

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Pol MARTIN

Support person present: No

1. My name is Pol Martin. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1966. I was previously known as Polnacha O'Mairthini. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born in Drogheda in County Louth, Ireland.
3. When I left school I went to catering college in Dublin I have a diploma in Hotel and Catering Management at City and Guilds levels, 7061, 7062 and 7063 and these are basically cheffing qualifications. I then did work experience in hotels in London, Paris and then back to Dublin. I worked in Ireland for a few years before moving over to Scotland in 1989. I was living in Dalguise before moving to Perth in 1992. I wasn't cheffing at that time I worked for PGL Leisure Ltd at Dunkeld. That was at Dalguise Activity Centre as an activities leader. I left there and went to work for Letham Community Centre, Perth. One of the previous managers of the Dunkeld Centre had become the manager at Letham and it was him who offered me a job there as a leisure assistant. I did that for a couple of years and was a foster carer by this point. I have a diploma in social work as well which I did at Northern College, Dundee. I then went to work for the National Foster Care Association in 1996 as a development worker Scotland wide although I was based in Queen Street, Glasgow. I worked with different local authorities across the country developing through care for young people leaving foster care. I did that for three years before going to the Orkney Islands for a year to work in the social work department there.

4. My mother's health wasn't good at that point so I moved back to Ireland and worked in catering. I opened up a restaurant in Stromness and I ran that for just under three years. I met my wife when I moved back to Ireland. I knew her when I was in my teenage years in Dublin but we met up again by chance and we bought a bar and restaurant near where we lived in Northern Ireland. I ran the kitchen and the back of house. My wife ran the front of house. There were rooms so we had another guest house at the back of the pub. We did that until the allegations of my abuse as a foster carer. I was arrested and we sold up. I was supposed to move back to Ireland but that wasn't possible because of threats to me and my family so we settled in Perth and Kinross.

5. While I was in prison I did a science degree and graduated after I was released. I then got a job with a waste management firm. At that time they had a waste recycling facility in Perthshire. I had to disclose my offending to them but they took me on, taking the risk, and I made my way up the ranks becoming a supervisor and then a manager. There was then an opportunity to work with a retailer dealing with environmental aspects of their business. I went to Dundee where they had a base and I was part of a team that introduced management recycling for them. I was offered an opportunity to work with that retailer which I took that and have been with them for four years. I cover nineteen stores in the region. I train staff on health and safety, waste recycling and anything really to do with reducing our carbon footprint.

Becoming a Foster Carer

6. I was a foster carer between 1992 and either late 1998 or 1999, I cannot remember the exact dates. I was 25 years old when I started my training.

7. We used to get children on respite at Dalguise from what was then Tayside Regional Council. I got friendly with some of the support workers including Steve Waugh who was based at Colonsay Avenue when he used to bring the young people up. They were mainly boys at that point and they would stay with us for two and sometimes three months in the summer months. Steve mentioned to me that they were looking

for foster carers and that there were no barriers to single people. I had a chat with some of the staff in what was then called Mainstay fostering for Tayside Regional Council. I don't honestly know where they were based but I know I did my training in Colonsay Avenue Children's Centre, Muirton in Perth. I think the people I initially met who came to see me at Dalguise were from Dundee but I couldn't tell you where they were based.

8. I believe because of the work I was doing at the time that was enough in terms of experience suitable to become a foster carer. As long as my employer gave me a good reference which checked out as well as any police references that was sufficient.
9. At the time I did think that being 25 was quite young to be a foster carer but I knew I had a good rapport with young people and I could manage them. I had a great upbringing and a great childhood. I felt I had something to give. Initially I was quite sceptical but I was told about the training and to take one step at a time so I agreed to attend the training.
10. They also came to look at my flat which they passed as suitable.
11. There was an assessment process a couple of weeks after training I had to attend. I met with George and Anna who were social workers and we talked through the assessment process. The assessment process probably took about six months. I had to attend a meeting in Perth with a board of about eight or nine people. They asked me questions and the assessment report went through. It seemed to go okay. I didn't get told anything at the time, I left after a couple of hours and it was two days later I got told that I had been approved. Once authorised I was approved to foster young people between the ages of 12-17. From that point I was an approved foster carer for FIY
12. There were ongoing checks and assessments, there was actually quite a lot of involvement. Initially for the first year, once or twice a week, Mainstay support workers were visiting my flat but also FIY's social worker who was Alan Keep would visit. He would often come and pick up FIY or pick him up from school and bring him home.

13. When I think about improvements I can say that there were reality checks in the training about how difficult it would be. What support was available from nine in the morning until 5 in the evening but FIY never kicked off in those times. There was an out of hours social work team but they were in Dundee. FIY could get very violent, throw stuff around, bang on doors and disappear. I found after ringing the out of hours team the first couple of times that they would tell me that they were really busy, it is not really a priority and ask if he had he been in trouble with the police. I would tell them he hadn't but I was concerned for his safety. I felt on my own with weekend and after hours support minimum. If there was an issue you would phone and it would be logged. Someone would come back to me the next day but by that point the crisis had finished. I have no idea if things have changed now.

