

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

EKV [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is EKV [REDACTED] I was born on [REDACTED] 1951 and am 65 years old. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

Background

2. I am a widowed lady and now retired from work. I have four children [REDACTED] aged 44, [REDACTED] aged 42, [REDACTED] aged 31 and [REDACTED] aged 26. I also have seven grandchildren.
3. I want to tell you about my time in Foster care with EKV-SPO [REDACTED] family in Morayshire, Scotland during the 1950's and 1960's.

Life before going into care

4. I was one of ten children. My father's name was [REDACTED] and my mother's name was [REDACTED] My older sister [REDACTED] was not brought up in care as she was too old. My youngest brother [REDACTED] was born after the rest of us were in care and stayed with my parents. My other siblings [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and me were all put into care at various times although not always together.

5. In 1952 I was placed in care when I was nine months old. I was to remain in care until 1966. I was in care with my sister [REDACTED] while the boys, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were in foster care about a mile from us.

6. I was too young to remember early life with my parents but I was told that my mum and dad were living together in a two bedroom cottage in [REDACTED] Banff called [REDACTED]. There was no running water or electricity. My father was a quarry worker who also sold honey from his bees. He also mended shoes. My parents were unable to look after us and we were dirty and had no clothes. I have been told that all I had to wear was a nappy. The social services became involved.

Care homes before foster care.

7. Again I have no recollection of this but I am told that a big black car came to the cottage and took us to a big house in Buckie which is in Banff. I was too young to know. It would appear that this was the children's home in Buckie.

8. Some of my siblings went to a big house in [REDACTED] Morayshire while my sister [REDACTED] and I went to stay in foster care at a cottage in [REDACTED] Buckie. Both these places are about four miles from Cullen in Morayshire. As I was only 9 months old I can't recall what happened but have relied on being told by the rest of my family.

Moving to foster care

9. [REDACTED] and I were placed in foster care with EKV-SPO [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]. EKV [REDACTED] was known to everyone as EKV [REDACTED]. I don't know what the process was that took us to our foster parents and I rely on my siblings to fill in the blanks.

10. [REDACTED] was a nice man who had been in the army. He was an invalid and walked about with his back bent over. He would spend most of his time in bed. If he was up he would sit in his chair and make things from cane like baskets. [REDACTED] had to look after [REDACTED] as well as us. I think that is what made her into what she was. On days when she couldn't cope she would take it out on us.
11. I know that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had a little girl of their own. She was killed in an accident when she drowned in the dam that was at the front of the cottage. [REDACTED] was very wary of the dam and we were not allowed to go anywhere near it.
12. [REDACTED] was also looking after her niece called [REDACTED] who lived with her because her sister was unmarried and couldn't support her. So living at the croft we had "big [REDACTED]" and "little [REDACTED]". Big [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]'s niece and little [REDACTED] was my sister who was eighteen months older than me. Big [REDACTED] was a few years older than both of us.

The [REDACTED]-SPO foster care

13. The house itself was a "but and ben" type house set amongst a row of other cottages. Our cottage was set lightly back from the others. It was set in a very small village with a shop and a mill. It was a lovely wee place to be brought up. The house itself was two houses knocked into one. To get from one room to another you had to go through one of the other rooms. There was no corridor. There was an outside toilet and no running water or electricity.
14. There was a living room and kitchen which were all in one room and the rest of the rooms were used for sleeping. The living room had a fire and a cooker along with a big table where we sat for meals. There was no heating or lighting so we used paraffin lamps.
15. Growing up my sister [REDACTED] and I didn't get on and we still don't to this day. When I was eleven we moved into a council house in the village. My foster dad

- █ had just died before we got the move to the council house. There was running water and electricity at the new house.
16. Two other children came to stay with us when I was with EKU-SPO █. First to come was █ I would be about eight years of age at this time and was the same age as █ █ is now deceased. █ came to stay with us. He was only a baby. The girls were in one room and the boys were in another. EKU-SPO █ were in the bedroom next to the living room. █ █ moved away when we moved to the council house as she was old enough to work.
17. █ was a lovely man and used to stick up for you against her. I can recall when EKU served me porridge with sour milk. I complained that the milk was sour but she insisted that I eat it. █ took the plate off me and told EKU to throw it out and not force me to eat it or he would report her to the authorities. I can also remember another time when █ intervened. EKU was washing my hair in a bucket. She was being very rough and held my head under the water. The water was gurgling and █ pulled her arm and got my head out of the bucket. He again told her to stop being so rough or he would report her. █ died in 1962.

