

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LVL

Support person present: No

1. My name is LVL My date of birth is 1945. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Qualifications and professional experience

2. I have a MA in Politics, Psychology and Sociology from Glasgow University. I had already attained this before I completed a Certificate in Social Studies, also at Glasgow University from 1966 to 1967. From 1967–8, I had my first job as a trainee social worker in the Department of Child and Family Psychiatry based in the Royal Hospital for Sick Children at Yorkhill. I was paid by the health board.
3. My work at that time was based around issues of rejection at birth and mothers not bonding with their babies. I compiled a number of background reports. From 1968 to 1969, I completed a Diploma in Applied Social Studies, and from 1st January 1970 I started my first job as a qualified social worker. I worked at that time as a psychiatric social worker. At that time medical social workers and psychiatric social workers were based in the hospitals. Generic social workers worked in Area Teams throughout the city.
4. From 1970 to 1975 I worked in the Hospital in the Department of Psychological Medicine as a psychiatric social worker. I dealt with adults who were both in- and out-patients. I was involved in both group and individual work and dealt

with various mental health issues. I had an interest in community psychiatry. From 1975 to 1980 I took a career break to take care of my two children.

Role within local authority

5. I returned to work in 1980. This time I worked for, what was then known as, Glasgow City Council in statutory services. I was based at the [REDACTED] office and I was in a basic grade post. There was a campaign at that time to recruit new child minders in the city and the social work department was responsible for assessing them. I worked on registering new child minders. I worked just twelve hours each week, and as it was sessional, it was ideal for me to fit around my own child care. I would interview and vet a potential child minder, who would inevitably be a woman, and also meet her at home and speak to her husband to check that child minding in their home would be appropriate. After the first two years I was gradually moving into more generic social work, including some work with children, and my roles and responsibilities began to expand. I was still able to keep to my twelve hours per week for a number of years. During this time, with regard to generic social work, I was unable to take on any serious child care cases as I wasn't in the office often enough or long enough to deal with crisis situations.

6. My work involved intake duties, preparing court reports and welfare rights issues. I had an allocated caseload and some of these cases might involve children. My work was allocated to me by my Area Manager. With regard to child care work, I could be involved in adoption processes as that could be done on a sessional basis. I worked on adoption assessments for couples wishing to adopt children. I went to a panel that matched couples to suitable children. Someone else did the assessment of the children and their suitability for adoption. The panel included city councillors, which I always thought was strange. I can't recall why they were on the panel. The panel was an official rubber stamping exercise at that time and the main social work had already been done. I don't think I was ever involved in assessing children in care for adoption. More general children's cases could be referred to me if they were in a home with parents where there were mental health problems, to try and ensure the right supports were in place.

7. My hours at work gradually crept up, and by 1990 I was working 29.5 hours per week. By then, I worked in community care which was becoming more important in the lead up to the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. I was based in a community care team, doing assessments and reports. The bulk of the assessments were of older people who were going into care homes. Over time, the people in my office began to fulfil more specialised and different roles as different Acts came in. They became specialists in child care, criminal justice and addiction. I had no management responsibilities and was always managed by others. My workload was allocated to me by my line managers.

Mental Health Officer

8. By 1994 I had become a Mental Health Officer (MHO) with the local authority. This is a specialised role for experienced social workers. An MHO would ensure everything possible was done to keep an adult in the community, rather than being detained and was involved in applications for guardianship of an adult. I was an MHO from 1994 up to my retirement in 2008, and during this time I did not work with children.
9. Becoming an MHO involved additional training, and this was organised by the social work department. They have a responsibility to employ a certain number of MHOs to cover their region. There was study leave from work, lectures to attend and assessments to complete as well as visits to the Sheriff Court. After completing the training I became a registered MHO.

Involvement with foster care placements

10. I can recall three different children who were allocated to me when they were in foster care. There would not have been a separate allocated social worker for the foster family once the placement had been made. I was the social worker who monitored the child in their foster placement. I believe that the foster carer would have been assessed for the role along the same lines as a prospective adoptive

parent. Their home would have been considered, along with other children in the family and their motivations and suitability for becoming carers. I was not involved in the assessments of the foster parent myself. Once the child was placed with a foster carer the social work department had a duty to monitor the placement, and if the child was allocated to me it was my role to carry out the home visits and report my findings.

