

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FSM [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is FSM [REDACTED] My surname was FSM [REDACTED] when I was born, but my mum changed it to FSM [REDACTED] when she married my step-dad. I was known as FSM [REDACTED] when I was in care. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1969. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I spent a lot of my childhood with my grandparents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] My mum split up from my dad when I was really young and I don't think she could cope with my brother, [REDACTED] and me on her own. [REDACTED] is about three years older than I am. My grandparents lived in the [REDACTED] and I went to Milton House Primary School when I was living with them.
3. I also spent a lot of my childhood in hospital. I had really bad eczema and asthma and was in and out of the City Hospital. I then got a condition called osteomyelitis in my hip and was in Leith Hospital for a few months. I missed a huge part of my primary education as a result.
4. After being in hospital, my mum, [REDACTED] insisted that I went back home to live with her and my step-dad, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was living there too. I went to Fernieside Primary School for a little while and then went on to Liberton High School.

5. My mum and my step-dad lived in Craigour. I have step-siblings, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is forty-one, [REDACTED] is forty, and [REDACTED] is about thirty-five. My real dad didn't have anything to do with me and [REDACTED] when we were growing up. I didn't meet him until later when I was in care.
6. My step-dad was horrible. He was a heavy drinker and was very violent towards my mum, and sometimes [REDACTED] and me. I had to get up in the morning and clean the whole house before I went to school and either [REDACTED] or I would be sent for the milk and morning papers. The younger ones were treated better. It felt like we were two divided families. I always had to share things that were mine with the younger ones.
7. My mum was really nasty as well. She used to shout at us all the time. She punched me on the face one time and burst my nose because I spent 10p from her change when I went to the shops. I tried to spend as much time as I could with my grandparents, but my mum would always drag me back home.
8. The violence at my mum's was horrendous. There was something going on in that house every day. My mum's friend, [REDACTED] was beat up with a poker stick by her man, [REDACTED], in our house. I remember [REDACTED] screaming and I went downstairs and saw her covered in blood and there was blood everywhere. I must have been about ten at the time. On another occasion, [REDACTED] beat up my mum really badly and I went to the phone box and phoned the police. My mum battered me after that for phoning the police.
9. [REDACTED]'s proper name was [REDACTED] I don't know his surname. He's dead now. He tried it on with me when I was a child one night in a car. He put his hand on my leg and I threatened to tell [REDACTED] and he never touched me again. About six months before that, I got picked up by a man in a car who wanted me to show him somewhere further down the road at the flats. I was about eleven at the time. He tried to touch me and I was screaming and trying to fight him off and he eventually let me out of the car. The police were called but nothing ever came of it. I don't know who that guy was.

10. The police used to come out to the house quite a lot, but this was thirty-odd years ago and domestic abuse was acceptable then. The wife had to know her place back then. I used to come home from school and my mum would have a black eye and I'd get angry with her for allowing it to happen. But when you're just a bairn, there's nothing you can do. You're stuck and you're told it's none of your business. I couldn't go to [REDACTED] because he had started working and wasn't really around much. When he was there, he used to fight with [REDACTED] and try and protect my mum.
11. I think [REDACTED] might have got arrested and charged a couple of times for being violent towards my mum, but not for what he did to me or [REDACTED]. He pinned me up against the wall one day and I was so scared that I actually pee'd myself. When I was about ten or eleven, he found my pal's cigarettes in my bag and he made me smoke all twenty fags, one after the other which made me sick.
12. My grandparents were amazing. They worked really hard and my granddad used to try and teach me how to read and give me advice about doing well at school. He had a big role in the community helping young kids. He tried to help me, but I was rebelling because of what was going on at home. My grandparents knew about my home life. My granddad used to fight with [REDACTED] quite a lot. My nana and mum used to drink on a Saturday and my granddad would come in and he would scrap with [REDACTED]. I went to stay with them for a wee bit again to see if I would start behaving. My grandparents spoiled me rotten and everything was fine, but I don't think my mum could handle it so she forced me back home again.
13. Eventually, I started running away from home. Any opportunity I got I would be off. I'd do anything to get out of that house. I would climb out the window, down the drainpipe and over the neighbour's garden. I'd go to my grandparents or my pals' houses. My pal [REDACTED] would hide me in her house sometimes, and then my mum would phone the police or she'd come to [REDACTED]'s door to get me. I have a memory of my mum taking me to the doctor's at some point because of how I was behaving.
14. I had another pal called [REDACTED] and she was going to put me up one night when her mum went to bed, but she fell asleep and I ended up sleeping on the streets all night.

I was freezing so I sat in a phone box for a wee while because it was a bit warmer in there, and then I hid under a bush and tried to sleep but couldn't because it was so cold. I went to [REDACTED]'s door early in the morning and her mum was going mad asking where I'd been. We then went up to [REDACTED]'s house and her dad gave me breakfast before we all went to school. Either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] must have spoken to the guidance teacher because I got called into the guidance office in the annexe at Liberton High and the police were called. I don't remember what was said, but I remember going home and my bags were packed at the door and then I was taken to a social work office.

