

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FDP

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is FDP My date of birth is 1954 and I am presently 63 years of age. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I have five sisters and two brothers. They are, from the oldest to the youngest, , FDO, or FDO as she is known, , me, and , who was known as I never knew I don't know what happened to him. My wee brother died when he was a baby.
3. I was five when I was put into care and I have no recollection of life before I went. My first memory is of being in a home somewhere with my sister , but that's about it. I don't remember my natural mother and father at all.
4. My first real memories are when I was in foster care at Gardenstown.

Foster care at Gardenstown

5. [REDACTED] was a small farm just outside Gardenstown. As well as the farmhouse, there was a stable block, a barn for the beasts, old railway carriages for the hens and a tractor shed.
6. I remember being in the living room with a table full of food. After speaking to my sisters, I now know this must have been our first day at [REDACTED]. I don't remember anything else about how we got there or why we were there.
7. The only other thing I remember from that time is mum telling us we had to call them mum and dad. I think we must have been calling dad "sir" or something. Their names were FLW-FLX [REDACTED] but I've always just called them mum and dad.
8. I don't think I even knew at the time that all these other girls were my sisters, I was so young. I never knew anything about [REDACTED] my youngest sister. She came to live with us a wee while later. I think it was mum that told us we were sisters and that [REDACTED] was coming to live with us.
9. My first impression of mum was that we had to do what we were told. She told us that if we didn't do what we were told, we would get put back where we came from.
10. It was probably not long after I started school that I realised we were all in foster care.

Routine at [REDACTED] Gardenstown

11. At the start of every day, my sister [REDACTED] and I would have to do all the housework as soon as we got up. [REDACTED] was less than a year older than me and we had to beat the rugs, do the dusting and whatever else needed cleaning. At the weekend we would take all the rugs out and polish the vinyl floors.

12. After the housework was done we would go to school. When we came home from school, we would have to change our clothes, do our homework and then do work on the farm again.
13. My older sisters had to sort the beasts on the farm out. Once I'd been at [REDACTED] for about a year, I was sent to work outside as well. Me and [REDACTED] would have to do the turnips or whatever else needed done. As [REDACTED] and FDO got older and left, we had to fill their shoes. There was quite a lot of beasts and we would have to feed them all.
14. In the summertime I had to look after the hens and the geese that were sitting on eggs ready to hatch out. I would have to check they were alright and feed them.
15. When it was time to do the hay, dad drove the tractor and trailer and we would have to put the hay on the back. Dad would drive it round to the yard and we would have to take it off the trailer and make it into stacks.
16. If there was a lot to do, mum would tell us that she would make us a big meal at night. If we didn't get everything done though, she wouldn't.

Sleeping

17. I slept in the same bedroom as [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] slept in a pull-down bed that came out of a cupboard. There was two bedrooms up the stair, but we weren't allowed up there.

Toilet

18. Right across from the front door of the farmhouse was an outside toilet that mum and dad used. We weren't allowed to use that, we had to go to a wooden hut with a toilet in it that was further away. I remember we would have to empty it into the "midden" in the middle of the steading, where all the farmyard manure went.

19. After a while, they got central heating, carpets and a toilet put in the house. We were still only ever allowed to use the toilet in the house last thing at night though. We were never allowed to use the toilet paper, we always just had to use newspaper. When the new toilet was put in we got bathed in there, but before that the bath was in the milking house.

Washing and bathing

20. We would have to carry out the hot water once a week or a fortnight to the bath in the milking house. Mum would go first, then dad and then us, all in the same water. We were washed in washing powder and green soap. Mum bathed us all the time, no matter how old we were. She was there all the time, right up to when I left. We would have to stand up in the bath while she washed us. If we didn't stand up straight, she would throw cold water over us.
21. Otherwise we would get washed in a sink in the kitchenette. Mum would wash us down there too, even when we were older. It was so embarrassing.
22. We had tins of pink toothpaste to brush our teeth with. The tin wasn't replaced straight away when it was finished though, we would have to use salt instead. I think the tins of toothpaste were often put out if someone was coming to visit.