Training

14. Initially the process was nine or twelve weeks training one evening a week which was a Monday night. There were other prospective foster carers as well from all different age groups including a couple of other single people including a couple of ladies and another man. I did the training programme which was all about child development and needs, impact on you and impact on the family, relationships and feelings. It was quite good training. It was George and Anna who did the training but I cannot remember their surnames.
15. There was no specific training on children with different life experiences such as neglect. I would say I was given minimal information about the family background of FIY and the other five kids I fostered. We were made aware that we could get children with challenging behaviours but there was no training on how to deal with this.
16. We were given child protection training which consisted of keeping me safe and the child safe at the same time. The focus was probably on me being a single male carer, being careful what I said, how I interacted, who I brought into the house, issues around sexuality and being aware of that and that was basically it. Child protection for me at

the time was the Children's Panel system as every one of the kids were involved with that.

17. I did not particularly receive any training in disciplining children and how to manage them if they did kick off. I couldn't keep in a 6'2" lad whether I wanted to or not. You can try and ground him. You could take away pocket money but FIY always found a way to get fags or something so discipline was an issue. At that point I was spending summers in the States and this was waved, by me, as an incentive to FIY that if he got this or that done he would be able to go with me. To a degree that worked. His social worker and support worker would try and curtail him as he had a lot of support.
18. Emergency and short term fostering was brought up in the training. We were told about the different types of care. There were different sorts of carers on the training course. I was aware what the differences were. It didn't really apply to me, I think I only did one emergency placement for one night.
19. Ongoing training included a first aid course and child psychology. There was a support group that met once every month which we were encouraged to attend. I did go to most of them. There was the chance to talk to other carers in a safe environment about any issues that were going on and how other carers might deal with such things. It was a shared responsibility. That worked, it was a good forum which was organised by Mainstay at Colonsay.
20. I was given an A4 double sided leaflet on yellow paper which is the only thing I got in writing about guidance. I believe it was very general information such as my role as a foster carer, who to contact in an emergency, contact with birth family and schools.
21. As far as verbal instruction or guidance I would say that every social worker had a different opinion about how things should be approached and every support worker had a different concern. I just tried to meet everyone's needs as best as I could making sure they had the best interests of the child where possible.

22. I hope the training has changed in the last thirty years. Everything was touched on but there was no depth or substance to the training. The reality was it didn't adequately prepare you. In my case it didn't adequately prepare me for what to do with a sixteen year old being pissed and verbally abusive. It didn't prepare me for [REDACTED] who was 5'4" with a tornado of a temper running off. I wasn't prepared in how to handle those type of situations. I would hope the training would be much more detailed nowadays given the advances in child protection.

Foster Care Placement before authorised by Tayside Local Authority

23. Before I was approved and whilst I was going through the assessment process Mainstay were quite keen for me to take a young man called FIY [REDACTED]. I was introduced to him when he was brought to the Leisure Centre by Steve Waugh. FIY [REDACTED] was a big lad of either 6' 1 or 2" and he was fifteen and a half. I had only moved into my flat called [REDACTED] ten days before and I was probably told that they needed somewhere for FIY [REDACTED] to go. I think he was living in a house in Crieff with some carers. I don't know if they were foster carers or support workers but the situation wasn't good. I was asked if I would take him on a short term basis even though I hadn't been approved at this point. I agreed and the Mainstay foster team helped me to get some furniture for his room like a bed, bedside cabinet and stuff like that.
24. FIY [REDACTED] came for a visit to the flat so we talked and went for a walk and he seemed okay. I was a bit intimidated because he was such a big lad. I met his support worker Steve Waugh and I think his social worker at the time was either Lesley Riddock or Ruddock and I said I would take him over the weekend to see how it went. Lesley was based at Colonsay Avenue and was head of the Mainstay team. He came for the weekend, Friday to Monday when he left in the morning. It went okay and I think FIY [REDACTED] was quite happy to be back in Perth so I think it went quite well.
25. Later that same week I was approached again and asked if I would be happy to take him on a full time basis but I wouldn't get any financial support even though Mainstay carers were paid at that point. I said it was fine because I was working anyway but

they did say they would contribute towards his food. I couldn't be paid by Mainstay because I wasn't an approved carer at that point.