15. I remember sitting in the social work office and they gave me juice. My mum was there and she was shouting at me for causing all this trouble. I was thinking that I hadn't done anything wrong, but at the same time I felt that I was to blame for bringing trouble to the door. I think my mum gave me a cuddle and then she just left me in the office.
16. I sat in the office for a long time. I don't know if I was there for so long because they couldn't find anywhere for me to go to. A woman in the office told me that I was going to be moving out of my own house. I was scared, but in a lot of ways I was happy that I didn't have to go back to my mum's.
17. I remember being in a car with a social worker. I think my social worker's name was Liz Myers and I think it was her that took me to a foster care home in Musselburgh. She talked to me in the car and told me that I was going to this family who had children of their own and also fostered children. She said that I would be safe there. I was just wee and felt really scared because I didn't know what to expect. All I had was my bag of clothes. My mum always used to buy my clothes from a charity shop. I only ever had good stuff if my grandparents bought it for me.
18. There had never been any social work involvement with our family before I was taken into care. Everything was hush-hush back in the day. You kept it within the family. As far as I can remember, it was the first time the school had taken any interest in my welfare as well.

**Foster care – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Musselburgh**

19. I remember going into the house and the foster carers, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], made me feel really welcome. They had a big house in the corner of a cul-de-sac. I think it had three or four bedrooms. It was like one of those old-fashioned terraced houses.
20. They had a son called [REDACTED]. He was about the same age as me, maybe a year older. He had his own bedroom. There was a daughter staying at home as well. I shared a room with her. She was lovely. She used to talk to me at night. She was like a big sister, but I can't remember her name. They had other kids as well, but they were older and didn't live at home. I don't remember any of their names either.
21. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were amazing. I was really well looked after and I felt loved. They made me feel like part of the family. They registered me at Musselburgh Grammar school and helped me to fit in and make friends. I could go to both of them and talk about things. I was a bit of a rogue at times. I feel bad because I stole a couple of pounds off them for fags one time. They didn't know I smoked. I would get into mischief at school as well, just the usual stuff. I got a boyfriend and used to go to a disco in the Brunton Hall on a Friday or Saturday night.
22. One of their older daughters was a hairdresser and I got a proper, fashionable haircut for the first time in my life. They had an older son as well and he had a video shop, so we would always get a video to watch at the weekend. The whole family was great.
23. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] just treated me like one of their own. We'd go on outings on Saturdays and they bought me new clothes. I used to get bullied all the time at school when I lived at home because I was a total tramp. My mum would send me to school in the most awful clothes. I felt trendy in Musselburgh. I had the same clothes as the other kids and the same style of hair. I felt normal.
24. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] taught me basic life skills. For instance, you had to do normal chores like make your bed in the morning and help out when they had visitors. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

were very sociable and knew lots of people. They had parties sometimes or had loads of visitors round to their house and I would help to make sandwiches with [REDACTED] in the kitchen. [REDACTED] was always cooking and she'd talk to me in the kitchen while standing cooking, showing me how to do it, and getting me to lay out the plates on the table, really making me feel like part of the family.

25. [REDACTED] was like a big brother to me. He had been brought up in the local area so he knew people and he helped me to make friends really quickly. I would go to his room and we'd just sit and talk a load of rubbish. Sometimes he'd say that I was annoying him and he'd tell me to get out of his room. We were just like a normal brother and sister. I remember I got my hair cut and had a wee, fine pleated ponytail. It was really fashionable at the time. I was lying on the couch watching a video and I fell asleep and [REDACTED] cut my ponytail off. My hair was short and it was only a tiny ponytail. I remember going crazy, but it was just the typical kind of thing a brother would do to his sister.
26. About two months before I left [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]s, they got a wee foster girl called [REDACTED]. She was only a baby. I remember playing with her out in the garden. It was like having a wee sister. It was great. We all fitted in well. It was normal.
27. I can't explain it properly, but I felt like I had always stayed with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] because of the way they made me feel. I felt like I was in a real home environment and I felt safe.

#### *Visits*

28. I went to my mum's for weekend visits. I would go on a Friday after school and go back to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]s on the Sunday evening. My mum would be really nice and she'd try to make me feel welcome, but [REDACTED] would be sitting there getting drunk and the violence was still going on. I used to take some of the things that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had bought me, or I'd bought myself with the pocket money they gave me, and my mum would be raging and make me share my things with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think I

only went home about six times. I hated it. I used to feel really anxious, but at the same time it was my family so I had mixed feelings.

29. [REDACTED] stayed with my mum when I went into care but he then moved down to London to do training for his job. I kind of lost touch with him then. When we were younger, we were inseparable but then he got to an age where he was working and going out and seeing his pals and getting girlfriends. He still checked in on me when we were both living at home, though, and he'd chuck me some money sometimes.
30. I think the social worker, Liz Myers, popped in to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s now and again to see me. She'd take me for something to eat. She would come in and chat with me and ask me if everything was alright. Everything was really good and I told her that.
31. My mum used to come to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s for meetings with the social worker. I don't remember what they discussed.