Food

23. We ate in the kitchenette off tables that were fixed to the wall and could be folded away. That's where we would play too and there was a television up in the corner. After she got the central heating there was a radiator in that room where the old fire had been. It was only on when she switched it on, we weren't allowed to.
24. Everything was locked up, even the freezer had a lock on it. Breakfast was porridge every morning. Because we lived on a farm, we got a lot of potatoes and vegetables. We would get mince sometimes too, but it would be watered down to go

round us all. We often got chips too. Mum would make broth with all the vegetables. Even if it was turning sour, we would still have to eat it. We also got "eggy stuff" a lot for tea. That was just eggs, flour, salt and pepper, mixed with water and fried. As a treat, if mum gave us beans for our dinner, one of us would get to scrape the tin.

25. We were often sent to the bakers down the back road. We used to carry a bag of baps, or scones, or whatever was left off their van, back up the road. The fancy pieces would be on the top, but all the old stuff would be underneath. Everything would be put in the freezer and we would get something for our supper. We weren't allowed jams or anything, maybe just butter if she had made some.
26. A father and daughter would come up sometimes from Gardenstown and would give mum fish. She would give them butter, cheese and eggs in exchange. I had a bit of fish once and I choked on a fish bone. That was the first time I choked and I had to eat dry loaf to shift it. I was just little at the time.
27. Mum would make cheese. She would heat up the milk and put in rennet to make it go thick and put it in this wee cold room. My job was to go in and break it up, empty the liquid from the top and sieve out the curd. I would then put it into a basin for it to set. That was one of my jobs from when I would have been about six or seven.

Clothing

28. Our clothes were always different from what other children wore. At home we wore boys' vests and underpants that were sown up the front, dungarees and a shirt or a jumper. On our feet we wore "tackety" boots. Mum used to knit us cardigans or jumpers for school. We would wear different pants and vests for school and a petticoat under a skirt or a pinafore. When we came home from school we had to take everything off, including our underwear, to keep them clean. For church on a Sunday we had Sunday clothes: a dress and a hat. We would have to change as soon as we got home from church.

29. Mum only did a wash at the weekend, on a Saturday. We had to wear the same clothes every day until they got washed at the weekend. In the winter we wore thick woollen socks, but they didn't get washed very much at all.

Schooling

30. We all went to school at Bracoden in Gardenstown and would walk there in the mornings. We would then walk home for lunch and back again for the afternoon. I found school hard and never enjoyed it.
31. The local children used to call us maggots and beasties because we were foster bairns. If we had been sitting in a chair, they wouldn't sit in the chair after us. They would blow on it or put a book on the chair and sit on that. They wouldn't touch us. I think this happened to all my sisters in their classes too. Me and [REDACTED] were in the same class and even the other children of five and six were doing it.
32. I had one pal from the village who was nothing like that, it was the "higher class" ones who were. By that I mean the children whose folks had some money. I knew I was different, it wasn't very nice.
33. Sometimes the other kids would hit you. I remember getting my head hit off a clothes peg on the wall one time.
34. When I was older, I went to the school in Macduff for a year and it was just the same there. We would get the bus, but even if there was a seat we had to stand. The other kids wouldn't let us sit beside them. We knew our place.
35. Mum never gave us a hand with our homework, we just helped each other and muddled through. I remember [REDACTED] teaching us how to tell the time.

Visits/inspections

36. Mum and dad would take us up to their daughter [REDACTED]'s house to visit her and her husband [REDACTED]. Their surname was [REDACTED] and he was a policeman. We weren't allowed in their house though. We weren't allowed in anybody's house. We had to stay in dad's Dormobile van, or wander the streets, or play in the park. It didn't matter how long it was for, it could be hours. She could be up for her dinner. All we would be given would be the heels off a loaf, bits of biscuit, or old baps out of this bowl that [REDACTED] would have. It didn't matter how old the stuff was or if it was mouldy.
37. The social work used to come every so often. Mum would tell us to keep our school clothes on. She told us we weren't allowed to speak to them and would lay out a spread of food for them. All they saw was what mum wanted them to see.

Birthdays/Christmas

38. I remember we would get a present on our birthdays, but it wasn't a big deal. At Christmas we would get a cardboard box that had an apple and an orange and clothes in it. There would be socks or a vest, maybe a new blouse, all for school.
39. We didn't get toys, although I did have a doll and a game of "Monopoly". I'd bought them myself with money I got from picking potatoes.

