would be bad, but I would have gone anywhere to get away from Mrs [FFR]

Aberlour Orphanage 1949/1950 – 1954

65. I was in Aberlour Orphanage for three or four years. It was good, I enjoyed it there. There was a boys unit, a girls unit, and an infants' unit. There were about 350 people in total, from babies up to fifteen or sixteen years old.

Routine at Aberlour Orphanage

First day

66. I was terrified arriving at Aberlour Orphanage. I had never seen so many people in my life. I met the warden [BLK] and his wife. They were nice, they made me sing for them.

Mornings and bedtime

67. We got up in the morning and had a wash, then went for breakfast. There were about 45 girls in my dormitory. The girls' dormitories were on the ground floor. There was a baby unit, a small girls unit, and a big girls unit. I moved dormitory as I got older. I don't know where the boys' dormitory was. There were matrons to look after us. The bedtime routine was quite easy going.

68. When I was eleven or twelve years old my matron was Miss ^{FFT} . She used to say, "If you're not good you won't get to see your mother." She must have thought my mother was caring. Eventually I replied, "When?" Miss ^{FFT} said she was just joking. Miss ^{FFT} frightened me, she belted me often.

Mealtimes/Food

69. The dining room was on the ground floor. Most of the meals were good but we had to eat tripe and blubber which was awful. I've never been a meat person because of that. When we did have meat, there was no choice of meat, but it was not too bad.
70. We used to have to take food up to Mr and Mrs ^{BLK} s house. It was separate from the main building.

Washing/bathing

71. There was a big bath and we had a bath every other night. I went in first because we had to go in the bath three at a time, and the water did not get changed. There was no supervision of our bath time.

School

72. I was at both primary and secondary school in Aberlour. When I wasn't at school, I was working in Aberlour Orphanage.

Chores

73. The older girls used to do work in the orphanage. I thought they were so grown up. I would have to clean the floors before going to school. I also had to clean things during the week that weren't normally cleaned, like brasses and things. The staff would tell us what we were going to clean. I loved it because it meant I wasn't at school.

Leisure time

74. There was a toy room and we used to play with a skipping rope a lot. One woman used to throw sixpences for us and we would all fight over them. She came to the orphanage about every six months and threw money. I think it would have been better if she had given us one coin each. I don't remember the woman's name.
75. One time me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] stole some food and went up to the woods. When we came back there was a baby lying outside the church. I picked it up and we took it inside. We worked out it must have been a girl who got pregnant to a sailor and abandoned the baby there.

Religious instruction

76. We went to church on Sunday. The staff gave us three pence each for the collection but I would take money out of the collection. I wanted to be a missionary to help people.
77. A couple came to see me at Aberlour, they wanted to adopt a little girl. The staff told us that the lady wanted to adopt a little girl and I thought that was my chance to get out of there. They asked what religion I was and I said, "God." They asked what type of God and they realised I was Protestant. They picked another girl, [REDACTED]. I met [REDACTED] years later at a reunion and she said the couple who adopted her were lovely people.
78. I hated Catholic people because of that when I was young. I was still a child and didn't know any better. I just thought they shouldn't have treated a child like that, I felt it was cruel.
79. Mr and Mrs [REDACTED], the minister and his wife that I stayed with after I was removed from Dorwood House, sent me a cross for my birthday but it went missing. I later found it in stuff that was being sold to raise funds for Aberlour Orphanage. It had my name on it and I told the staff. [REDACTED] ^{BLK} wanted to know how it had got in amongst the stuff to be sold and I got it back.

Trips/Holidays

80. We went on holiday to Hopeman House. It was a big house. We went down on a bus for a week. One dormitory would go down at a time. We went there every summer. There were about eight or ten children to a room. It was freedom. Me and [REDACTED] went down to the beach.
81. We didn't get day trips out from Aberlour Orphanage, but when we went to Hopeman House we went out on day trips there.

Birthdays and Christmas

82. At Christmas, I would pretend to be sleepy and go to bed wondering if I was going to get anything. Although it was an orphanage, some of the kids got presents from parents, but I didn't get any Christmas presents. I would get something from the staff, like talc. We did decorate the place and we got Christmas dinner. They made me sing from morning until night.
83. I got to know when my birthday was in Aberlour, eventually. Everybody at Aberlour Orphanage got a present on their birthday, just a wee thing. We got a birthday cake too.

Visits

84. My dad used to send me letters at Aberlour, when I was eleven or twelve. He didn't come to see me though.
85. I didn't get any other visitors at Aberlour Orphanage, except my brother [REDACTED]. The first time I met him I was about thirteen or fourteen. [REDACTED] was about four or five years older than me, he was in the army. He burst out crying when he saw me. The visit with [REDACTED] went well. The warden had told him to come and visit me.

86. When █████ came to stay, he was able to stay at the Orphanage. He had said he was going to stay at a hotel but ^{BLK} █████ told him they had two houses at the orphanage for visitors to stay at, so he stayed there for a week. He told me all about my other brothers and sister. █████ █████ and █████ were older than me. █████ █████, █████, and █████ were all younger than me, but I don't know all their ages. Then after three or four days █████ got a girlfriend in Aberlour and he forgot about me.

87. One time the postman gave me a letter out of the bundle of mail for the orphanage. He said not to tell anyone. It was a letter from █████ with five pounds, which was a fortune in those days. He may have been sending me other letters that I didn't get.

Healthcare

88. Nurse Logan dealt with healthcare at Aberlour Orphanage. I loved her, she had a wee baby. Nurse Logan had a big white house on the river Spey. There was another nurse, Nurse ^{FFU} █████ I never got ill at Aberlour, I've never been ill. I did have to see a doctor for routine immunisations, but I don't know the doctor's name. I didn't see a dentist at all at Aberlour.