#### **Leaving foster care - [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]'s**

32. I went home from school one day and the social worker was there. I think it was Liz Myers. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] sat me down to tell me that I was moving. I remember [REDACTED] saying to me that they could only keep me for six months. I was distraught. I didn't want to move. I thought they were amazing and I had friends and I liked my school. I remember saying to them things like, "Can I not just stay with you forever? Can you not adopt me?". They said they wouldn't be allowed to. I was hysterical.
33. This is something that I would never want to happen to another child. I feel that this really affected me. Even now I feel it. It was like rejection. I kept asking what I had done wrong and [REDACTED] was nearly crying, telling me that I hadn't done anything wrong and it was just that they couldn't keep me any more and I had to move on. I had not been told before then that I was going to be moving to another set of foster parents.

34. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] helped me to pack my bags and I think it was the next day that I was taken away. The only reason I think I was with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for six months is because I remember [REDACTED] saying that I could only stay with them for six months. This has always stuck in my head.
35. I'm not sure if I went straight from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]s to the new foster carers or whether I went home to my mum's overnight. I remember seeing my mum at some point. She wanted me back with her but the social workers wouldn't let me go back there. She was really hurt because I was arguing with her and saying that I wanted to stay with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], not her. I think I went straight to the other foster carers, but it's a bit of a blank.

**Foster care – FSC-SPO [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Edinburgh**

36. The social worker didn't tell me how long I was going to be with FSC-SPO [REDACTED]. I was just told that I was going there. I remember feeling upset and angry that I had been taken away from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and my pals. But I also felt that I just had to accept it. My granddad, who had been in the army, had brought me up to be clean, tidy and smart, and to be polite to people. This was drummed into me from a young age. So I thought I just had to be polite and accept that I was going to this new place.
37. They lived right next to the cemetery in a house on the main road, which was all on the one level. I think they were called FSC-SPO [REDACTED]. I don't remember their first names. They were older than [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], in their forties or maybe fifty. The house was generally tidy, although the kitchen was messy with stuff lying about, but everything had that musty smell, damp and cold. And it smelt of dogs. They had two dogs. I think one was an Alsatian. I am allergic to dogs and cats. I tried to keep my distance from the dogs but they were always there.
38. I don't really remember Mr [REDACTED]. I just remember Mrs FSC [REDACTED] and her daughter. I don't know if he worked and maybe wasn't around very often. Mrs FSC [REDACTED] was there all the time. She was a really hard-faced woman. Their daughter was about twenty



and still lived at home. I don't remember her name. She was vile. There was another foster girl who I shared a bedroom with, but I think she came after me.

39. I don't have a lot of memories of living with [FSC-SPO], I think I've blocked a lot of it out.

**Routine at [FSC-SPO]**

*First day*

40. The only memory I have of my first day there is that Mrs [FSC] put me into the bath and scrubbed me with a hard brush. I can remember the smell of the horrible shampoo she used and I have a memory of her scrubbing my nails. I was naked in the bath and I just remember her saying that I had to get clean because I was going to see the doctor. I was then taken through to the freezing cold bedroom. I have no other memories of getting washed during my time there so I think I've blocked it out.
41. I only remember Mrs [FSC] talking about me having to go for a medical at the doctor's but I don't remember going there.

*Mornings and bedtime*

42. I shared a room with another foster girl whose name I can't remember. She was about the same age as me. There were bunkbeds, a set of drawers and an old tiled fireplace, and there was a window on the wall opposite the beds. It was so basic. They never put the fire on. It was freezing. I had scratchy blankets on my bed, like old army blankets. I just remember always being cold. I remember moaning about the cold one night and Mrs [FSC] told me to shut up and think myself lucky that I had a roof over my head.
43. I took my clothes from [ ] and [ ]'s and other things like bits of make-up, books, pens and diaries. I was allowed to keep my things in a drawer in the bedroom.

44. We had to get up in the morning about seven-thirty during the week, eight o'clock at the weekends, and go down and set the table for breakfast. The other girl and I washed the plates in the sink.
  
45. We had to be in bed before nine o'clock every night. We weren't allowed to talk. I can't remember where [FSC-SPO] or the daughter's rooms where in relation to ours, but we were young girls and if we were talking or giggling in bed, the daughter or Mrs [FSC] would burst into the room and tell us to stop talking and get to sleep. They'd put the light out and it was cold and dark and I felt scared. It was a horrible place to live. It was like a house of horrors.

#### *Food/mealtimes*

46. There were set times for all the meals. Everything was very structured. We got our dinner at either five or five-thirty every single day. They had a huge kitchen and a big dining table. They were very old fashioned so all the meals were at the table. We got things like porridge, toast and cereal for breakfast. The meals were all proper home-cooked dinners like stews, mince and tatties and vegetables. We always got boiled tatties, pure white tatties with no skins on them. I dreaded mealtimes because everything was so salty. I struggled to eat because of the really potent taste of salt. Mrs [FSC] would stand over you until you ate mostly everything on your plate. The other foster girl was treated the same. Mrs [FSC] daughter would just eat her dinner as normal. I remember saying to Mrs [FSC] once that she was trying to poison us and she told me not to be ridiculous.
  