Pocket Money

40. We would get some pocket money most weeks, not much, maybe threepence. By the time I left it went up a wee bit. We would also paid for picking potatoes. We were always popular for picking potatoes because we were good workers. It was a day away for us and I used to enjoy it.
41. We would sometimes ask if we could buy fish and chips, but we would only be allowed if one of us paid for mum and dad's.

Holidays/trips

42. We would sometimes go away for the day in dad's Dormobile van. We would drive to different places and have our dinner in a layby somewhere. When we came back we still had to do all the work though. We never had any other holidays.

Relationship with foster parents

43. I would say I was closer to mum and dad than my other sisters were. I used to take dad's boots off at night and put on his slippers. Dad never really said anything, he just did what he was told, mum was the boss. He never did anything bad as such, but at the same time he knew exactly what was happening. He wanted us doing all the work because he was getting the lifestyle he wanted.
44. I got closer to mum after my second episode of choking when I would have been about seven or eight. I had swallowed a potato and it got stuck. Mum pushed it down my throat to clear it and then she passed out. Everyone told me it was my fault and it was horrendous at the time. I felt really guilty, I thought she had died. It was after that, that I got closer to mum, because she always used to tell me to watch what I was eating or it could happen again. She would say things like I was going to die and "everything comes in threes", "watch now". I started to get afraid and wouldn't eat.
45. I felt dependant on her and thought she had saved my life. As I got older it became hard to be away from her because I thought she was the only one that could save me if I choked again.
46. [REDACTED] was treated different by mum, more like her own daughter. She was only three when she came and mum used to favour her. Mum had more affection for her and used to use [REDACTED] to tell her things about us. When we came home from school, [REDACTED] used to get to watch all the cartoons, we weren't allowed. Even though this happened when I was still young, I could see it was just a ploy by mum. I was never jealous, she was using [REDACTED] to control us.

47. If mum and dad ever went away, which wasn't often, we would all be left there. [REDACTED] was left in the livingroom with the door locked. We were all in the kitchenette. One time [REDACTED] opened the locked door and handed out pancakes and jelly to us. Mum found out because [REDACTED] told her and that was the end of [REDACTED] being favoured.
48. I knew from early on that mum and dad weren't our real parents, but I used to think that at least they were doing more for us. At times when it was bad though, I used to think we might have been better off with our real parents. At least they might have loved us. I knew we were only there to do the work. There was no warmth or affection from mum or dad.

Contact with natural parents

49. I must have heard about my natural mother from my sisters. We knew it was a bad thing to speak about her though, so we would talk in secret. When [REDACTED] went to school she was adamant she wanted to be called FLW-FLX not [REDACTED] I suppose that was because she had been so young when she came to join us.
50. Mum, FLX told us that our natural mother never wanted us. A few years ago I got hold of my records and they say that our natural mother had contacted the Social Work Department a couple of times but mum never told us.

Medical attention

51. I don't remember seeing the doctor or the dentist much. When I was about eight-and-a-half though, I chopped the ends of two of my fingers off on a machine for turnips. [REDACTED] and me were putting the turnips in the machine, which had an on-off switch at the side. It was known as a "thrashing" machine and had a blade at the bottom. The turnips went in the top and after we had finished I saw there was a wee swede stuck at the top. I reached up to take the swede off and [REDACTED] switched the machine on. It was only when I walked away that I saw all the blood and the tops of two of my fingers were off.

52. I went to tell mum and dad and got taken to the hospital in the back of a car with mum and dad's daughter [REDACTED] I went to Aberdeen hospital and was kept in for a while. After that I remember going back and forward to the hospital with mum for check-ups.