Routine

18. When we stayed at the croft we would have to go down to the village tap every Monday to get the water that was needed for washing and cooking for the rest of the week. We used to have to carry the water back home.
19. We would get up most mornings at seven o'clock and then do some things to help about the house. I didn't mind doing this. We used to keep our own rooms tidy. I would do anything to help if it meant that we got on her good side. In the winter time I would fill the hot water bottles.

20. When we went to the council house we were getting older. I had to carry the bins out every Wednesday before going to school. We used to have to peel the tatties and clean the fire.
21. We had our school lunches during the week and often used to go and play with school friends in the village. We were only allowed back into the house when EKV said we could come in.
22. Tea was always something like beans on toast or the likes. We were never starved and always had something to eat. Bed time would vary but was not a factor of any concern to me. You had to play outside till you were invited into the house at night time and you would be out there in all weathers.
23. We used to get into trouble for sitting on the doorstep listening to the radio which was playing in the house. In later life we got a wee black and white television as a present from a local farmer. We were allowed to watch Dixon of Dock Green and Whirlybirds. That was a great treat as we were the only house in the village with a television.
24. On a Wednesday and a Friday, EKV would alternate visits to ████████ to call on the other foster mother who was looking after my siblings. We would listen at the door to the foster parents talking. Of course" you never hear well of yourself lugging in". EKV used to slag off the ████████ as being useless and especially EKV which was me and what I was called.
25. I think that the only reason that she was involved in Foster care was because she was getting paid to have us and it was worth her while. EKV never went out to work and earn money.

Visits

26. There was a man from the social services called Mr **FPS**. He used to visit a few times a year. **EKU** always knew when he was calling and so she dressed us up in our best clothes and we had to keep clean and tidy that day. We would sit with Mr **FPS** and **EKU** in the living room and he would ask us questions like "are we happy with **EKU**" and is the schooling going well. Of course we had to answer yes as we were too feared to say no.
27. I used to visit my brothers and sisters two or three times a week when she took us to **[REDACTED]** to see them. When we would get the bus to visit them I remember **EKU** used to smile at us for the benefit of the other passengers and keeping up her appearance. It was weird. I never had a visit from my birth mother of father and we were too frightened to ask to go and see them.

Bed wetting

28. The two **[REDACTED]** and I were all bed wetters because once we were put to bed we weren't allowed to get up to go to the toilet. **EKU** had a bucket in her room but we had nothing. She would thrash us with a hairbrush for wetting the bed. We all had to make sure that we didn't drink too much before going to bed.
29. The bed wetting stopped when we moved to the council house. We had running water and electricity and an inside toilet.

Schooling

30. I went to two schools in my time in Foster care. I went to **[REDACTED]** Primary School and Cullen Secondary School. I was a nervous child and was scared of authority. If you did something wrong at school you could get the belt. I think that the only thing I got belted for was talking too much. The other kids at the

school knew us as “boarded out tinks”. We got free school meals and had a different colour lunch ticket. I used to hate that as it made us stand out from the other pupils. I had good friends there.

31. The school would have known what was going on at home as we had bruises on our legs when we were doing gym and they must have seen them.
32. I was very keen on art. EKU told me that it was a waste of paper. I had no paper to draw on so I used to take out the pages of my school jotter. At some stage we had to hand our jotters in for marking and mine would be much thinner than the rest. This usually led to getting the belt. I used to steal the toilet paper to draw on. Later at school I was encouraged to draw at art classes. I used to pinch the chalk from school so that I could draw on the stone walls at the old mill.