Foster Care Arrangements

26. I thought of myself as employed by Tayside Regional Council and I was paid an allowance. I think the words 'local parentis' were brought into it. I think any decisions about medical care, trips or holidays would go to social workers or the panel for agreement on.
27. I didn't get a choice in the type of foster care arrangements I would undertake.
28. I did not have a social worker allocated to me as a foster carer. There were social workers on the Mainstay team so perhaps they would be there to support me but I didn't have a named social worker allocated.
29. I could pick up the phone between nine and five Monday to Friday so there was support there but it wasn't really adequate.
30. I viewed foster caring as both a profession and a vocation. You get into it for all the right reasons, to help young people and share your experiences with them but you very quickly become aware of how much involvement there is. It takes over your life so it becomes a profession.
31. Thinking about things now I think foster carers should have child care qualifications. I learned a lot more about child development doing a year's social care training at Perth College than I did in the previous three years of being a foster carer. I think foster caring should be viewed as a profession.

Financial Support

32. I can't remember the exact amounts, I think it was every fortnight I got a Mainstay carers allowance and that was based on the age of the young person that was with you at the time. I think it was around £220 per fortnight which was paid to look after the child. It was paid by cheque. It covered everything from clothing, school meals, activities, food and trips. I didn't think it was adequate and it became very clear it wasn't. ^{FIY} [REDACTED] was 6'1", he was still growing and he was going through trainers every six weeks. They were £50-£60 a pair and that was thirty years ago. I used to feel bad because I would ask for a clothing grant to help out because he needed new clothes. I would be told no as the carers allowance should cover that. I only once got a clothing grant for him.

Foster Home Household

33. At that time I was going through the assessment process I moved into Perth because obviously I didn't have a home. I moved into a flat called [REDACTED] in Craigie, Perth. My flat had two bedrooms and it was in a block with us being on the top floor. We had a garden. There was another flat on the bottom floor. I was there for just over a year when I moved to a three bedroomed semi-detached house at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Perth. It was a typical layout with the bedrooms being upstairs. Both properties were in good condition and were rented. I moved to [REDACTED] Perth in 1995-96 into a house I bought. It had three bedrooms and was a second floor maisonette with a shared hallway leading to a first floor kitchen, living room, a family bathroom with bath and shower and a second washroom with toilet and hand basin. There were stairs leading to the second floor with two double bedrooms, one single room and one small office/study. It had a garden at the rear of the second floor. I was still single at this time.
34. There was only me and the boys I fostered living there but there were other people coming in such as friends. I had a girlfriend at the time, whose name I think was Fiona, she was in and out but we didn't live together.
35. The boys that I abused, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would come and visit and they also stayed over. I was friends with their parents. Their staying over was approved by

the social work department. They went to speak with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s mother and checked things out. I couldn't say exactly who did that but it was someone from the Mainstay team. That is what had to happen for anyone who was going to stay over. Social work had to approve them.

36. The only other person who stayed over was a colleague Steve who worked at the leisure centre and he used to stay on a Sunday night because he worked late on a Sunday and early on the Monday.
37. Hindsight is a great thing but possibly social work should have looked at the boys staying over a bit more. There were issues going on in their family that were deliberately kept from the social work department by me and the boy's mother. The issues concerned drug use by the mother and her partner and the reason we lied to social work was to prevent social work becoming involved with them and possibly removing them from their mother's care. As far as I was concerned it was like a temporary respite thing for the boys to stay with me. I had met them from them coming up to Dalguise as well and then became friendly with their parents.

Children Fostered

38. [REDACTED] was my first foster child and then [REDACTED] followed by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and three respite children which makes seven children in total fostered by me. From memory [REDACTED]'s surname was either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was one of the boys I fostered on a respite basis. I had a boy called [REDACTED] whose surname was possibly [REDACTED], for a few nights for respite. He was meant to be placed full time but this did not happen as his mother complained about him moving in with a single male carer before he ran away. He never returned to me. They were all boys. I could have two at the one time once I moved to the three bedroomed house. [REDACTED] was with me for about eighteen months. He was with me full time until his sixteenth birthday although I can't remember his date of birth but I think it is early in the year.

39. [REDACTED] was with me for two years, [REDACTED] was nearly three years. None of the children were related to me and they were all placed by Mainstay.
40. I think FIY [REDACTED] was with me for about five or six weeks before I officially fostered him. FIY [REDACTED] had a nice personality but he fantasised about a lot of things. He was very into Japanese comics, games and stuff like that. I know his support worker tried to get him into kick boxing to channel his energy that way and he did it for a couple of weeks. I worked at the leisure centre and I tried to help. He would come to work with me and I tried to get him involved in sports but he had no real interest. He liked to be with other people but he also liked to be on his own reading and playing games. FIY [REDACTED] also had his social worker Alan Keep wrapped around his little finger. Alan was a very gentle man.