Abuse at [REDACTED] Gardenstown

53. We were treated like slaves by mum and dad and the local folk looked on us that way too. We were just young girls. Before us, mum and dad had other foster kids and when [REDACTED] and FDO left, they took on more. We were all just there to do the farm labour. Some of the other foster kids were only there for a short time, we were the only ones that were there all the time.
54. We knew we were different to everybody else and we were "homey bairns". By that, I mean nobody wanted us and that was why we were put there. That's what mum and the kids at school used to tell us. She told us all we were good for was being chained up in the barn with the beasts. If you get told that enough you believe it.
55. My oldest sister [REDACTED] used to beat [REDACTED] whenever she wet the bed. She would hit me sometimes too, if I didn't do what she was telling me. I used to think she only did it to make things easier for herself. Mum knew what was happening, but never did anything about it.
56. [REDACTED] was never called by her name, she was called "Stinky" by us all. Mum told us to call her that because of her wetting the bed. We were only doing what we were told, but I still feel bad for calling her that. She was my sister and it wasn't right.
57. Mum never hit us, but as a punishment she would make us stand in the corner with our hands behind our backs. Sometimes we could be standing there for hours. Another punishment was to stand in the midden with a bag over our heads. Again

you could be there for hours until mum told us we could come in. I don't remember being put there in the snow or the rain, but any other weather we were there.

58. One summertime, [REDACTED] and I were put to bed straight after teatime for a whole month. We had accidentally seen dad having a pee in the stable and [REDACTED] must have told folk at school. Mum found out and that was our punishment.
59. There was an electric fence round some of the fields and mum used to give us her keys and tell us to touch the fence with the keys. We all had to do it. I don't know if she thought it was funny or if it was another way of controlling us. I remember doing that a few times and getting a shock up my arm.
60. As we got older, we were only ever given one sanitary towel to use, however long our periods lasted. We used to have to use bits of old towel or toilet roll from school. We were never allowed to ask mum for more, it just wasn't done. That's the way she was.
61. I was at [REDACTED] right up till I was sixteen and even at that age mum used to bath us. We were never allowed to lock the door and she would always come in. We used to think she was being perverted.
62. After my choking episodes I couldn't eat anything. Mum had me living in fear and would tell me to watch out or "the wrath of God is going to get you". I stopped eating anything that wasn't soft, like mashed potatoes or soup. I just couldn't swallow anything else. As long as I was near mum, I thought if anything happened she was there to save me. I was paranoid and that was because of what she kept putting in my head. It was as if I had been brainwashed.

Leaving foster care

63. I left [REDACTED] in 1970, when I was sixteen, after I had been there for ten years. I was good at cooking at school and was told I could get a bursary to go to

college in Elgin. I told mum, but she told me I would just have to do what everybody else did and get a job.

64. One day when I came home from school, a lady that was all dressed up was there. Mum told me that was who I was going to be working for. I was sent to where the lady came from, [REDACTED], near Turriff and that was my first job. I was there to clean and help look after the woman's three boys. I had to clean their shoes and tidy up after them.
65. I used to sit at the table and eat with them, but because of my eating problems that made me really anxious. I was afraid because I was so far away from mum. I used to phone mum from there and write to her. The lady was not a nice woman and treated me harshly.
66. I got £6 a fortnight in pay and I would take the bus back home after I got paid. When I went back to [REDACTED] I would have to put money from my wages into a tin that mum had. I would maybe keep £1 or £2 and the rest would go to mum.
67. I was only there for three or four months and then I went to another farm at [REDACTED]. My job there was to clean the house and help feed the men. It was more relaxed there and it was better because I was nearer mum. I think I got £7 there and £3 or £4 of that went to mum as well.
68. I would buy mum presents when I went back to visit. I might buy her a tea set and she would tell me she would need a teapot to go with it. I felt it was my duty and that I owed her that for bringing us up. I don't know if she would still be getting foster care money for me then.
69. I then got a job as a waitress in a hotel [REDACTED] and went back to stay with mum and dad again. I might have been seventeen by then. I was then asked if I would move into the pub and help the couple that had bought it look after their kids. I started working in the bar and would sometimes take the kids up to see mum on the farm. My eating wasn't so bad then because I was nearer mum and I felt safer.

