

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FES [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes. [REDACTED]

1. My name is FES [REDACTED] My name as a child was FES [REDACTED] and my name as a child in care was FES [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I now know that I had four brothers and three sisters. Their names were [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. We lived in Falkirk with our parents [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My parents were alcoholics and were a danger to us so we were removed from their care. My brothers were sent to a home in Dumfries and my sister, [REDACTED] and I were sent to Weedingshall. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later My sister [REDACTED] was adopted as a baby.

Foster care – JDH-JDI [REDACTED] Larbert

3. I can't say the names of my foster parents, JDH-JDI [REDACTED] so I will refer to them throughout this statement as him and her. As a child in care, they made me call them mum and dad. Also living in the house was her partner [REDACTED]
4. I remember going to her house when I was five. I went in a black car with a woman. I don't know who this woman was. When I got out of the car there were three girls and

a woman there. I remember feeling terrified. I didn't have any personal possessions with me. We were all given a sweetie and I ate mine. The other girls kept theirs and they made a fool of me. Two of the girls were her granddaughters, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and the other girl was another foster child called [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a year younger than me. [REDACTED] was a year older than me and [REDACTED] was the same age as me.

5. My foster parents lived in a three bedroomed bungalow which was situated in the countryside. It was known as [REDACTED]. It had a big garden and a driveway. It sat in the grounds of [REDACTED] which was part of [REDACTED]. They got the house because the farm brought money in for the [REDACTED]. He was [REDACTED] at the farm. She didn't work.
6. The bungalow had a porch. There was a bathroom and a kitchen on the left and the living room was straight ahead. The bedrooms were down the hallway. She slept in one bedroom with [REDACTED] who was her boyfriend. He lived in the house with her throughout my time there. He was all right to me. He used to tell me not to cry for her. Her husband, [REDACTED] and I slept in the other bedroom.

Routine at the [REDACTED] JDH-JDI

7. She got me up because he was at the farm early. From the age of five I had to light the fire and make up his bed. Then I made her bed. [REDACTED] showed me how to split sticks with an axe and how to light the fire. I had to set the table for breakfast and make breakfast for the four of us. After this, I got washed and ready for school. After school, I got changed and set the table for dinner. I did other chores like dusting and hoovering. I made sure there was coal for the fire. After dinner, I did the dishes. [REDACTED] didn't do any chores and I don't remember her being hit. We didn't really get on. [REDACTED] did what she needed to, to survive. After the chores it was bedtime. You had to sit on her knee for a prayer then kiss her on the cheek. I then washed and went to bed and waited for him to come to bed.

8. On a Monday, I did the washing. This took all day. I never went to school on a Monday. I did his overalls and [REDACTED] working gear last. I had to hang it out to dry and then bring it back in when it was dry. The ironing was done on a Tuesday after school. She used to burn me on the hand with the iron if I didn't do it properly. [REDACTED] used to tell me not to cry. I still burn myself now if I have had a bad day. I cleaned the windows once a month. I basically kept the house. She liked it perfect.
9. On a Saturday afternoon, [REDACTED] and I would go and play in the woods. I still had the house work to do at the weekends. I had a bath on a Sunday for school.

Holidays/Trips

10. One time [REDACTED] and her took us to London. I once went with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and their mum and dad to Dundee and we went to Dunragit a place near Stranraer because that's where her mum came from. This didn't happen regularly. Every second Sunday we went to Edinburgh with him to his sisters.

Food

11. She made dinner. She made good dinners. It was things like stew and potatoes. I didn't like the desserts. She used to make me eat cold custard and I was sick. She slapped me for being sick. She would hit me for not eating food that I didn't want to eat. I never ate with them. I ate in the kitchen and they ate in the living room. I like my space when I am eating. The kitchen was the place of safety for me then and it still is.

Schooling

12. I went to Larbert Primary. It was two and a half miles from the house. I walked there all year round. I don't remember much about school because I wasn't there much. I would have lunch in school and I would then walk home after school and did more chores. I remember not wanting to go home from school one day and hanging on to

a lamp post. [REDACTED] went and got her and they took me home. They always said I was an awkward kid and that nobody wanted me.

