

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FEQ [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FEQ [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1973. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

2. I am single and live alone, I have no children. My mum is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] My dad is [REDACTED] I have seen my dad once in about forty years and my mum for about seventeen years. I don't even know if they are still alive.

3. I have a half-brother, [REDACTED] who is three years younger than me. I also have a step-brother [REDACTED] and a step-sister [REDACTED]

Life before going into care

4. I was in care from a young age because my mum was in psychiatric care. I'm not sure of the exact details of my mothers' mental problems. My father was also heavy handed, particularly with my brother, not me, which led to my parents splitting up. That was when I was about nine or ten and me and mum then moved from Irvine to Musselburgh.

5. I had been in trouble with the police in Irvine. Then when we moved to Musselburgh, I was criminally active straight away and my mum couldn't cope with that. I started going about with older people. I got in trouble from age seven onwards.

6. I was robbing houses, breaking into pubs, stealing cars and motor bikes and stealing all the time. I have never physically hurt anyone with my criminal activity. It was all to get money to help my mum.
7. I don't have much recollection of any social work involvement but I do remember mum wrote to them when we were staying in Musselburgh. I did see someone then and I recall being in foster care umpteen times but only for a short time. That was before my long term care in Haddington when I was twelve.

The [REDACTED] foster care

8. Initially, in about 1985, when I was about twelve, I went from our home in Musselburgh to foster care in Gifford. That was with the [REDACTED] family who were pleasant enough. It was only for about four to six months until I could go longer term, to the JCX/SPO [REDACTED] in Haddington.
9. As I say, Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] were fine. I don't think that they trusted me and I got blamed for things I didn't do, but it was nice enough. It was my first time in a small village.
10. That was arranged by my social workers, Ray Harris and David Philpot. I do remember a panel and being told it was to address my criminal behaviour.
11. I never saw my mum for about five years after I went into care in East Lothian. I'm not sure if that was because she was ill or what.

JCX/SPO [REDACTED] foster care

12. After the [REDACTED] family, I was taken by the social work to JCX/SPO [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] in Haddington. That was long term care and I was with them for about three years, until I was sixteen.

13. It was JCX [REDACTED] that looked after us and did everything. Her husband [REDACTED] was an architect and worked a lot of the time. They had two daughters: [REDACTED] was one, she was older than me and was adopted. I forget the other daughters name but she was about a year younger than me.
14. I was still getting into bother with the police when I moved from Gifford to Haddington. That continued all the time, really.

Routine at JCX/SPO [REDACTED]

15. The JCX/SPO [REDACTED] were quite strict. [REDACTED] more or less took a back seat and JCX [REDACTED] ran things. She was heavy handed and tried to inflict rules. I was used to doing what I wanted with my mum, so that was all new to me.
16. When I say heavy handed, she hit me, to stop me 'carrying on'. Mrs JCX [REDACTED] once hit me across my head and pushed me backwards against a pile of chairs. That was because of my criminality. Her daughter [REDACTED] stopped her and that never happened again.
17. I had no discipline at all from my family life. I ran away from the JCX/SPO [REDACTED] house at least four times.
18. I don't remember getting any letters from my mum, but I know it says in the records that I was getting them. I had a photo taken of me in my cadet uniform and that was sent to her.
19. There was no direct contact. The only thing I remember was running away once to try and see her but I was picked up by the police and taken back to the JCX/SPO [REDACTED].
20. I don't remember any official contact with my mum either. If there was, I would have remembered that. I was completely cut off from her.

21. I don't blame her cos she's that mentally ill, she completely abandoned the situation of having a son and a family. Her mental problems have deprived me of a father and caused me a lot of problems.
22. I've since spoken to my father and he told me that my mother disappeared with me and when he found her, she told him to go elsewhere.
23. The JCX/SPO family were strict but it was a proper family setting. I couldn't really get on with JCX but ██████████ was alright. The main affection or kindness would be from their daughters, who treated me nice. It was good at Christmas as well.
24. You've got to appreciate I was criminally active all the time and there was things I knew they couldn't find out about. To do with local criminal activity.
25. JCX did let me smoke cigarettes, so long as I smoked outside and kept the cigarettes on top of the fridge. She tried to structure things, which was fair enough.
26. The main thing was that I feel I was more tolerated, than guided. I think that was because of how long I had been criminally active. It was like they couldn't wait for me to turn sixteen to get me out the house, and that's how it turned out.
27. I had my own room and I spent a lot of time out with my mates. We were into poaching and stealing cars. Just to rally them about and then dump them.
28. I do reckon the JCX/SPO cared but there is an incident that JCX allowed, that was indicated at the High Court during Michael Lowrys' trial. You see the JCX/SPO used to go to Germany on holiday but never took me away with them. I usually stayed with other carers when they went on holiday.
29. Yet, JCX allowed me to go away with Michael Lowry and his two children to Butlins in Ayr. I know ██████████ wasn't happy about that and said that to the

police years later. JCX allowed it. I don't know if the social workers even knew about that at the time.