70. I got another job in another hotel and then when I was nineteen, I got married. Mum wasn't happy because my husband, [REDACTED] was a bit older than me. We rented a house in Gardenstown for a wee while and I got pregnant with my oldest son, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] got a caravan and we stayed in it at mum and dad's. I had to pay her £20 a week for keeping it there and £20 for water. [REDACTED] was born there in the caravan.
71. [REDACTED] was a fisherman and a drinker. When he would come home off the sea he would go to the pub. Mum took his pay packet and would give me money from it.
72. I'm not sure how long we lived there, but one time I went to Banff for some shopping and left [REDACTED] looking after [REDACTED]. I phoned home from there and mum told me I had to come home straight away as there were people there that were going to take my baby away. I was panicking, but they hadn't been there for that at all. It was folk from the Council looking at the circumstances I was in so that I could get a house. Not long after that I got a house in Gardenstown and had [REDACTED] my second son, there.
73. We moved from there when [REDACTED] was about three. [REDACTED] packed in the sea and we moved to a farm about fifteen miles away, where he got a job. One time the doctor was round when [REDACTED] came home drunk and abusive. The doctor took me and the bairns away to mum's. That was the only time I'd seen her since I left Gardenstown. I stayed the night, but left again the next day.

Life after being in care

74. It wasn't long before [REDACTED] packed in that job and we moved to [REDACTED], which was even further away. My eating was bad then, because I was afraid if something happened to me there would be nobody for the kids. I landed up in the Ross Clinic in Aberdeen, which is a place for eating disorders. [REDACTED] was drinking and there was really no money for anything.

75. [REDACTED] then got another job in [REDACTED] so we moved back there and then I had my daughter [REDACTED] I would see mum sometimes when I was there, but I never told her about [REDACTED]'s drinking. My eating got so bad though with [REDACTED]'s drinking and abusiveness that I ended up in Cornhill Hospital in Aberdeen. I was there for about two months.
76. I was married to [REDACTED] for about ten years and then we divorced. I had had enough of his drinking and all the abuse. I moved to Banff with the kids and [REDACTED] went to live with his brother.
77. I had been taking anti-depressants and my eating had been really bad. I stopped taking the pills and, when [REDACTED] was seven, I got a job as a home help. I also got another job in a chicken factory and then got a job as a housekeeper at Macduff. I had several jobs and always had at least two jobs when the kids were growing up.
78. Eventually my kids grew up and moved out. I married again for a short time, but it never lasted and I now live alone. I gave my kids everything I could, but my relationship with them is not very good. I used to be close with [REDACTED] but not anymore.
79. I never saw mum after I left [REDACTED] and went to stay in Banff. She never wanted to see us anyway. [REDACTED] had gone to see her one day, but mum told her to go away. I think that was the last [REDACTED] saw her.

Reporting of abuse at [REDACTED], Gardenstown

80. I have never reported any of the abuse I suffered at [REDACTED] I have spoken to my doctor about it and she sent me for counselling, but it was too late. I only went once.

Impact

81. My sisters and me are not the same as other people. We are not equal, we are still "homey bairns". We were made to stand out by mum and dad.
82. I live with my eating problems every day. When I had my kids I was eight stone and went from that to six stone. I'm the heaviest I've been at the moment, but that's because I'm on medication. When I'm nervous I can't eat and my pills take the anxiety off. I'm still afraid of eating anything solid. My doctor told me I've got post-traumatic stress.
83. I used to think that the only person that could save me was mum. The truth is she was the person that made me like this. I was quieter than the rest of my sisters and she made me so dependent on her.
84. [REDACTED] only found out later on in life that mum and dad were not her natural parents. She went off the rails and she took it bad when she realised they didn't really love her. [REDACTED] died a few years ago.
85. I don't have anything to do with [REDACTED] anymore. She saw me sitting with [REDACTED] on my knee when she was about three and told me I was spoiling her. I didn't want my bairns to go through what I had so I stayed away from [REDACTED]. I think that was the effect of how she was brought up that made [REDACTED] that way.
86. Each and every one of us has a bowel problem.

Records

87. I obtained some of my records about ten years ago from Aberdeen City Council. They told me then that they had all my sisters' records too, except [REDACTED]'s. It was my records that told me who our natural parents were and that our natural father was actually our great-uncle. There was nothing much else in them though. The way I see it is that what's written down, isn't what actually happened.

88. My records do say that our natural mother had said that she was happy for **FLW** and **FLX** to adopt us, but that **FLX** didn't want to. I suppose that would mean she wouldn't get any more foster money.

Other information

89. 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..... **FDP**

Dated..... 22.2.18