Food

33. We used to see EKU hanging up the washing and knew that it was a chance to steal a biscuit from the tin. We would nip into the kitchen and steal a biscuit. She knew we had been there and used to line us up until someone confessed. I would be picked on and get a warm backside from her.
34. On the whole the food was fine and we didn't have any complaints. There were occasions when EKU had friends up from Glasgow and we weren't allowed in the house and so were not fed till they left. I can remember being hungry then.
35. Breakfast was bread and jam. There was a school lunch and a meal in the evening. It was fine. EKU always did the cooking.

Birthdays/Christmas/Trips

36. At Christmas time we always had a nice dinner. We also got a pair of slippers, an apple and an orange. We would also get some sweets like Parma Violets. Christmas was a good time. There were decorations and a tree.
37. Birthdays were not celebrated but were marked by her tugging your hair for the number of years that you had reached. Seven tugs when you became seven years old.
38. We were also taken to the Keith country show every year. We never had a holiday anywhere but we did go to the beach at Cullen on occasion.

Pocket money

39. We had to do jobs for a three penny piece which we were allowed to spend in the shop in the village on sweets. I later learned from one of the other children that were in care we should have been getting a shilling a week which was provided by the social services. She must have been pocketing the money.
40. The house did get a couple of comics for us all to read. It was always the eldest first then everyone would get a chance to read them. There was a girls and a boys comic. The girls comic was called the "Bunty".

Health care and hygiene

41. In the old croft we would get a wash at the basin. We would also have an occasional bath. This all changed when we moved to the council house and we had all the facilities. Our clothes and stuff were bought for us and we were always clothed and kept clean.

42. There was a local doctor. A dentist who attended to us came to the school. We also had the school medical inspections so we were never refused any medical attention if we needed it.

Running away

43. We never contemplated running away as we had nowhere to go to. We did not know where our parents were.

Religion

44. We went to the Church of Scotland meeting every Sunday. I went to Sunday School and the service. I still have a certificate for perfect attendance. There was no religion practiced at EKU. I enjoyed going to the church.
45. I remember one day out collecting for the church at the local farms and houses. I went back to the minister's house with the collection and was met by his sister. The minister was unmarried. I remember everything got on top of me and I burst into tears. I was bottling things up. She didn't offer me any sympathy but told me not to be a silly girl and to go home. I think that if she had shown me any sympathy I might have told her what was happening.

Abuse

46. You didn't need to do much to get a thrashing. She used to use a cherry tree branch. She kept it behind the cooker but in open view of everyone. Say for example if I was late home from school or I had been in a fight with my sister I would be put over the couch and thrashed. Then I would be put into my room with nothing to eat. She always hit your backside and thighs.
47. As she thrashed you I can remember her telling me what I had done wrong. Like "what have I told you about" whatever the reason was. I think that she was mad and her behaviour was not rational.

48. I think the first time I was thrashed I would be at school. On looking back the welfare services should never have put us at that house as she was having to spend a lot of time looking after her husband and although I am not making excuses for her she had her hands full with us as well.
49. When she was in a mood all you needed was a look from her and that was enough. I would guess that I was thrashed at least once a week as I was always fighting with my sister. [REDACTED] never got a thrashing.
50. You would be thrashed for wetting the bed. She would use a hairbrush which would really sting your backside. You were not allowed to get up in the night to go to the toilet. You tried not to drink too much before going to bed as they was no inside toilet facility.
51. When we moved to the council house we had neighbours and the thrashings stopped. But the psychological abuse continued. She used to say things like "you are a clart like your mother".
52. If you were passing her when she was cleaning the step she would give you a clout round the head. She would call me a bitch. She was a big woman. She never hit [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. She just didn't like my family. She never showed my sister or I any sympathy or compassion. If she was sewing she would prick me with the needle.
53. There was an incident one night when I was fast asleep in bed. I was woken by a clattering sound of what I thought was pots and pans rattling. I didn't know what was going on as it was pitch black. I felt wet and I woke up my sister who was sleeping next to me and asked her if she was wet. She put the light on and my sister nearly screamed as our bed was covered in blood. A picture had fallen off the wall and had struck me on the cheek an inch from my right eye.. [REDACTED] went to get [REDACTED] who came into the room. [REDACTED] went mad at me asking me what had happened. She accused me of messing around with the picture and