47. You were too scared not to eat the meals. I would be gagging but would still eat it. When you were finished, Mrs [FSC] would take your plate and put it down to the dogs and they would lick it. The plate would then get put back onto the table and you had to take it and put it in the sink and wash it. The pot would then go down to the dogs as well and she would let them lick that. To this day I have a real phobia about dogs licking. It really creeps me out.

### *Clothes*

48. I don't remember ever getting any new clothes. I just wore what I'd been bought by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. It was so different from living with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. FSC-SPO [REDACTED] never took me to get a haircut or gave me any pocket money.

### *School*

49. I had to move from Musselburgh Academy to Liberton High School. We started in the morning at half past eight. I started skiving school again. I know now that I'm dyslexic but I didn't know it then. I couldn't concentrate so I would only go to some classes. A couple of us used to skive and we'd sit behind the garage at the bottom of the drive at Liberton or, if someone had money, we'd go to the museum and sit in the toilets because it was warm.

### *Leisure time*

50. You had to be straight home from school. I felt really restricted. Once you were in that house it was like you were a prisoner. I remember I was kept in a lot and had to just sit in my room. It wasn't a punishment, it was just what we did. I wanted to see my old pals in Musselburgh and Mrs FSC [REDACTED] told me that I wasn't allowed to go back there because I lived with them now. This really upset me. I don't think there was a lock on the bedroom door but it felt like you were locked in a prison cell.
51. We had to play cards sometimes at the table. Mrs FSC [REDACTED] made us do that. We played cards and did jigsaw puzzles, nothing else. They were very old fashioned. They never took us out. We just sat in our room on Saturdays and Sundays. We didn't have a telly in the room. I have no memory of sitting in the living room. We either sat in the kitchen at the table or in our bedroom. I spent all my time in the house with the other foster girl so I don't understand why I can't remember her name.

### *Chores*

52. The other girl and I had to do the dishes, put the bins out and sweep the floors. Mrs FSC must have done our laundry because I don't remember doing it. The bedroom had to be immaculate. We didn't have that much stuff but you weren't allowed to have anything out of place. If you chucked anything, like your books or personal diaries, on the floor you were told immediately to get them picked up.

### *Healthcare*

53. I remember my eyes and skin being really bad at FSC-SPO. I think it was a mixture of my eczema and asthma, made worse by the scratchy blankets and the dogs. The social worker knew that I had bad asthma and hay fever, so I think she would have known that I was allergic to dogs. As far as I know, there was never any discussion about whether I should be living in a house where there were dogs.
54. My eyes were always red and puffy and I was always sneezing and using my inhaler. I got cream for my eczema at [redacted] and [redacted]'s but I never got anything at FSC-SPO. I had my blue and brown inhalers for my asthma. Mrs FSC used to say to me that I was using my blue inhaler too much. The blue inhaler helps when you're wheezy and I had to use it quite a lot. She would give me a row for using it, so I got kind of scared to use it. I don't remember being taken to a doctor. I don't know if I went to the doctor to get my inhalers or whether Mrs FSC just picked them up for me. She took me to the dentist once and that was fine.

### *Family*

55. I must have seen my nana and granddad for a day because I remember my nana taking me to get my hair cut and my granddad bought me new shoes and a winter coat.
56. I didn't get the same weekend visits to my mum's as I'd had when I was at [redacted] and [redacted]'s. I don't really remember seeing my mum. I have no memory of her coming to

FSC-SPO house. She had my wee brother [REDACTED] when I was with FSC-SPO and I remember wanting to go to the house to see him but I wasn't allowed. I don't know who stopped me or how I'd heard that he'd been born. I never got the chance to see [REDACTED] as a baby and I don't have a great relationship with him now.

### *Discipline*

57. You didn't dare not do what you were told, so I don't know what the punishment would have been for disobedience or misbehaving. Mrs FSC would raise her voice and the other girl and I just did what we were told. Mrs FSC was hard-faced so I was scared of her. I only rebelled a few times about the food and was told to be quiet and think myself lucky that I had something to eat.

### *Inspections*

58. I had a couple of visits from the social worker, Liz Myers. I have no recollection of any official person coming in to inspect the house or to see how I was being looked after.

### **Abuse in foster care – FSC-SPO**

59. There was no love or affection. They were just cold towards me and the other foster girl. I don't remember any of them ever being nice to us or giving us any kind of praise or encouragement. They never took an interest in us. It was just a case of sending us off to school, giving us our food and sending us to our room to sit, or off to bed. It was made clear to us that we were just the foster children. I was told by Mrs FSC to be grateful that I had a roof over my head and was getting fed.
60. We got our three meals a day but we never got any snacks or treats so I was always hungry. I have no memory of ever getting any puddings or treats. If you asked for anything else, you were told that you'd had your tea. We never got supper. We just

got a hot drink at night. I think we got Cocoa or something like that and we never got a biscuit with it. I remember going to bed hungry.