Placement Preparation

41. I usually got quite a lot of notice before a child was placed in my care. Obviously with FIY [REDACTED] I didn't. With [REDACTED] he was in a fostering placement out Methven way with his carers working at Glenalmond College. He had challenging behaviour so I used to do respite for them once a month so that was planned. I did that for about six months and then he ran away from his placement. He was from Glasgow originally and he was tracked back but he kept running away so they moved him in with me. I was told [REDACTED] had committed some offences against his sister but this was not expanded on at the time other than he could no longer live in the family home. This had been decided by the Children's Panel. [REDACTED] was twelve and I had been supporting him in the home in my role as a foster carer and was asked by the Mainstay social work department to try and avoid him coming into the formal care setting. The main reason for that was I was available at the weekends when support workers were not. I used to take him and his brother for days out at the weekends when there were no support workers available I worked with the family. Then he came for respite to give his mum a break so that was planned. Then there was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was in foster care in Blairgowrie. I was used as respite for him once a month. I had a sixth boy for a weekend for family respite and if memory serves me

right his name was [REDACTED] I cannot recall his surname but he was from the Blairgowrie area.

42. Often I didn't know the full details of what I was getting into. I wasn't given the full information which I think was policy at the time. I would be given an outline of what the issues were. For instance [REDACTED] had a thing for taking ladies underwear. This had never been mentioned that he had a fantasy of dressing up in women's clothing. It have never come up although I think it was a known thing. [REDACTED] was a thief and shoplifter and again I knew nothing about that.
43. I wasn't given a lot of information but I could have refused to take a child based on the information I was given. I feel I would have been letting the department down and letting the kid down especially. They would have nowhere to go. I feel that if I had been given more information I could have made a more informed choice. I think had I been given more information it would have made things easier. There was a lot of guilt tripping by social workers who would say things like 'if you can't take him then we are going to have to put him in a residential unit down in the Borders' or they would say they would have to go to a specialist secure unit. I remember once saying to [REDACTED]s social worker that if he needed that sort of support why was he being placed with me? I don't remember the name of the social worker but I was told that he thought [REDACTED] would be better near his family home.
44. I have no idea if they had any system for matching me with a child. I assume that there was something done in the background but nothing I am aware of. I would say that placements were often on a Friday evening and it was a case of we need somebody for that night.
45. I am not aware of any steps that were taken to prepare a child to come and live with me. For more long term placements there would be an introduction. I met one set of previous carers who were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in Blairgowrie. I knew [REDACTED]s carers because he had been in respite with me.

46. Some of the boys settled in fairly quickly but it was a hit and miss. FIY [REDACTED] was drawn to [REDACTED] because his mother lived there. She just didn't have any interest in him as she just found him very challenging. She would make the effort to come and see him. She was a taxi driver at the time. He would be verbally abusive towards his mother and she just couldn't manage him. [REDACTED] only lived down the road from [REDACTED] so he was constantly running away seeking others just like himself. [REDACTED] would always, if he got into any trouble, head off to Easterhouse, Glasgow as he had relatives there. [REDACTED] had special education needs and some disabilities so not with him, he was more settled. He was quite clingy.
47. I think the introduction period between a child and foster carer should be made longer so you can see if a relationship can be developed because there has to be a relationship between the child and carer. I would hope that nowadays that would be better. I also think that foster carers should be given more familial information.
48. If I had known the background of a child in advance and the pressure hadn't been there to take a child I would say I would have refused to take some of the kids. I would have said I wouldn't have taken FIY [REDACTED] because he had a violent streak in him. He was a very intelligent young man but there was a very intimidating side to him. He would be right in your face. That didn't put me down as I was nearly 6' but it was stressful. It was a stressful environment and I was also balancing working full time at Letham leisure centre.
49. When I think how things should have been different, I think for me I shouldn't have had more than one placement and I think there should have been more support in there. More questions should have been asked why [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were staying at mine so much. That could be very volatile at times with them as well because they had their own issues. They weren't there full time but they were there 2-3 nights a week. I felt I was just left to it at times and it got to the stage that the only time I saw someone from the Mainstay team was when a child was due an appearance at a panel. Then I would get a pile of documents usually the day before a panel and told to read them. I would be told to talk about this or talk about that at the panel.

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

50. On a school day it would be up, wash, shower, get ready for school and then breakfast which I had prepared. Either I would drop them off or they would walk or get the bus. They were all at the ages that they could get themselves ready.
51. After school if I was working they tended to come to me at the Letham community centre and when I finished we went home. I would cook dinner and try to get them to do their homework.
52. It was usually bedtime about ten-half ten but not strictly enforced because they could be in their rooms doing something. Certainly in the main living room the telly would be off.
53. The boys did do chores. I did all the cooking and it was a case that they would wash up and tidy their own rooms. They would take turns to help around the house such as taking the bins out. Part of my role was to prepare them for adult life so they had to see that money did not grow on trees and that sacrifices had to be made. I didn't give them money for doing the chores as they got their recommended allowance from the Mainstay team. I can't remember what amount they got. That money was not on top of the money I was given, it was included in that.
54. In the flat **FIY** had his own room and when we moved it was the same thing. I never had more than two boys in foster care at the same time. There was the odd occasion when I might have respite but they would share a room with whoever the other boy was I was fostering. I had one big double room for the boys and one smaller room. I had my own room. **FIY** had what you would call the box room.
55. None of the children wet the bed.