30. It was for a long weekend and the sexual abuse by Lowry just continued on that holiday. That was when his two kids were there as well.
31. I don't know why JCX would let him take me on that holiday. They didn't like one another. I don't know what reason Michael gave but he asked JCX and she agreed. I was fourteen then and his other sons would have been about six and eight.
32. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Lowry was found guilty of that as well in the court case.

Food and hygiene

33. JCX did all the cooking and always took care of the food. We had all the meals at set times. I went to the meals and I was well fed.
34. There were two toilets at the JCX/SPO. It was a three bedroom house and a proper functioning house for a family. That wasn't a problem.
35. I don't recall having to see a doctor or dentist ever, but Mrs JCX would have arranged that if I'd needed one.

Schooling

36. I remember getting a taxi from Gifford to Musselburgh Grammar when I was staying at Gifford. When I was staying in Haddington with the JCX/SPO family, I was at Knox Academy.
37. As far as I remember, I never sat any exams, as soon as I was sixteen I just packed it in. I did go to school but I skived as well, any chance I could get. I can honestly say that I'm lucky I can read and write.

38. I once got the blame for breaking into a cupboard at the school, where sweets were kept, but it wasn't me. That used to happen, I'd get the blame because they knew I was criminally active.
39. I don't think I was a problem at school, I'm quite a reserved person and placid at times. I prefer to keep my head to myself and get on with things.
40. There was never any attempt at school to understand why I ran away. That was never addressed, not once.
41. I have no recollection of any social work visits when I was in foster care.

Work

42. I did work on a milk float in and around Haddington. I also had a paper round. I'm not sure if I got pocket money but JCX [REDACTED] would buy any clothes I needed. She had a social work allowance.

Leisure time

43. I would spend time in my room listening to music or playing electronic games. I was allowed out until nine at night and I would have to be in by set times. I'm sure I always stuck to that.
44. When I was out and with my pals, if we weren't getting into trouble, we would sometimes go cycling. We would cycle in and about Haddington.
45. I also joined the army cadets from fourteen to sixteen and I enjoyed that. I was helping other kids with training and was good at it.

Religion

46. Religion was not part of the [JCX/SPO] ' life or any of my immediate family's lives either.

Birthdays/Christmas

47. At Christmas I got presents, just like the two daughters did. The [JCX/SPO] had two sons as well who lived away from home and they would visit at Christmas. I felt part of the family and included.
48. The good memories from the [JCX/SPO] house were from Christmas. They got me a bike one year. I really appreciated that and being treated as part of the family at those festive times.
49. I have no recollection of any birthday celebrations.

Running away

50. I ran away from foster care with the [JCX/SPO] family about four or five times. The first few times were only for a day or so but I remember the last time was for about a month.
51. I would have stayed with friends in Haddington when it was only for a day or so. The friends' parents would want me to hand myself in, so I would. Sometimes I would get into bother and the police would take me back.
52. I just wanted to get away from the situation. I wanted to get away from the abuse and Michael Lowry. I never told anyone for sixteen years about that abuse.
53. I would get grounded and have my trainers taken off me by [JCX] but I would still run away. No one would ask if anything was wrong. Nobody seemed to care. Not the social work or anyone, tried to find out what might be causing me to run away.

54. The fourth time I ran away I went to my sisters bed-sit in the West End of Edinburgh. I eventually handed myself in to the police but I was still taken back to the [REDACTED] in Haddington. That must have been about five or six months before my sixteenth birthday.
55. I have no recollection of any panels for the running away. I don't recall meeting with the social workers and talking about it at all. I was usually just grounded for a few days.
56. Running away didn't stop Michael Lowry abusing me, it still continued. It wasn't until I was crying in the flat above the snooker club, that he stopped.