13. I didn't get pocket money but [REDACTED] got a thrupenny bit for school. [REDACTED] used to give me one because I didn't go to school much. He told me not to tell her.
14. When I started secondary school, I went by taxi which was paid for by the social. After I was adopted by him and her, [REDACTED] took me. I went to Larbert High. I was badly bullied and ridiculed at school. This was because I was quiet and didn't wear a uniform. I wore what she gave me. I wore her dresses and I wore his shoes and shirt. I was made to wear a vest and the other girls wore bras.. The bullying went on for three years and it stopped after I had a meltdown one day when one of the bullies dropped a paperweight which I had made for my foster mother to try and make her like me and not hit me. When I was in second or third year I got a blazer which I loved. I felt like I finally fitted in.
15. I didn't go to school much and the school wrote to her about my low attendance and asked her to come in. I wanted her to go to see that I hadn't been dodging school and that he had been writing the absence letters but she wouldn't go. She belted me for crying because she wouldn't go. I hated her for not going into the school. I just wanted her to believe that I hadn't been dodging school.

Visits/inspections

16. A man from social work came once. I lied to him the whole time. I was frightened to tell him the truth in case he went and told her what I had said and I got a battering. Nobody knew about [REDACTED] so we weren't allowed to mention him. [REDACTED] would disappear out of the house when we knew they were coming. I blame the social work department a lot for how I was brought up. Social work didn't do their homework properly.
17. I was adopted by them when I was about twelve. I first saw my proper name when I signed papers. I don't remember visits from social work prior to the adoption. Nobody

asked me if I wanted to be adopted. When I met my real parents they thought I hadn't been adopted because they hadn't signed anything.

18. My sister came once in a big black car before she went to Canada. She wanted me to go out for a meal with her but I didn't go because I was frightened. I regret that to this day.

Birthdays/Christmas

19. I never had a birthday. [REDACTED] did but I didn't. The first birthday cake I had in my life was when I left home and got married. I got one thing for Christmas but [REDACTED] got lots. One Christmas I got roller skates. I loved those roller skates. One year [REDACTED] and I got watches on a chain. She lost them before Christmas and accused me of taking them. I got hit and she kicked me on the leg when I fell on the floor. She must have found them because we were given them for Christmas after that. I hated those watches because I was punished for something I didn't do and she never apologised. On Christmas Day I set the fire but she made breakfast and Christmas dinner.

Healthcare

20. I don't remember ever being sick although I must have been. I remember visiting the GP but I don't know what for. I do remember being taken to the dentist and having five teeth taken out at the one time.

Abuse at foster carers, JDH-JDI [REDACTED] Larbert

21. I was beaten most days if I didn't do something perfectly right. I was slapped for not eating cold custard or tapioca which I hated. I was slapped for being sick when she forced me to eat the desserts. She would slap me on the face and head. She also hit me with a belt but this was on the legs. She always hit me on the legs until I had welts on them. She used to belt me on the legs because the marks would be hidden by

trousers. Sometimes I had to lie in bed for a couple of days to hide but I still had to do my chores. One Sunday I was in the bath and she saw marks on my legs and she asked me what they were. When I said they were from the belt, she hit me so hard that my head hit the bathroom wall.

22. I was beaten if I didn't clean the house properly. She used to hide things like a feather or pin to see if I would pick them up when I was cleaning. I was belted if I didn't find them and move them to where they should be. She was always trying to catch me out to see if I cleaned properly. This still affects me to this day.
23. Every second Sunday, he took us to Edinburgh to visit his sisters. One Sunday when we came back she said I had forgotten to wash the potato pan even though I knew I had washed it. She put my hand on the hot cooker and burnt the palm. She said I would never forget to wash a pan again. She then kept me off school for two or three days to hide the blister.
24. One day I found a five pound note when I was playing in the woods. I gave it to her thinking this would make her happy with me. She slapped me because she said I had stolen it out of her purse. I used to cry and she used to say 'Nobody wanted you, your parents didn't want you, we don't want you and we might send you back.'
25. One Sunday, because I wanted my hair cut to fit in at school, she cut my pigtails off and cut all my hair until I had hardly any left. I took [REDACTED] because I wanted to die. They found me at the bottom of the garden. They made me drink milk to make me sick. She asked her son whether she should get an ambulance but he told her not to in case the police became involved. She belted me and her son [REDACTED] took me to his house for a month until the marks went away and my hair grew. On my return she said I had done it to draw attention to myself and she punished me again.
26. JDI [REDACTED] slept in the room with me and [REDACTED] and I shared a double bed and there were two single beds. He used to come to the bottom of the bed and pull me out by the legs. I used to tuck my feet tight up hoping he wouldn't get me. My feet