Washing and Bathing

56. It was always difficult getting FIY ██████████ to have a shower or bath and he had the most awful stinky feet. His trainers were constantly in the wash to try and remove some of the smell.
57. Both houses had a bath and a shower and over the years all the foster children had full access to these facilities. The bathroom doors had locks.

Clothes and Shoes

58. I would go out with the boys when they were shopping for clothes and it was me who did the washing and ironing. I never asked them to wash or iron their own clothes. They were responsible for getting their own clothes into the washing basket but that was about as far as it went.

Mealtimes

59. Everybody had different things they liked to eat and because I had been a chef I did all the cooking. All of them got school dinners.
60. FIY ██████████ would have a chipper every night of the week if he could and we did have a chippy tea once a week. The rest of the time I cooked and I tried to get FIY ██████████ to learn to cook. Things like spaghetti bolognaise and macaroni cheese. If I remember rightly he didn't like vegetables and if I cooked any he just wasn't interested.
61. I wouldn't say I adapted the meals but I would make allowances if someone didn't like cabbage or broccoli for instance. There would always be potatoes and two different veg so there would be a choice. FIY ██████████ liked chicken and beef but he didn't like mince, he liked pasta but not bolognaise. It was that sort of thing so I would do a separate sauce so effectively I would make a separate meal to cater for likes and dislikes.

62. At times, especially when we lived at [REDACTED] because there was a [REDACTED] next door, if the boys wanted a snack they could go there. FIY [REDACTED] would live on Pot Noodles and they weren't included in the weekly grocery shop as they weren't nutritionally good. I certainly wouldn't have eaten them. FIY [REDACTED] was able to go to [REDACTED] and buy snacks if he wanted.

Leisure Time

63. Depending on what night of the week it was sometimes we went bowling or to the cinema but most nights we were at home. FIY [REDACTED] would go out and see his friends. They all had friends and they maintained those links as part of their routine. It depended on their age but FIY [REDACTED] had to be home by 9 o'clock. I worked weekends but if I was off we would go a walk or some other activity.
64. I worked weekends, not every weekend but certainly every other Saturday or Sunday. FIY [REDACTED] could sleep the whole day if you let him and be up all night. Just a typical teenager. I was never one for just sitting round and doing nothing.

Trips and Holidays

65. FIY [REDACTED] was over in Ireland with me to visit my family on three occasions in the time he was with me. He was welcomed into the family. I paid for these trips. I don't recall getting any extra funds to help with them. FIY [REDACTED] might have been given a few pounds spending money.
66. I used to be involved in Vacation Camp for Rehabilitation for the Blind in the States. It was a holiday facility for families with blind adults or children. I was a programme director and did the activities for adults and children from birth to adults in their eighties. It was a huge mix of people with up to 260 over a ten or fourteen day period. I would spend from the end of June to the second week in August there.

67. [REDACTED] came over with me and spent the entire summer there. He was employed as one of the camp janitors and he helped look after the grounds. He shared a room with an African-American boy called [REDACTED] and it was a new experience for him. [REDACTED] also went but that was over one winter when we went over for a week so he was there for four days in January. I was looking to see if he would be suitable for the summer but he wasn't as he acted up when we were over there. It just wasn't for him.
68. [REDACTED] seemed to have a great time at the camp. He was always in trouble with his supervisor. I wasn't his supervisor. It sort of played out to [REDACTED]'s big man image being above everyone. All the kids in the janitor crew were either Latino, Puerto Rican or African-Americans and they were a similar sort of age as [REDACTED] so it was a learning experience for him. Some of them were also really big guys. [REDACTED] was always getting into trouble for sleeping in. He wasn't really anything to do with me over there although I would see him all the time. I knew what he was doing. I would usually get a phone call from his supervisor Joe telling me he hadn't shown up. I would have to go over to his dorm and get him out of bed. The black boys found it funny that he was a total white dude, he couldn't play basketball. It was ingrained in them that if you are tall then you play basketball but he did try.

Schooling

69. [REDACTED] went to St John's Secondary School, Perth and he had problems at school. I had to go and meet with his head teacher a couple of times and Steve would be with me as well. [REDACTED] was a very intelligent boy but he couldn't settle to anything. He didn't have much of an attention span and was always getting up to devilment in the school. This meant he was getting kept out of classes and going to a special needs class and stuff like that. He wasn't too happy with that because he obviously didn't see himself as having issues with that.
70. In my opinion [REDACTED] didn't have any length of attention span and I would say that was his biggest issue certainly with school because he wasn't on a full time timetable. They tried to adapt the learning for him but he would just go off on one and he was in

trouble at school all the time. I am not aware that he was diagnosed with ADHD, Autism or anything like that. With the benefit of hindsight he may have been as there were issues there. The school didn't speak about these issues with me directly.