89. When I was ten years old, I had my first period. I didn't know what was happening, nobody had explained to me about the changes that take place in a woman's body. I thought I had dysentery, because they had a hospital at Aberlour Orphanage and other people were in there with dysentery. When Nurse ^{FFU} █████ realised it was my period, not dysentery, she beat me. She slapped me in the face. Nurse ^{FFU} █████ gave me a sanitary towel but I didn't know what it was, I thought it was some kind of hat.

Abuse at Aberlour Orphanage

90. I don't think the warden or the other people in charge knew what was going on regarding the way Nurse ^{FFU} █████ or Miss ^{FFT} █████ were with the children. We knew that if we grassed on Nurse ^{FFU} █████ or Miss ^{FFT} █████, we would get battered.

91. There was not really any physical abuse at Aberlour Orphanage, apart from when I got my period. However there was psychological abuse from Miss FFT
92. My dad sent me two shillings every week. Miss FFT took it and said she would keep it for me. When I was getting ready to leave, I asked her about my money. She said she would use it to get me something nice. She bought me talcum powder and soap. I didn't get any of the money. I think she spent my money on fags.

Reporting of abuse at Aberlour Orphanage

93. I told my brother about the abuse when he came to visit me at Aberlour Orphanage. He said that he would get me out of care, and he did.

Leaving Aberlour Orphanage

94. My brother was living in Glasgow where his girlfriend was. He was living in army barracks, then he got a house. He got me out of Aberlour Orphanage when I was fifteen. Although I liked Aberlour, I was glad to get out. told me I would be leaving Aberlour. He wrote to me to tell me. The staff at Aberlour Orphanage read your letters, but they had to give me that letter as was coming back to Aberlour to pick me up. I left about two months after wrote me the letter saying I was going to stay with him. I think that was for Aberlour to check he really was family. I didn't know where any of my siblings were when I was in care at Redhall, Montrose, or Aberlour.

Life after being in care

95. collected me from Aberlour and we got a train to Glasgow. had a nice house on . At Glasgow, I got taken in by 's girlfriend's sister and her husband . and must have got checked out by the social workers. I hated it at and 's house. I was there from the age of fifteen until I was seventeen. That was when I met my husband . He was a handsome

man, he looked like Dean Martin. He came from Edinburgh and he used to come through to Glasgow to see me. While [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were waiting on a bigger house, I had to stay at [REDACTED]'s mother's house for a while.

96. [REDACTED] got me a job working in a factory making sausages. That was when I was staying with [REDACTED]'s mother. I got paid £5.00 per week but I had to hand it over to [REDACTED]'s mother and I just got two shillings back for myself.

97. I met my mother [REDACTED] when I was eighteen. She wanted to see me and I told [REDACTED] I wanted to see her. I wrote to my dad to get the address where she stayed. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] took me to see her at her flat in [REDACTED]. She was playing cards and she took me into the kitchen. She asked me for money to gamble playing cards. She wanted to see me again a few times after that, but I just ignored her. I didn't see her again until I saw her in a care home when she was ill. She said, "If Christ can forgive the thieves on the cross, why can't you forgive me?" I was choked, but I couldn't forgive her.

98. [REDACTED] moved to London and when I was nineteen, I moved back to Edinburgh and stayed with my dad. I got a job in Edinburgh working as a waitress at the [REDACTED] Club, also known as the [REDACTED] Club. I got married to my husband [REDACTED]. I moved into [REDACTED]'s mother's house when I was pregnant with my son [REDACTED]. Then my dad got me a house in [REDACTED].

99. Then I got a council house in [REDACTED]. Next I moved to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] After that we bought a bungalow at [REDACTED].

100. My husband [REDACTED] was working in a wire factory and I was having children. I had [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] but he was still-born.

101. When there was a strike at the wire factory, my husband [REDACTED] started cleaning windows. He was making more money doing that than at the wire factory. He applied for a license but that was refused because his brother was a thief. He reapplied and

got a license. Within three or four years he had contracts for Edinburgh Council schools and hospitals etc. and he had twelve people working for him.

102. I ended up running the window cleaning business with [REDACTED]. After a while we also started doing other cleaning work, but it was mainly windows. He died in 1989 from cancer. I kept working until I was seventy.

103. I am now living in a retirement flat. I am very proud of all of my children. My son [REDACTED] died around five years ago, from cancer. My daughter [REDACTED] has now been diagnosed with cancer.

104. I have never really had a relationship with my siblings. I did try to form a relationship with them, but they didn't try. The only one I speak to now is my brother [REDACTED].

Impact

105. Since leaving care I have had a happy life, but I do keep thinking about what happened to me in care. It has had a big impact on me, but I didn't give in. I was overprotective of my children when they were younger. I lived for my family. I did used to suffer from nightmares, years ago. I would think I was back in care.

Reporting of Abuse

106. I have not made any formal report about the abuse I suffered in care. I have told my children. I told my dad, when I lived with him when I was sixteen. I have never had any counselling over the years since leaving care. I think I just wanted to try and put it behind me. I had my family, and that's all that mattered.

Records

107. I have never tried to get my records but I would like to have them. I understand that Future Pathways may be able to help me with that.

Hope for the Inquiry

108. I would like the Inquiry to clarify where I was in care and for how long because I am not sure about all of the places I was. As a child I didn't know how long a year was, so I would like to find out exactly how long I was in each place.

Other information

109. 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..... 15/1/2020