blaming me for causing it to fall. She said it was a pity that the picture hadn't KO'd me. I didn't know what that meant but I was told by my friends that in the Doric language which EKU spoke it meant "to be killed". The cut wouldn't stop bleeding so the doctor was called for. I had to get some small paper stitches put on the cut. Why would I be interfering with a picture in the pitch black during the middle of the night?. It was just another incident for EKU to use to attach blame to me.

54. When you were doing your homework you would have to kneel down beside her while she sat in the chair. If you got a word wrong that you were reading she would give you a clout round the head.
55. She used to paint a bad picture of the local children's home and used to threaten us with being sent there. She used to tell us that there would be no biscuits or lemonade at the home and that if we didn't behave that is where we would end up. I was too afraid to speak most of the time in EKU's presence.
56. When I was about thirteen or fourteen I moved to secondary school. At that time all the girls were wearing stockings. EKU wouldn't let me have stockings and I had to wear ankle socks and be ridiculed by the other girls. I went to the school party but I couldn't go in because of the ankle socks. I remember my chum bringing out sandwiches for me as I wasn't going in.
57. There was an occasion when we were at the council house and my sister and I were talking in bed. She came through to give us a row. She started to hit the bed clothes with a stick. We hid under the clothes until we thought that she had gone. I put my head out but she was still there and she managed to hit me on the face causing a black eye. In the morning she told me that I was not to say what had happened to anyone at school. The only person that asked was the English teacher and I told her that my brother had thrown a stick and hit me in the eye. I couldn't say a word to anyone. EKU should not have hit us with a stick. It was because we had defied her and had paid the price.

58. When we were at the first cottage you were not allowed into the house until you were invited in. You had to play outside in all weathers. There was a wash house attached to the end of the cottage and she used to say "get into the wash house you little cunt". We would go in there as there was a chest with blankets and old clothes. We were not permitted to go into the cottage. This stopped when we went to the council house.
59. I am surprised that the teachers didn't catch on to what was going on at the croft. The teacher used to walk down the row between the desks and as she approached me I would cower down as if expecting a scud round the head.
60. You had to judge the mood she was in every day. If she was in a bad mood you had to try and keep out the way. If you were having a cup of tea at teatime it would be poured into the cup with no milk in it. If you looked up and she was in a mood she would use a teaspoon and flick the hot tea at you.

Reporting abuse

61. I was never able to tell Mr **FPS** the social worker about what was happening to me when I was in care. I think that if I had been on my own with him I might have been able to say. I was fed up being called a cunt. **EKU** had a total hold over us all.
62. There was another social worker came to the house called Mr Croal. He came to visit us when we were in the council house. **EKU** went to make tea for him one of the visits. I was having a private word with him and he said that he believed I wanted to go to art school. I said no as I knew that **EKU** would set about me for saying that. **EKU** used to say I would need to go and work like everyone else. I think that Mr Croal was suspicious that something was going on.
63. I never had any say in my own development it was all decided by other people with no consultation.

64. I told my friends at school what was happening to me. I also told a girl I shared a room with at a hotel I was working at when I had left school. I was only fifteen and the girl was much older. There was nothing she could do.
65. I have never told any of the authorities about what had happened to me in foster care.

Leaving foster care

66. I left foster care when I got a job at the ██████████ in Cullen. I stayed there during the working week and on my days off had no choice, but to go back to ████████ EKU I got paid three pounds per week and ████████ EKU took ten shillings off for keep. I also had to pay my own bus fares. I could sense that she didn't really want me to come back to her house.
67. My sister ████████ had been chucked out of the house some years earlier when she was caught sneaking a boy into the house. I didn't object because I did not like my sister. She got a job as a housekeeper at one of the big houses.