71. If the school wanted to speak about **FIY** or any of the boys they would speak to their social worker initially. On occasions I would be called into the headmaster's office about things like work not being completed on time or if there were any behavioural or language problems.
72. I wasn't expected to go to parent's evenings. I know **FIY**'s mother used to get invites to them.
73. In terms of training for the children in my care to prepare them for adult life I would say it was woeful. They just weren't prepared. During a summer **FIY** was meant to be living in my house while I was away he didn't stay there. He went to Edinburgh because he was given £200 by social work. He would never tell me where he was living in Edinburgh. I would still meet up with him because I was still friendly with him. Every now and again he would just appear at the house but he wanted to be on his own. I would tell his social worker that **FIY** was in Edinburgh and I didn't know where he was but as far as their attitude was concerned **FIY** was now over sixteen and he didn't want to be in the system.
74. The kitchen table was where the homework was to be done and I would take an interest in what they were trying to learn. Half the time I was learning myself when trying to help them.

Healthcare

75. Health appointments were dealt with by social work. **FIY** was always at the doctor and he had a very good relationship with his doctor. If there was anything wrong with him or he felt any pain he would be in at the doctor but there was no schedule as you might call it for healthcare.

76. I would organise a dental appointment if one of the boys needed one but I would have to get permission from the social work department to do that. I had to do that because anything to do with medical treatment couldn't be done by me without their permission as I wasn't the parent.

Christmas and Birthdays

77. We celebrated Christmas traditionally. They got their gifts and I am sure they would have given me gifts too. I am sure that **FIY** stayed with me on Christmas eve but on Christmas morning he went to his grandparents or his mothers for the day and he would come back in the evening. That was the same for **█** and **█** that they went somewhere else for Christmas day.
78. They always got presents on their birthdays. I always got an extra allowance for birthdays and Christmas and I was expected to go and buy them things with that money. I had to make sure the social work department got the receipts for the social work gifts.

Discipline

79. Discipline was difficult. You can cajole, threaten or take away but that was all you could do. You could take away privileges but violence wouldn't be tolerated and I am not a violent man anyway. At times I felt out of my depth. I was still a young man and I used my experience of growing up. I never questioned my father or my mother. I wanted to but I kept those thoughts to myself and when the situation de-escalated I would ask why they made me do whatever it was. I would ask for the reason. Here I was faced with boys who were like young men challenging and threatening me. They would threaten to rip my throat out and there was name calling. That was quite intimidating and whilst I saw myself as in a position of responsibility a lot of times I didn't feel I had a position of authority.
80. I think history will show that I didn't cope with the challenges of discipline very well. It was hard to find that line between authoritarian and caring. I wanted to show an

interest but I think I went out of my way to be their best pal initially and maybe that is where some of the issues came from. I couldn't be a father figure because I wasn't old enough to be a father figure. I was more like an uncle or an older brother. That was sometimes very difficult to handle especially when things kicked off. Things never kicked off between nine and five.

Relationship with Foster Children

81. I would like to think it was a good relationship I had with the children. I had their best interests at heart. As I have said I was never a father figure because I was too young so it was more like an older brother or an uncle. I wanted what was best for them and I wanted them to be safe. I don't think they would have realised that, especially the ones that I abused.
82. I did give them emotional support. In our training there was tactile hugging and we were given advice about what was appropriate and what wasn't. Most of these kids didn't come from loving family backgrounds and to give them a hug they would struggle with that. They would tense up and wouldn't get anything from it. I would listen and I think that was the most important thing I could do. I also wouldn't escalate a situation. I would try and remain calm and let them vent. I would use language like 'so you are telling with this is what happened and why you feel like you do' and I would said things like 'what are we going to do about it' rather than what was he going to do about it. I think I did the best I could with that.
83. The training about tactile hugging was a slide with a handout of what a good hug and a bad hug was illustrated by cartoon drawings. A good hug was face to face at arms-length and not too close contact where a bad hug was a proper hug without the head or lower body touching.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

84. FIY's mum was called FIY and she was a taxi driver at the time. FIY did have a set time that he was to go to his mums after school one day a week. A lot

of the time she wouldn't be there and he would end up coming home. He would be angry about that. Sometimes she would just appear at our house whilst she was in the middle of fares. She would pop in for ten minutes to see how he was. She would give him some money and pass on information from his grandparents. I had never met his grandparents because he had done something shortly after he moved in with me and they wouldn't have him back in the house after that.

85. The other boys were much the same. Some of their parents didn't want to see them so there was very little or no contact at all.

Siblings

86. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were not my foster children and I didn't have any other siblings who were in a care setting elsewhere. Some of the boys I fostered did have siblings who were living at home with their birth family. They could have contact with their siblings if they wanted to and it was encouraged.

Visitors

87. The children's social workers would visit quite often initially because these were problem kids. If things were not going right you would see them once or twice a week. If things were going on okay maybe once a month. I don't think we went longer than about a month without seeing them. It could be that the social worker would pick them up from school and bring them to the leisure centre or take them out for tea.
88. Their social workers would speak to me so there would be phone calls because I worked. I was working in the leisure centre so they might pop in and see me quickly there.