were high up the bed when I was younger so he had to reach up the bed. He would take me into his bed. I don't want to talk in detail about the things he did to me. It disgusts me and it makes me feel sick. It was sexual intercourse. He made me touch him and he did things to me. He used to put his hands around my neck and tell me everything would be fine. He would tell me not to cry and that he would be my friend. He said the things we did would be between us. I didn't like it but I did like the attention. This happened most nights. I hated him taking me into his bed. Sometimes it happened on the couch and sometimes when he was passing me in the kitchen he would whisper in my ear 'It's okay I'll see you tonight. Don't cry for her, you are special'. Then he would touch me.

27. When I was aged twelve or thirteen I got my periods and she then moved me out to the other bedroom. I don't know if she knew what was happening but if she didn't, why would she have taken me out of his room?
28. Sleeping with him stopped after that but the touching and kissing continued usually on the couch or in the kitchen. This went on until I was sixteen or seventeen. I don't know why I didn't run away or why I didn't tell the police. I think I was too scared to run away. I protected their grandkids but I wonder if I encouraged him. If a man gives me a compliment I think I have done something to encourage it, so I wonder is this what I did with him. He used to say 'You have good rhythm, you will make somebody a good wife.' I must have been doing something that made him think I enjoyed it.
29. When [REDACTED] and he went on holiday, [REDACTED] and I had to sleep with her. She whacked me on the ear for grinding my teeth. I hated sleeping with her. To me she was worse than him.
30. I don't know if he abused [REDACTED] I know he abused his granddaughter, [REDACTED] because we were lying on the floor under the table and he was lying on the couch with her and I heard it happen. I feel like I should have stopped it. It still haunts me. His granddaughters never stayed overnight and I'm not sure whether that is because he abused them. The grandsons did stay over and I heard later that he did abuse one of them who was called [REDACTED]

31. I have been told that [REDACTED] kept a book about everything that had happened in the house but they burnt it when he died.
32. I had no friends that I could tell about the abuse and we didn't have any neighbours. The only visitor we had was [REDACTED]'s brother in law. Occasionally he used to ask about the marks on me and she just used to say I was clumsy.

Leaving foster care

33. I was working in Falkirk as an assistant cook for about a year before I left foster care. I got my wages in a brown envelope and I gave them to her. I wasn't allowed to open them. I never got any of the money. At Christmas there was a party and the office took the cost of the party out of my wages. I had a drink in me and I told a few people what she did to me. An old couple told me I could stay with them. When I went home she hit me because I had opened my wage packet. I told her that was the last wage packet she would open because I was leaving. I never spoke to her again. She got her son, [REDACTED] to come to speak to me. He said she would open a bank account and put some money in it for me if I stayed but I refused.

Life after being in care

34. I stayed with the old couple in Camelon for about a year. They were nice. I had freedom. I remember I went to the cinema for the first time. After I left there, I moved in with my friend and her parents. When I was nineteen, I got married to [REDACTED] I had my first daughter when I was twenty. I was an auxiliary nurse when I was first married. I liked caring for people, I am a people pleaser. I think this stems from being in care because all I wanted as a child was her approval. I would have done anything for her to like me and I tried my damndest. If she wanted six bits of coal on the fire, she got six bits.