Life after foster care

68. I moved about with my suitcase wherever there was work. I remember I went to Skye once and worked in the hotel trade. I also used to work at the potato picking. I stopped going back to ████████ EKU as time wore on.
69. I did go back to ████████ EKU to attend her funeral. She died 22 years ago in 1994. I only went back as a promise to ██████████ who had been brought up by ████████ EKU since he was a baby. I only went to the service but I didn't go to the graveyard. I wanted to see the place I had been brought up.

Impact

70. Very soon after leaving foster care I was working in a hotel in Cullen I attempted suicide [REDACTED] I couldn't stand the thought of going back to EKV when I was on days off I was not wanted there. I would go back to her and she would take ten shillings off me. I only went back to EKV so that I could see my friends. I was fed up not having a home or a place I could go.
71. I decided that I was going to see my birth parents when I was about sixteen. They were staying in a house in [REDACTED], Huntley. My brother [REDACTED] had a car and was a regular visitor. He took me and my sister [REDACTED]
72. My mother and father were sitting in the front room. My mother asked [REDACTED] who the two girls were that were with him as she didn't know her own children. She was very embarrassed and left the room. My father sat and chatted to us. He told us that it wasn't our fault that we were taken away. He said that he just couldn't support us. I met my brother [REDACTED] for the first time as he came in to the house when we were there on that visit.
73. My father died not long after. I used to call back and visit my mother with my husband as he had a car. I used to take my children so that my mother could meet them. I wanted to keep the relationship as I was told that it was not my parents fault.
74. My siblings are scattered all over the place and I don't see much of them nowadays. I was very close to my sister [REDACTED] but she died.

75. Foster care ruined my life. I was married too young as I wanted a place of my own. I was 21 and pregnant. My husband knew that I had nowhere to go. We were always on the move. My first husband used to drink and beat me up. I had two children with my first husband. The marriage only lasted seven years. There were times when I had to go to a woman's refuge to get away from him.
76. I met my second husband in 1980 . He was totally different he had suffered abuse as a child and understood what had happened to me. I developed a drink problem and suffered from depression. I have been on medication on and off at various stages of my life. I was suffering badly with depression and drinking. I couldn't cope with life.
77. My second husband died and again my two youngest children were taken into care. They were only in care on a couple of occasions. They were brought back to me gradually. There were meetings with the social services. I was drinking again and badly affected by depression. I struggled financially when I left my first husband.
78. I read a book called "Say Nothing" by Josephine Duthie and the contents of that book mirrored my own foster care. It was good to read it.
79. I lack self-confidence as I am too scared to stand up to people including my first husband. I don't find it easy to trust people. I get anxious about things. I tried to learn to drive but was far too nervous. I often dream about being with **EKU** and her "stick".
80. I am on medication for depression and have been on and off it since I had my children by my first marriage. The drinking was to help me sleep although I appreciate it is not the answer to that problem.

81. I was quite bitter about not being able to do what I wanted to do like go to art school. I had to work but managed to fit in a year on an art course at college in Aberdeen. I am now involved in painting. I am really self-taught. I draw portraits and find my art therapeutic. I recently sold a drawing at a show in Turiff.
82. I went to counselling but have not been back for eighteen months. The counsellor was a young guy and didn't seem to understand.

Records

83. I have never tried to get hold of my records about my time in care.

Other information

84. There are a number of lessons that could be learned as a result of my experiences. Not being able to say 'no' is one. It is important for teachers, neighbours members of the church to be more aware of the symptoms of abuse. They should have spotted things like lack of eye contact and low self-esteem. The cowering when people passed you.
85. People who foster are better trained now and are checked out. EKV was already looking after her invalid husband and us arriving added to her problems. I can remember EKV dying of cancer and EKV punching him and causing him to cry out in pain. I used to lie in bed listening to this. She just had too much on her plate.
86. 15 years of your life was a long time to be abused in care.
87. I have been advised that the public hearing part of the Inquiry is underway. I am not sure about giving oral evidence but I will think about it should I be required.

88. 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... EKV

Dated... 15 02 2014