89. I think there would be a need for a more formal meeting of foster carers and social workers rather than informal. Probably the only formal setting there was case reviews and children's panel hearings. There could have been more organised monthly get togethers with carer, child and social worker where we could look at future plans and how things had been. My experience was contact with the social workers was more like an informal relaxed chat.

Review of Care/placement

90. At a panel it would be discussed if the child would remain with me. I was asked for my opinions at the panel, how things were and how they were going but not really for future plans. That was discussed more broadly by others. I saw my role at the panel as representing the child and not from my perspective as a carer. My role was to say how they were getting on in the placement, what they were doing well and what they were not doing so well. None of the kids wanted to be in foster care, they wanted to be at home. I think the children were certainly listened to at the panel but for FIY [REDACTED] there was no way he could go home. They just couldn't support him. His grandparents were elderly and they couldn't manage him. With [REDACTED] it was just a volatile family relationship, it was a very dysfunctional family. He was the eldest and he just wanted to be at home, I think, to protect his younger brothers and sisters. [REDACTED] had abused his younger sister so he couldn't be at home. [REDACTED] was also from a dysfunctional family so he just couldn't be at home. None of them could be at home even if they wanted to be.
91. I think foster care has always been seen, in my opinion, as the better option to residential care but it is not going to replicate family life and it never will. It is a more informal type of care which I think children thrive in better.

Records

92. We were asked to keep a Mainstay diary which we handed in. I was to write daily goings on of what happened each day. For example if FIY [REDACTED] kicked off I would record the time and something like FIY [REDACTED] didn't have a good day, he kicked off and

got a bit abusive, he walked out slamming the door and he broke the window'. It was just the basic details of what happened and I would add if I had called the police or called for social work support. Usually FIY [REDACTED] would return and I would record this. I use FIY [REDACTED] as an example but I would do the same for any of the children.

93. I handed the diary into Mainstay when it was full. It wasn't anything official it was just an A5 notepad. I don't know what they did with them. We were also asked to take them along to the support group meetings as well. Most of us didn't because we didn't want to be carrying around stuff that was confidential. We would only use first names and not go into too much detail when sharing experiences at these meetings. Once they were handed in I never heard anything further about it. I don't think anyone was reading it and picking up on things they might need to do regarding what had been recorded.
94. I was given a white metal box file to keep all the panel paperwork within and we had to keep it all locked up. Once it was full I took it to Colonsay and got them to shred it all. They filled up quite fast depending how often the panel meetings or case conferences were.
95. I never kept any other records. We were told we shouldn't keep them and that they should be destroyed.
96. The training about keeping records about the children in my care was almost a bit of an afterthought. After about a year we had brought up in the Mainstay support group meeting about keeping confidential paperwork at home as we had all these notes and records so they gave us the white metal files that could be locked.
97. Keeping the diary wasn't in the formal training that was again the support group idea we had to do that and it was agreed by Mainstay that it was a good idea. It was just a notebook it wasn't anything more official. The kids didn't get to see what I put in the diary. I can remember [REDACTED] in particular asking what I was writing and I told him he could read it so he could see what I wrote. I didn't hide it, it was out in the open in the

kitchen. There was no process for this diary about the children seeing it and either agreeing or disagreeing with the content.

98. We were given every year, very kindly, a National Foster Care Association diary which was a half-page a day sort of thing. That was to keep notes of meetings.

Leaving the Care System

99. The process for children leaving my care was absolutely woeful. When they left me that was them moving on, on their own. All of them wanted to be free. It wasn't really foster care they wanted to be free from it was more the formal care arrangements. When **FIY** left I think he was given £200 and was told that was him but he was to give social work a ring if he needed anything.
100. When I worked for the National Foster Care Association my role was to bridge that gap and look at more formal funding arrangements for care leavers from foster care and to continue foster care support way beyond. Most of them were sixteen or sixteen and a half and legally they could be discharged from care. None of them were ready for life on their own.
101. When **FIY** went to the States with me he was in and out of my care because when he was sixteen he wanted out of care. Steve Waugh wasn't keen for that as he felt he wasn't ready for it. It was sort of an open placement at that point. He wanted to go to college in Edinburgh so he was going down there and staying but there was always a room available for him with me. I can't recall if **FIY** was considered part of my foster care complement at that time. The following summer following my trip to the States he was to move to Edinburgh full time but it was agreed he could stay at my house on his own with support from my friend Wendy. She would pop in weekly to see him as would the support workers. We left him the responsibility to look after the cats and stuff like that. I think he was officially out of care by the time he was sixteen and a half or sixteen and three quarters.