35. After nursing I worked for the British Nursing Association and then I did the books for my husband's business until I had a breakdown. I never worked again after that. I had three children with [REDACTED] but we split up about four or five years ago. I have a new partner called [REDACTED] but we don't live together. He stays in Dunbar.
36. About 34 years ago I went to the council in Grangemouth to see if I could find out more about my family. The next day a lady came with a letter which had been written by my sister who lived in Canada. She had written me a letter telling me that I had brothers and that our parents were alcoholics. I went to see my parents. I thought they would be waiting with open arms and that they were going to say sorry. A wee old woman who had sick in her hair opened the door. There were no carpets on the floor and he was sitting in the corner. That was when they told me that I wasn't adopted and they had got me a bottle of vodka but they had drank it with the excitement of waiting for me to come. I wanted to tell them they had ruined my life. All of our lives. I never went back after that.
37. About a year later my sister came over from Canada and introduced me to my brothers [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] used to come to my house every week but that fell away. He eventually tried to commit suicide but he is okay now. I have been to see my sister in Canada twice with the support of my In Care Survivor Service counsellor, Cath, and the support of Future Pathways.

Records

38. I went to see my records with Cath, at Grangemouth Social Services. There wasn't much information in the records. There were no records relating to my time in foster care. I wanted to know why we were put in the middle of nowhere. Why were we never checked up on? Why was the school letter not passed on to social services? The records said that I was slow. Maybe she was right saying that I was thick.

Impact

39. Life still haunts me. My house has to be immaculate. My pegs have to match on the washing line. I self-harm very easily because it takes her voice out of my head. She goes away for a wee while and then she comes back with a vengeance. She calls me all the names she did when I was wee. Sometimes it is nice when she comes back because then she is in control and everything I do has to be perfect.
40. About fifteen or sixteen years ago my sister got cancer. I was putting an extension on my house at the time and it was full of builders. I took a breakdown and wanted to end my life. Everything I was hiding as a kid came out and I just couldn't handle life any more. I went into a deep depression. I was hospitalised for a week after the breakdown and a week at a time after that. I had electric compulsive therapy. I had a great Community Psychiatric Nurse called Fiona. I didn't want to share a room with anybody at the hospital in case they came into my bed and I didn't want to be in a room when a man examined me, so she arranged for me to stay at home. I didn't want to talk in a group about what had happened. I liked my own space. I would have committed suicide if they had made me go back to the hospital.
41. I think every day in life about not being here. The only reason I don't commit suicide is because of the stigma for my kids. I have been diagnosed with severe bi-polar disorder and I go to a trauma clinic every second Tuesday for treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Counselling has kept me alive. It makes me fight against the suicidal thoughts I have. I can't cope and that is where it helps. I have had counselling since the breakdown. I couldn't cope without the counselling. It would be like standing on ice waiting for it to crack. I am physically healthy. Everything works except my head.
42. If we are in company and somebody tells a dirty joke, I don't find it funny because it triggers so much of what he said.

43. I can't add. I'm not bad at spelling. I don't have a great memory. The ECT affected it. I don't have a hobby because I'm not good at anything and nothing interests me. I would have loved to have been a lawyer but I don't have the concentration to look at books.
44. I think the abuse has had a positive effect on my relationship with my children and my grandchildren because we are very close knit. My children say I'm hard to live with but I'm very close to them. I see my daughters and my grandchildren every single day. My grandchildren never want to leave. I think I have gone the opposite to the way I was brought up.

Other information

45. I believe that there should be a follow up of care of a child who goes into foster care or adoption for at least a year following their placement. That child should be taken out of the home environment and asked questions. I blame social services for what happened to me and I blame myself for not speaking up but I was too frightened. To me they walked away and left us. We were hidden. We were forgotten kids. [REDACTED] stayed there and they never picked it up.
46. I later found out that I was at school with my sister [REDACTED] but I didn't know she was my sister. We made contact in later life but we no longer have a relationship as she has her adoptive family.
47. I hope that the Inquiry will recognise that something needs to be done. Backgrounds should be checked so that everything is tighter and safer for the child that is in that environment. There is a reason that a child is difficult. Don't give up on children the way that they gave up on me.
48. 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..... FES [REDACTED]

Dated..... 17. 1299.