Abuse at The [REDACTED] foster care

57. I can't remember how long I had been at the [REDACTED] before the abuse started.
58. Before I moved in with the [REDACTED] family, they fostered a boy called [REDACTED]. He was also a victim to the same perpetrator as me, Michael Lowry. Michael bragged about that to me. It didn't come out until years later at the trial but I think [REDACTED] suspected Lowry was abusing boys.
59. I didn't know for sure but, looking back, [REDACTED] and Michael Lowry detested each other with a venom. The only reason I could think of was to do with abuse.
60. She would be very stern and raise her voice whenever Michael Lowry's name was mentioned. I just feel that she had her suspicions and maybe just didn't have any proof. I don't know that for sure though, it's just me presuming.
61. The first thing was, that I got friendly with [REDACTED] who was Michael's [REDACTED] was at Knox Academy in Haddington. I used to get invited to their house for tea and that and I got to know the family.

62. There was Michael and his wife and they had [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] I can't remember their names. One of them was a witness against Michael for abuse.
63. Michael was aged about 42-50. He ran a snooker club for the young boys. He was also a road sweeper in Haddington and he worked in the public toilets there. He also did collections for hampers at Christmas.
64. I knew the family and I suppose that dropped my guard towards him. I remember somebody had said, in the town, that Michael Lowry was a poof and we had a wee laugh about it. Then me, innocently enough, I decided I would ask him if he was.
65. That's how it first happened. I went and chapped on his door at his work in the public toilets. He took me into his room and proceeded to sodomise me.
66. I was about thirteen or fourteen. He told me that I had better be back again the next day. I didn't understand what was going on, it was beyond me. I just done as I was told.
67. After that, it was never ending. It went on until I was about sixteen and stopped one day at the snooker club. I had moved into a flat [REDACTED] when I was sixteen.
68. I was sitting crying and Michael came over and kneeled down next to me and asked me what was wrong. I never said anything, as it could have been manipulated or twisted to whatever way he thought it should be. I think he realised he was on eggshells and it never happened again after that day.
69. The abuse was so intense. Without exaggerating I would say it was happening no less than three times a week. It happened in his own private properties, in the public toilets, his own house and in the snooker club. It was always just me and him.

70. It made me feel dead, really dead. I had no feelings at all. I felt nothing for him. He didn't say anything. That's the scary side of it, I can't recall a conversation. That's how cold it was.
71. I remember one time, I walked into Michael Lowrys' office, and I just meant to give him a fright by kicking his door open. When I walked in, he was sitting masturbating and I laughed at him. He got up and slapped me full force across the face. Then he proceeded to sodomise me.
72. Once, when he was sodomising me he bragged to me about doing it with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] It had been going on for so long with me that I presume he thought he'd won me over to his way. So I suppose I got the best out of a bad situation with him admitting to doing it to [REDACTED]
73. There wasn't any connection between the [REDACTED] family and Lowry. They knew one another but there was nothing but complete animosity between them. I think the fact [REDACTED] and me were both in their foster care was more than just a coincidence.
74. I think Michael Lowry was deliberately targeting children in care with the knowledge that they might not have someone to turn to.
75. There were pals of mine in Haddington that had their suspicions about Michael Lowry. They said to me that if he touched me they would kill him. I never said a word though.
76. I bumped into one of my old pals from Haddington about twenty years later when I was in a psychiatric ward. It was either [REDACTED] I told him about Michael Lowry and the abuse and he said they all knew I had suddenly changed.
77. So if my pals all knew how come the social work and my foster parents never picked up on any of it.

Leaving foster care

78. I remember leaving foster care when I was sixteen. David Philpot, my social worker, drove me from Haddington. I wasn't wanting to leave Haddington, that was where my network of friends were. I was going to some mansion in the middle of nowhere to try and help my criminal behaviour but I wasn't up for that at all.
79. Despite all the abuse that was going on, I quickly made up my mind that I wasn't going. I told him to stop the car and I got out. I told him I was sixteen and that as far as I was concerned, the social work had been no good to me at all. I got all my stuff and left him.
80. I don't know if I was under supervision with the children's panel at that time, but I was sixteen.
81. I went to Michael Lowry's snooker club in Haddington. He had offered me a room in a flat [REDACTED]. I went there for about three or four months.
82. He abused me once more, for the last time, after I went to stay in that flat. That was when I broke down in tears and he asked me what was wrong. I said nothing and he was unnerved by that and started backtracking. Maybe he was getting worried.