61. The daughter seemed to rule the house. If you asked for something, the daughter would say, "No, you're not getting that. You are the foster brats". For example, we had to sit at the table and watch the daughter putting Clearasil on her blackheads and doing her nails. It was gross. We'd often ask her if we could paint our nails and she'd tell us that we couldn't, as we were just the foster brats and didn't get to do things like that. She was horrible. She always referred to us as either "the foster children" or "foster brats". I can't remember Mrs **FSC** saying that but she and the daughter would often say things to us like, "Know your place. We're here to look after you so know your place".
62. The daughter would push us about a lot and tell us to go to our room. She'd physically shove me and the other girl into our room. I don't remember Mr or Mrs **FSC-SPO** ever hitting me.
63. I believe that a lot more happened in **[REDACTED]** but I've blocked it out. I can't remember most of my time there. The strongest memories I have are that the house smelled damp and musty and I was always sitting in the freezing cold bedroom.

#### **Reporting of abuse in foster care – **FSC-SPO****

64. I had a couple of visits from the social worker. I remember saying to her that I hated it and that she had to get me out of there. I think it was Liz Myers. She was nice, but she said to me that they weren't so bad and I just had to stick it out. I told her about the salt in the food and she said that the food couldn't be that bad and I was probably over-reacting because I was missing my friends in Musselburgh. What people need to understand is that kids weren't listened to back in the day. It was like you were telling tales if you said anything. That's how I felt when I spoke to the social worker.

65. I also have a memory of going to my grandparents and asking my nana to get me out of there. I said to my granddad that I would run away and he told me not to dare. He was strict and I think they were worried that something was going to happen to me. I think my nana spoke to my mum and I have a memory of either my mum or my nana arguing with the social worker about me going back home, but they weren't allowed to take me home.

**Leaving foster care – FSC-SPO**

66. I think something must have happened to make me and the other girl run away from FSC-SPO but I've blocked it out. I must have been about thirteen at the time. I think it was something to do with the daughter. We went to bed one night and waited until they were all asleep and then we climbed out of the window. We put our pillows under the covers to make it look like we were in bed in case anyone checked. I remember walking down the road for what seemed like forever. I think we might have taken a few things with us in our school bags but we had no money. I think I was going to go to my grandparents but I didn't want to knock their door in the middle of the night. We had nowhere to go and ended up being picked up by the police and they took us back to FSC-SPO.
67. I told them about how I was being treated by Mrs FSC and her daughter but I don't think they believed me. They weren't interested anyway. They told FSC-SPO in front of me what I'd said. Mrs FSC was really angry and I said to the police that they had to get me out of there or I would just run away again. I think something definitely happened to cause me to run away, but I just can't remember what it was.
68. Mrs FSC said I was completely out of control and the social work got called in. I think it was Liz Myers, and there was a male social worker there as well. I think he was a temporary worker. I don't know his name. Mrs FSC told them to take me away if I didn't want to be there any more and I ended up back in a social work office, before being taken to Drylaw Children's Home.

69. I don't know how long I lived at FSC-SPO. It felt like forever but I think it might only have been six months.

**Drylaw Children's Home, Easter Drylaw Drive, Edinburgh**

70. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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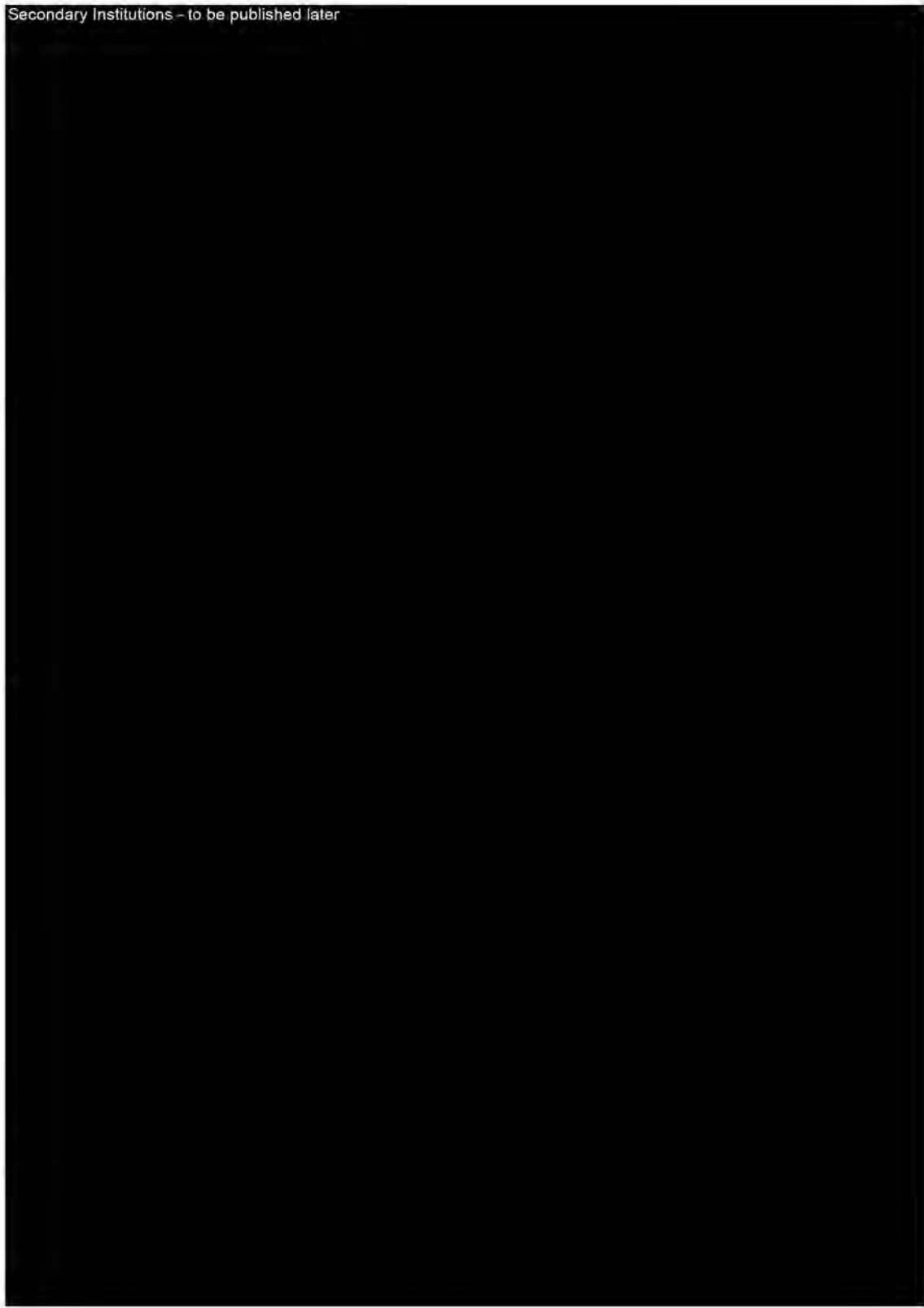
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### **Life after being in care**