Monitoring foster placements

11. With regard to the three foster placements that I monitored, the child would have already been placed by the time I became involved. They would be allocated to the team that covered the area where they were placed. If a child was initially in care in the Southside of Glasgow, there would have been an allocated social worker for him/her from that district. The child would have had a social worker in order to be placed in Nazareth House in the first place, and I think it would have been good practice for the child to continue to have the same social worker once they were living in Nazareth House. This would not necessarily have happened and it would depend on the individual circumstances of each case.
12. My role was to observe what was happening in the placement and check the child was well looked after, and my responsibility was primarily to the child. I could also have helped out the foster parent if money was an issue, say at Christmas time. When I monitored the placement there were no particular criteria or tick boxes to check against.

Record keeping

13. I would make an immediate note of my observations of the visit but not whilst I was there. These notes were written in my notebook soon after the visit, and recorded more formally on the file when I returned to the office. The pages of my notebook would be torn up once the notes were written up. The file for the child would follow them from one Area Office to another. As the foster parents were paid for their work

there must have also been a file in the finance department at the local authority, but I have no knowledge of this.

14. I am not aware of any formal review of these social work files, but there were opportunities to discuss cases informally if required. There could also be ~~a~~ case conferences in situations where there were major concerns that might involve school teachers, health workers or guidance teachers. I also had regular supervision with my Senior and could discuss cases then. I'm not sure if Seniors would read the file, but the managers were expected to monitor our cases and decision making to some degree.

Duties and responsibilities

15. I don't remember how often I had to visit the child in their placement. From my limited experience of the three placements I monitored, I think if the placement had not been going well, I would have visited more often. I would see the child on their own, but not necessarily during every visit and I assessed the interaction between the child and foster parents. I would take the child out to places like McDonalds or for a coffee or ice cream and this would happen in the evening if the child was at school in the daytime.
16. If a child mentioned concerns I would listen to the child and discuss the issue. I would also bring the matter up with the foster parent if I thought it was appropriate and decide what was needed to resolve the issue.
17. The practice with regard to assessing and monitoring foster parents was variable. It was not an ideal system in my view. I think it was a difficult thing to do, placing a child from a difficult background into a very different environment, with a family. I am not sure if the right people always got through the net who were able to handle these complexities. Looking back now, some foster placements were not ideal, but adoption placements can go wrong too despite the work that goes into setting them up.

18. Once a child had been placed in a foster home, there would be a reluctance to remove them as this could cause too much upheaval. It's a question of balance. Sometimes a child might be better off living in a big home, and some children would be better off in a family home where they would get more individual attention.

Nazareth House, Cardonald

Involvement

19. I had no involvement with the children placed in Nazareth House in Cardonald. I have never been inside the building, and have no recollection of ever having to even contact anyone at Nazareth House.
20. I can't recall anyone in my office talking about Nazareth House or the children placed in there. Cardonald was in the Southside of Glasgow and not in the catchment area that the [REDACTED] office covered following my return to work in 1980.
21. If Glasgow City Council took in a child into care in this period, the 1980s, I don't know if Nazareth House is a place they would have placed a child. I had no involvement in the process of placing a child.

LBC [REDACTED]

22. I am aware that LBC [REDACTED] has said in her statement that I was her social worker during her foster placement. I recall LBC [REDACTED] being one of the three allocated cases I referred to above. I knew her then as LBC [REDACTED]. I don't know if LBC [REDACTED] had a social worker when she was at Nazareth House. I would have thought that children placed at Nazareth House would have been allocated a social worker, but I do not know this for sure. LBC [REDACTED] was allocated to my office after she left Nazareth House, and this was because her foster mother's house was within the boundaries of the catchment area for my office. The allocation to me individually would have come from a senior social

worker on my team. LBC was already placed with her foster mother, Ms EIK by the time I got the case and I do not know if it was someone from my office who assessed Ms EIK and placed LBC with her.