Life after being in care

83. I tried to join the army at sixteen but they said 'no danger' when they saw my criminal record. Next thing it was prison.
84. After the flat in Haddington, I went to Edinburgh and stayed in some lassie's house in Bilston. I also stayed in the high flats at Moredun. I was in and out of prisons and hostels a lot from that time.

Prison

85. I got into trouble after I was sixteen and I ended up remanded in Saughton Prison for an assessment. After I was convicted, I was in Longriggend Prison and Polmont Young Offenders Institute.
86. I had another assessment at Polmont and I was transferred to Castle Huntly. I felt mentally ill in those places. There was never any harm inflicted upon me in prison.
87. The period of time when I was in prison did not end until I was about 27 or 28 years old.
88. I was going to court and pleading guilty to offences because I wanted to be sent to prison. I knew I would be a lot safer in there.
89. That was because I had experience with those kinds of people and I was kind of accepted there. I didn't know any better. It was the same faces year after year and I was in a kind of cycle.
90. There was never one inch of fear from the moment I was in prison up until the very last time, when I fell mentally ill. I didn't know what was happening to me but I felt like I was in a very dangerous position.
91. I got interviewed for Carstairs, my head was such a mess and I didn't care. Nobody had ever cared for me, so my thought was why should I care for anyone else.
92. I was in segregation at Saughton for about three months. I was delusional and I was visualising that I was sodomising a child. Years later, now, I can see that was my subconscious mind trying to remind me what had happened to me.

93. So something made me think that that behaviour might be suspected of me. I'm not joking, I was hitting my head full force off the wall in my cell to get that thought out of my head.
94. It was a relief to find out that I was sane and to get out of there eventually. I don't know what the diagnosis was. I thought I would never get out of there. That was in 2001 and it was a turning point for me and the last time I was in prison.
95. My lack of understanding about the abuse and its effects led to my criminal activity. I spent seven years, on and off, in prison.

Reporting of abuse at the JCX/SPO

96. When Michael Lowry was doing what he was doing to me, I couldn't tell my friends. It was too embarrassing, they might think that I was like that.
97. I have told some people, some care helpers and some friends, but years later and you have to be careful as they don't understand the depth of it all.
98. Michael Lowry did tell me to keep my mouth shut so I didn't tell my foster carers. Maybe if they had come to me and asked, I would have broken down in tears, but they didn't.
99. I would say, at that time, I was fearful of Michael Lowry. He just dominated the whole situation and controlled it all for his own needs.
100. I never told anyone about the abuse for sixteen years. It wasn't until 2001 when I had a bit of a breakdown and it all came back to me that I reported it. I told my Community Psychiatric Nurse about it and I was told to tell the police.
101. I gave a statement to a detective officer, Stevie Sutherland, I think that was his name. That was in 2002.

102. I told the police that Michael Lowry had bragged about abusing [REDACTED] and that he was another victim. [REDACTED] was another witness.

103. [REDACTED]

104. The trial was in 2005 and Michael Lowry was found guilty and sentenced to eight years. When he was sentenced, I felt everything coming back to me that was taken away, my dignity, my self-respect, my pride and my innocence.

Impact

Drug and solvent abuse

105. It was almost immediately after the abuse happened, say within one week, that I turned to solvents. It was a direct knock on affect from the abuse. It distracted me from reality. It gave me some sort of escape but it wasn't a permanent relief as the effects wore away quite quickly.

106. I started with gas then solvents then petrol, all from about age fourteen right up until I was sixteen. The drug abuse was from age sixteen until about thirty. I was on amphetamines and cannabis to start with.

107. Drugs had a better effect than solvents and weren't as destructive. They let me bury the thoughts of the abuse and I withdrew further into myself. I wouldn't talk to people and completely forgot about the nature and aspect of it all.

108. I was near death twice with two overdoses. That was the lack of insight and experience with the drugs I was using. I tried uppers, downers, meth and heroin. The heroin didn't creep in until later in life and I got addicted for a period in time. It doesn't take long for your entire life to surround around that drug.

109. The drug abuse affected my relationships with girls. I met a nice girl from America and there was prospects with that but I had to walk away. That was because of how furious and destructive my drug intake was.
110. You're not necessarily a bad person for taking drugs, it's what you have to go through to get it, to make sure you have a supply all of the time. Criminal activity, everything like that.
111. It has a knock on affect, from the sexual abuse to solvents to drugs to criminality to prison to psychiatry to the present day.
112. From the age of about twenty, I smoked heroin and I have injected it as well, but only three times. I was only on it for about six months before being put on a methadone programme.
113. I've been on methadone three times, twice on a programme and once illicitly. I first beat my addiction when I was about thirty, in 2003. I saw doctors and took the proper procedures to control my habit.
114. I knew the Michael Lowry court case was coming up and I wanted to be fit for that. I was clean for about a year.
115. After that, I was on and off methadone prescriptions for a few years and I've been permanently off that since about 2014. I still use drugs but only a little amphetamine and some cannabis.