123. I went from the West Maitland Street bed and breakfast to one down by the Dean Bridge. My grandparents were giving me the odd fiver and tenner, but I didn't know how to claim benefits so I didn't have enough money for food. I became really streetwise. I used to get up at three and four in the morning and sneak under the shop shutters and steal the milk and bread that had been delivered. That would be my food intake for the whole day.
124. A few people approached me and I started sleeping about. I'd do it for a fiver to get something to eat. I was on the streets, like a prostitute basically. I did it to survive. It became a way of life. I went from bedsit to bedsit and then I started seeing a guy and stayed with his auntie for a wee while. It got me off the streets.
125. I then sussed out how to claim benefits and I worked in chippies, restaurants and in a care home doing domestic jobs. By this time I was about seventeen. My boyfriend and I were living with one of his pals. I came home and went to bed one night because I was so tired from working a long shift in a restaurant, and my boyfriend's uncle came in and raped me. I've blocked out the uncle's name. It brought on another asthma attack and I ended up in the Northern General on Ferry Road. I never reported it to the police. I think I was protecting my boyfriend and also the uncle's wife because they had a young family. I remember a nurse in the hospital asking me if anything had happened to me to cause the asthma attack but I just covered it up.

126. I told my boyfriend and another one of his uncles but nobody believed me. We split up and I went wild after that, totally off the scale. My granddad had died and I stole money off my gran and she reported me to the police. Every partner I met was either violent or no good. It was just constant abuse from everybody I met along the way.
127. I then met somebody who asked me to sell stolen stuff for them and I got done for reset. I was eighteen and the case kept getting deferred at court so I was nineteen and had had my first child by the time I was sentenced. I ended up in Cornton Vale and had to leave my baby with my mum. My step-dad had calmed down a bit by then and my mum was mellower. I was only in prison for a few weeks.
128. When I came out of prison I slept around with people again. My kids have three different dads because I had no self-respect. I was living in bedsits. I used to call it "bedsit land". You got stuff stolen off you, abused, battered and sexually assaulted. So much bad stuff happened. This was all in Edinburgh. I started having sex with people again for a couple of quid because I was hungry. It was absolutely horrific.
129. I moved into a bedsit on [REDACTED] with my baby and I had a really good landlady. She was lovely. She moved to Australia and sold the flat and then I moved to [REDACTED]. I had two children by this time. I had my third child when I was living there and her dad was violent. He wanted to take his daughter out of the country as his step-dad was from overseas. He stole her birth certificate and I had to go to a lawyer. Pictures of my child were put up in airports to prevent him from taking her out of the country. I ended up fleeing in the middle of the night and went to live in a women's refuge in Fife. Every so often I would move again so he wouldn't find me.
130. I met the man, [REDACTED] who later became my husband and had a child with him. I got my first council house in Piershill, Edinburgh when I was twenty-five and [REDACTED] my four children and I lived there for a good few years.
131. [REDACTED] was then left some money by a relative and bought a house. He put my name on it and we got married. This was the first time I felt I had proper security. That's

when I started to really turn my life round. I wanted a better life for my kids. Somebody gave me a chance and gave me a job in care and I worked my socks off. I was working with an agency and they helped me to get my SVQ. I worked my way up from nothing and ended up working in care for twenty-five years. I knew I wanted to be a care assistant back when I worked in the care home doing the dishes when I was seventeen, but I was too wild to get into that line of work then.