23. I think LBC was in secondary school by the time I knew her, so she could have been aged thirteen by the time I met her for the first time. I'm really not sure. I don't know why she was originally placed into the care of the local authority.

Foster placement with EIK

24. I remember that LBC foster mother, Ms EIK had been a visitor at Nazareth House. I think she had met LBC at the home and some kind of bond developed between them. LBC was placed by herself with Ms EIK. LBC has referred to Ms EIK in her statement as her Auntie EIK but they were not related. The house was in the Thornwood or Broomhill areas of Glasgow. It was semi-detached house that was owner-occupied. I recall that when you walked in the house the living room was to the left hand side, the kitchen on the right hand side and the bedrooms upstairs.

Monitoring the foster placement

25. I can recall visiting LBC in her placement. I have very few memories of the house, but do remember that it always felt cold. I would be told the boiler was broken or there would be some other excuse for the heating not being on. I recall that I took a senior colleague with me on one visit and this must have come about because I had raised a concern with him or her. That was likely to be because of the lack of heating. I would not ordinarily ask a senior colleague to accompany me on visits.
26. I recall always getting access to the home. It was a bit untidy. Ms EIK was teacher at a local school and the house seemed full of half-completed projects. It was certainly not uninhabitable. With regard to the standard of cleanliness, I can't say. I must have thought it was adequately clean at the time.

27. I recall making quite a lot of visits to the home, and I supervised the placement over a long period of time. I cannot recall how frequently I visited. When I met with LBC and Ms EIK I would arrange the next visit verbally, or I would send a letter to Ms EIK. My official communication was always with the foster mother and not with LBC directly. I don't recall ever writing to LBC. I stopped visiting when LBC turned sixteen and our statutory duties ended.
28. LBC attended the high school that the foster mother taught at. I once had reason to phone the school to ask after LBC's progress, but there was nothing serious to report. I recall now that there was an issue with LBC having friends at home. I thought that as a teenager she should have had the opportunity to spend more of her free time with young people. The foster mother said it was difficult as she was a teacher at the school. Also, Ms EIK did not enjoy the best of health as she had diabetes and she had ups and downs. This was used sometimes as a reason for why things did not get done around the house.
29. LBC has told the Inquiry in her statement that: *"I was about eleven when I was placed in foster care for an elderly lady who seemed to have contacts with the Catholic Church. Her name was EIK and she was in her late fifties. She had serious health issues. My social worker, LVL from the social office, came to the house a few times and was fully aware of the filth and debris and the general ramshackle condition of the house. In fact I remember seeing in a report that LVL had refused a cup of tea because "of the state of the place"."* I was certainly working at the social work office in the time period referred to in the statement. I recall that Ms EIK had been a volunteer at Nazareth House, and it is my recollection that she was still working as a teacher for the duration of the placement. I think she was probably aged in her fifties. The house was untidy, but I have no recollection of it being full of dirt and debris. I would accept it could be described as 'ramshackle', but not full of 'filth and debris'. I remember there were some jobs in the garden that had been started, but only half-completed. I don't know if I ever refused a cup of tea in the house, I don't recall it. If it was written in the records I would have to accept I said it. If I had concerns about the state of the property, I would have spoken to the foster mother to suggest that the

house should be more tidy. I thought the relationship between the two people involved was more important, and the house could be untidy but this was outweighed by the importance of the quality of their relationship.