Mental health

116. I would relate my mental health problems to a combination of my sexual abuse and the drugs.

117. The first time I think I felt it mentally, would be about 2001. I was diagnosed as being schizophrenic. I didn't agree with that but I hadn't disclosed my sexual abuse.
118. When I first revealed my sexual abuse, and how elevated I had become, then they changed my diagnosis to being bi-polar. That was in 2002.
119. A big, big aspect of that diagnosis is down to the sexual abuse. The drugs made me forget it all and smothered it. I completely forgot it all for about sixteen years.
120. My mental health problems continued from there and I've been sectioned for mental health problems eight times and forcefully injected. I've been in psychiatric units for months and been prescribed many different psychology medications. It was through trial and error that they found the right ones.
121. I've been sectioned and held in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, Bangour Hospital and at Crichton Hospital in Dumfries.
122. I would like to say that it's not a sad story and that I have now been granted a full and complete discharge from psychiatry.
123. I've wanted this and I've worked hard to get to where I am now. I'm getting older and need to take care of myself.

General

124. I feel there's an impact from the negligence of adults. I feel that all the adults in my life have failed me.
125. My foster mother failed me for not voicing any concerns about her possible suspicions. If she'd had the audacity to do that, I could have avoided all that abuse.

126. If she'd met with social workers, they would have stopped children going there until it was all looked into. That then comes down to the social workers and to my mother and my father.
127. None of the adults in my life have made an impression on me. I've just had to drag myself up. I've had no-one to look up to.

Support

128. In 2001, when I was mentally ill, I went to an organisation called Health in Mind in Edinburgh. Then when I reported the abuse. I also had a senior key worker called Roy Henderson.
129. I got counselling from all of them for the four years leading up to my trial. We were meeting once a week to catch up and make sure that things were alright.
130. It was all based on long term treatment and they were great. They supported me and got me fit for trial. Don't get me wrong, intermediate front line psychiatry is brutal, but it needs to be, as you need to be put under control.
131. I also got therapy in Lothlorien right after the trial. It's a place near Castle Douglas where you can stay and get mental health therapy. I was there for about a year and it helped me pre-plan independent living. It was very helpful.
132. I then went to Edinburgh but I returned to Lothlorien for another eighteen months. I ended up back in hospital after that and spent nine months at the Crichton Hospital. That was also to prepare me for going out into the community.
133. After that, I got a place of my own in Castle Douglas and I stayed there for six years. I moved from there to Dumfries in 2014, after I fell back onto the methadone. There was just nothing in Castle Douglas.

134. That was a big turning point, I completely stopped after that cold turkey. It was the most destructive feeling I've ever had in my life.
135. Dumfries also has Kaleidoscope, which is a drop in centre for people with mental health problems, and there's a lot of different characters there. I have lunch, meet people and treat it as a place of safety.

Records

136. I have records and archives that I received from the procurator fiscal service and the social work department. The perpetrator Michael Lowry is mentioned in those case papers. There are vital pieces of information that are on the social work documents and relate to my time in foster care.

Lessons to be learned

137. There was never anything done to help me prepare for life outside of care. I remember moving in to that flat at Moredun and asking David Philpott what I was going to do about furniture and that. He said he didn't know. I just had to get on with it and get stuff off my own back.
138. I think social workers or carers shouldn't be shy to take that extra step to see if they can get closer to kids if they think that there might be something going on.
139. Maybe show some humanity as well, by putting an arm round a shoulder and asking if everything is okay. It shouldn't be in an institutional way. Give the kid an opportunity to think that they have someone to talk to.
140. It wasn't right that I was being taken away on a holiday by Michael Lowry. He wasn't even vetted. I don't know if there was vetting procedures back then but there was surely something. You must vet all the people who appear in these children's lives.

- 141. The tell-tale signs should be there straight away with such a crime as this. These should be known and they should be picked up on when a kid automatically changes. The adults have to be aware of it.

- 142. 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.

FEQ


Signed.....

Dated.....

26-10-1700