132. We moved out of Edinburgh in 2001 and I got a job with social services. I had three jobs. I was a home carer, I worked with mental health in a day centre, and I supported a girl with Down Syndrome. I moved back to Edinburgh in 2011 and worked with a nursing agency and also with [REDACTED]
133. [REDACTED] adopted my kids and we lived as one big family. It was really nice. We had a good life. We were married for twenty-five years. I thought I was lucky and, because [REDACTED] wasn't violent, I didn't consider him to be an abuser. But [REDACTED] was a different kind of abuser. He would go on about my "brood" and my "brood's brood" and he'd say things about him having brought up my kids. He was always going on about money and he constantly cheated on me. He would make out that everything was my fault and because I didn't have a lot of self-confidence, I would think that maybe he was right. I didn't recognise that he was an abuser because I was just happy to have my wee family unit and for the first time in my adult life, I felt safe and secure.
134. [REDACTED] and I eventually got divorced. I walked out of my house four years ago with just a suitcase of clothes and I rented a property and started again. I signed over the house to him. I worked for the council and a healthcare organisation, doing seventy to eighty hours a week to keep a roof over my head and buy my furniture. I also found out that [REDACTED] hadn't dealt with financial matters properly and had loads of debt, so I had that to deal with as well.
135. I took ill eighteen months ago, which I think was down to everything I had gone through and I was exhausted and wasn't eating properly. I feel now that I am getting stronger every day and I'm ready to meet someone again and get my life back.

## Impact

136. The way in which I was moved from one set of foster parents to another made me feel so insecure. Even now, I still find myself looking for reassurance all the time. For example, when I cook something I'll ask everybody if it's alright, if it's good enough and tastes okay. I just always seem to need to be reassured. I think it's got a lot to do with being so insecure when I was a child.
137. When I lived with **FSC-SPO** and in Drylaw, I grew up thinking that I was just "the foster child" or "the child in care" and that I was nothing. Those thoughts continued into my adult life. I have built up my confidence through having my kids, working in care and through the friendships I have now. I have turned my life around but not everyone can do that.
138. Before I got married, my relationships would always break down because I was not very good at being in a relationship. I am very private so I don't really trust anybody, although I am getting better with this. I am really independent and prefer to stand on my own two feet. Even if I'm struggling, I don't ask for help. I just get on with things myself which is something I learnt to do at a young age.
139. I believe that if I'd had proper guidance when I left Drylaw, I would never have ended up living the way I did when I came out of care. The system failed me. I stayed in so many different bed and breakfasts, bedsit rooms and hostels, and I slept on people's floors even when I had some of my kids. It was horrific.
140. I've tried not to let my childhood affect my kids. I had to learn as I went along about bringing up children. My mum was a crap mum so I never went to her for advice. I wouldn't say that I was a brilliant mum in the beginning but I managed. I always knew that I didn't want my children to go through what I had. When they were young, I was struggling for money but I made sure there was enough food on the table so they wouldn't go hungry and they were always clean. I even got caught stealing nappies once, which was very degrading.

141. When they got a bit older and started at nursery, I would make sure we all sat down to eat dinner together so I could ask about their day. Because of what I had gone through, I had to find out if they were being bullied or if any other bad thing was happening to them. I still do that now when they come to visit me. They now do this with their kids as well.
142. My experiences in childhood come out in certain other ways as well. For example, if my daughter's on her phone and not giving my granddaughter the attention I think she should be getting, I'll tell my daughter off. I think that comes from how I was treated in care. I was also more aware of the potential for abuse when I worked in care. I think I've helped a lot of people. I can't bear the thought of anybody being abused. If I saw anybody pulling a resident's arm when I worked in care, I always spoke up.
143. I suffer from a condition called fibromyalgia. I can be sitting talking one minute and then I just fall asleep, or it can go the opposite way and I don't sleep for days because I'm in so much pain. I've also got functional neurological disorder (FND). I have five functional conditions. There are a lot of symptoms of FND. I get jerks in my body and I take seizures at night. It's very unpredictable. I can have four or five seizures a night but then I can go for nights without any. I woke up one morning about eighteen months ago and I couldn't feel my arm or leg and couldn't use them. My speech was affected as well. It was really scary. I thought I'd had a stroke. I kept dragging my leg and had to be taught how to walk again. That's why I have a crutch now but my walking is getting better. I still can't fully extend my arm. I have carers who come in to wash my hair and that's eighteen months on. Accepting care was hard because I have worked in the care sector myself. But I'm getting stronger each day. I wouldn't have been able to meet with the Inquiry last year. Things are definitely improving all the time.
144. The neurologist has done every test under the sun and he thinks it's all linked to trauma. He thinks other things have happened to me and I need to get it out somehow. He wants me to get intense counselling, which I'm now on a waiting list for. I've had an assessment done but no counselling as yet. I think what I did was put



my childhood experiences in a box in the back of my head and pretended it didn't exist. People would say to me that it must have been horrendous to have been brought up in care, and I was just like, 'yeah, it was', but I never really gave it much thought. You get people who shout from the rooftops that they are victims but I'm not like that. My attitude was, 'it happened and that's that, move on'.