30. I thought their relationship was fine. They shared a bedroom and spoke to me about how they chatted together at night. It sounded affectionate and positive. I thought it would be better if [LBC] had her own bedroom, but she was used to sharing a bedroom with others. I spoke with them together, and [LBC] separately, both inside and outside of the house. I remember they went on holiday together in Wales. I thought their relationship was adequate and had no concerns. Nice things seemed to be happening.
31. [LBC] has said in her statement that: *"Auntie [EIK] as I called her, was very well off and did a lot for The Catholic Church. I don't recall any of the details about my foster but I think she was basically told to have her pick of the kids and I was the one chosen. Nobody discussed with me that I was being fostered and as far as I was concerned I was going home."* I don't think [LBC] was ever adopted by Ms [EIK] and I wouldn't have been supervising if she had as my involvement would have come to an end. The foster mother perhaps treated their relationship as akin to adoption. Ms [EIK] was a visitor at Nazareth House, and due to her involvement there, she had the opportunity to meet [LBC] and form a bond.
32. [LBC] has also said: *"Auntie [EIK] was a hoarder and, when we knew [LVL] [LVL] was coming to the house, we actually had to clear a path through all the rubbish in the house so as she could get in. In fact there were times she didn't even get in yet she never questioned that. I asked [LVL] for help several times over the years and even asked to go back to Nazareth House but she simply ignored me and told me to get on with things. Nurses used to come out to the house, to attend to [EIK] as she was constantly poorly, but none of them asked after my welfare."* I don't recall Ms [EIK] being a hoarder. I have no memory of [LBC] asking to go back to live in Nazareth House or asking me for help. If [LBC] or someone else wanted to go back to Nazareth House, I would have approached my Senior for advice. If she said it repeatedly, I would have done something about it and

would have investigated further to see what could be done and the concerns would be noted on the file as well as potential solutions. With regard to the file, I would also have made a note if something good happened. I didn't just record negative things. I made notes of every visit. I can't comment on the attitude of the nurses who visited Ms EIK's house.

33. In LBC's statement she has said: *"At fourteen I got into a bad crowd and would sneak out of Auntie EIK's house at night. She once caught me, wasn't best pleased and called LVL who I also begged to send me back to Nazareth House. I just wasn't fitting in where I was."* I do not recall the incident referred to or the foster mother telephoning me. All I can recall about LBC at that time was that she was a tall and gangly girl who just seemed to get taller. I remember she got pregnant quite young and Ms EIK paid for the wedding. I was invited to the ceremony, and it was held in a church in the Broomhill district of Glasgow, but I did not attend the reception afterwards. I don't know if LBC knew I was coming to the ceremony. I think LBC was aged sixteen or seventeen at the time and I recall her feeling sick because of being pregnant.

Ending of the placement

34. I stopped visiting LBC when she ceased to be in the care of the local authority as she had turned sixteen. I cannot remember my last contact with her as her allocated social worker.

Meeting LBC to go through her records

35. I am aware that LBC has said in her statement *"I went to the Social Work Department in [REDACTED] about twenty years ago and spoke to LVL. A lawyer came with me and we saw records relating to me. However, an awful lot of the information had been edited out. I was trying to find out why I had been put into Nazareth House, who was involved and who was responsible. All I recall about the lawyer is that he worked in Berkeley Street."* I have no recollection of this meeting,

and I was definitely not the social worker involved. I do recall meeting a man once to go through his social work records, and that is the only time I met with someone for this purpose. LBC must have asked to see her records and filled out a form to make an official request. It would have been a planned meeting. She has referred to information being edited. If the records mentioned anyone other than LBC, the information would have been redacted. I do not know who would have done the redaction.

36. I do recall bumping into LBC by coincidence in Glasgow sometime after she had ceased to be under the care of my office. She was then in her early twenties and had her second child with her in a pushchair. We were able to have a conversation and she seemed happy. She told me her foster mother had passed away, the house had been sold and her estate had been entirely left to a cousin. I thought this was a shame as LBC could have done with some money to help her bring up a young family and said so.

Reflections on LBC's statement

37. I am sorry to hear now that LBC has a negative view of aspects of her foster placement that I thought were acceptable. I didn't hear LBC say these things repeatedly about her placement. As a professional you believe you have done everything you can for someone whose care is allocated to you. It has come as a shock to me to hear the things LBC has said. I believed the system we had in place at the time for monitoring foster placements was adequate, and never thought to question it as I was busy just getting on with doing my job every day.

Hopes for the Inquiry

38. Our knowledge of abuse of children is much better than it was, and this is a good thing. Social workers are now coping with a lot more cases and these are increasingly complex. I would make a plea for better resources for social workers

working now as I know the pressures are greater than when I was working, but there is a lack of resources and not enough experienced people doing the job. Too much is being asked of too few people.

Other information

39. 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..... LVL [Redacted Signature]

Dated..... 2 May 2018