145. I would welcome counselling now as I think the neurologist is right and there are things that I have not yet dealt with. Edinburgh council gave me a bit of counselling when I was finishing up work, but it was more to do with my divorce and nothing to do with my childhood. I have been having nightmares and flashbacks. I could just be standing doing the dishes when the flashbacks come. The main three flashbacks I'm getting are of me and my brother in the back green down in the [REDACTED]; one where [REDACTED] hits [REDACTED] with a poker;

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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146. Sometimes I get really bad anxiety and I've been having panic attacks and don't want to leave the house. I have to tell myself several times over that I'm going to be okay so that I can force myself to go outside.
147. Another big impact is my lack of education and how that affected my employment opportunities. I have done part of an SVQ but other than that I have no qualifications. I have bluffed my way through jobs all my life. Having a criminal record has also seriously affected my ability to get jobs. I have to keep going back and explaining why I've got a criminal record, even though I went to prison when I was a young person just out of care and I've had a clean record for thirty-odd years. I've been turned down for jobs because of it. It is so embarrassing.

### **Records/reporting of abuse**

148. One of my friends asked me recently if I had seen my social services file, which made me think that I would like to see my records. I had never thought about it before. Maybe things would come back to me if I read them.
149. I had to get my medical records when I was fighting to get benefits, and I read in them that I was put into care because I was a destructive child or something like that. I can't remember the exact wording. That is so wrong. It wasn't me that had a problem, it was because of how I was being treated by my mum and step-dad.
150. I have never thought about reporting the abuse I experienced to the police and I've never gone back to social services to report anything. I have never even thought about it. I just thought that if you had not been sexually abused, you hadn't actually been abused.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

151. I want my story to be told so that lessons can be learned. I do not want what happened to me to ever happen to another child and I hope that telling my story will help other children in care. Looking back to the foster care situation I was in, it wasn't the fact that I had to go from one set of foster parents to another, that was just the circumstances, it was the way in which it was done. It was horrible. I think a child needs to be warned that they are being moved. At least three weeks in advance they should be told, so that they can mentally prepare themselves and they won't feel so insecure when it happens. Somebody needs to sit down with them and tell them that they're moving, where they're going and introduce them to the new people. When I worked with [REDACTED] we used something called a social story. It's like a memory board to help explain what's happening. I think something like this would be useful to help to tell children about their transition to a new place.

152. Another important message I want to get across is that when a child in care goes to an adult and says that there's something wrong with the place they're living in, be it abuse or violence, they need to be listened to. Too many times they're dismissed as talking rubbish, or the adults think they're making it up because they're troublemakers. A lot of them are screaming out for help. Even if they are making something up for a bit of attention, they still need to be listened to.
153. There are a lot of kids whose behaviour is wild, but people need to look beyond the behaviour. There's usually always something that's making them behave that way. People need to take the time to try and understand what's going on in a child's life, instead of writing them off as a lost cause and labelling them. One of the main problems is that when you're in care, people don't consider that you might be there because of reasons within the family, such as domestic violence or maybe your mum has died, they automatically see that you're in a children's home and think that you must be a troublemaker. This is so wrong.
154. I think it would be a good idea to give kids counselling as soon as they go into care to find out what's happened to them and give them all the help they need straight away. Another important point is that every child has different needs and they need to be treated as individuals. In children's homes they are usually treated as part of a group and not as individuals.
155. I think it would help to improve the foster care system if they introduced a better system of vetting the foster carers and monitored the home environment more once a child is placed there. Social workers need to go in and inspect the actual houses to see where the kids will be sleeping and make sure that there are proper facilities. FSC-SPO house was damp and freezing and I had asthma. Also, it's not enough to know that the foster carers don't have a criminal record. They need to find out what type of people they are and make sure that they are doing it because they care about kids, not just for the money. I never heard FSC-SPO say anything about money, but it was obvious that they didn't care, because to them we were just "the foster children".

156. I think the most important thing that can be learnt from my experience is that when a child leaves care, somebody needs to be responsible for making sure that they are safe, that they've got a proper home to go to and that they have life skills, such as how to do the shopping, cook and manage money. They need somewhere safe to live and they need to be supported for quite a long time, until they find their feet and show that they can pay their bills and manage their money themselves.
157. The system totally failed me. For a bairn to be abandoned by the system at sixteen is so scary. I could easily have gone down a different road. I could have been a prostitute, full-blown drug addict or even dead. I don't know why that didn't happen to me. Maybe it was because of the influence my grandparents had had on my upbringing and the six months I had with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], but not every child has that. I was left in situations where I was vulnerable and there was peer pressure and I could have picked up a needle and given it a try. Children leaving care are vulnerable and could easily give in to peer pressure and go down the wrong road if they are not properly supervised and supported.
158. I know someone whose son was in care and he's ended up in the prison system. He's only ever out of prison for about two weeks at a time before he's back in again because he's so institutionalised. This is another example of what can happen to young people if they don't get the right help when they go into care or any support when they leave care.

159. I never saw [redacted] and [redacted] again after I was taken away from them and I don't know if they are still alive now. I would love to knock on their door and thank them for what they did for me. Along with my grandparents, they played a big part in me becoming the person I am today. They were amazing. I have heard that they fostered lots of other children. I think they deserve an award for what they've done.
160. 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. <sup>FSM</sup> [redacted] .....

Dated. 21/1/2020 .....