102. When [REDACTED] moved on he moved into a one bedroomed flat along from where I was staying. For months and months he had no floor coverings, no curtains and a mattress on the floor. Trying to get him grants to get furniture was just near impossible. I maintained contact with him to try and help him out. I was doing the form filling for him to try and get money. It was almost like 'well you made the choice and you have to live with the consequences of that choice' even though he was only sixteen and really just a young boy. We wouldn't do that now thank god but back then, to me, it felt very cold and just like get them off the books.
103. I stayed in touch with all the foster boys after they left apart from [REDACTED]. He was the boy who was into ladies underwear but he had special educational needs.

Complaints

104. I never made any complaint about the services provided by the local authority. There should be something now but back then there wasn't a process if you felt that something wasn't right where you could make a complaint about a social worker or something else. I think it would be a good idea.
105. It would have to be something at arms-length from the supervising social work department by one of the national bodies such as the National Fostering Network or one of the agencies to undertake that role. I would hope nowadays, because I don't know what is current, where if families or foster carers feel they are not getting supported they have a point of contact.

Overall Thoughts on Areas for Improvement

106. There is always room for improvement. Mainstay at its time was seen as very innovative with a new way to offer care but the model wasn't changed or looked at from when it was initially introduced. I think the attitude was if it is not broken then don't fix it. There were obviously cracks in it and there were problems that were not being seen. There has to be a review on an ongoing basis of best working practices and what happens within the services provided.

107. I did the 'Making Changes Moving Forward' programme for sex offenders when I was in prison and it was the first time I really reflected on me as a person and I learned a lot about myself and what went wrong. When I moved to [REDACTED] in 1995-96 I started to feel I wasn't coping. This was my first mortgage. I spiralled into drug use. Outwardly I was managing fine but inwardly I was falling to bits but I always put on a brave show. I was hiding what was going on. I was hiding the fact that I had become an abuser myself. I think that really that should have been picked up by the Mainstay team sooner that I wasn't coping. I was having to work a lot more hours, I was also studying full time. [REDACTED] was placed with me then and so was [REDACTED]. Then my grandmother had died which was the summer of 1996. I fell to bits because I was very close to my grandmother. I had to go over to Ireland for her funeral and when I came back I was a mess. I can't remember where the boys went when I was at the funeral. It is all a blur. I can't remember the support workers name but she was in the Mainstay team and she came to see me. I was talking gibberish and she went back and reported this. I think it was Alan Keep who then came out to see me and I said I was fine. He said that they should have a look at everything and he did a re-assessment. I was worried that this would impact on my social work course that I was doing at the time so I put a brave face on. I masked a lot of things and I lied to them. I still would have expected them to pick up the signs things were not right as they should be trained for this sort of thing but I am responsible for my behaviours, not them. I take responsibility for what I did and I am not excusing myself for that at all but mistakes were made. I think if they looked back they would say that mistakes were made.
108. As for my own experience and what was missed or should have been picked up on I think I have talked in detail about the stresses I was under. I don't think there was anything else. I think if I had a particular point of contact that would have been useful but amongst foster carers there was always the worry if you show any weakness they would take the kids off you.
109. I remember once in 1997 when I was feeling very low and I went to the doctor and it was depression. It wasn't long after my grandmother died. At the next foster carer review meeting that I had they went into detail and I felt under attack. I wasn't on any

medication because they had access to my medical reports. Instead of being supported I felt under attack for being ill. Nothing was done about me still looking after children. They said I was fine enough at the moment but I was to let them know if things got a bit tough.

110. At my foster care review meetings there was a lot of people at them. It was chaired by the senior manager of the local social work department, there would be a children's panel member and some social workers. There was a vast number of people who would attend.

Convictions

111. I was convicted at Glasgow High Court on 20 October 2008 for six charges. I pled guilty to six of them and that plea was accepted. I don't recall all the charges however they were lewd and libidinous behaviour towards [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I cannot be any more precise about the details for each of the charges.
112. I have been reminded that the first charge related to lewd and libidinous behaviour occurring between 1 [REDACTED] 1994 and 31 [REDACTED] 1995 at my flat called [REDACTED] and this was towards [REDACTED] and that I showed him pornographic films, handled and sucked his private member and masturbated in his presence to the emission of semen.
113. The second charge was essentially the same and it occurred between [REDACTED] 1995 and [REDACTED] 1997. I was reminded that this occurred at [REDACTED] however it wouldn't have been at [REDACTED] then so it would be at [REDACTED] Perth.
114. The third charge was the same basically, lewd and libidinous behaviour, towards [REDACTED] [REDACTED] between [REDACTED] 1993 and [REDACTED] 1997.

115. Then there was a sexual assault on [REDACTED] between 1 December 1988 and 30 November 1989 however those dates are not right. I am told that these are the dates on the indictment. [REDACTED] was a young man who was a friend of a friend and was not involved in the household at the time. He was not a child in care.
116. The last charge was towards [REDACTED] who was fifteen and it was a lewd and libidinous behaviour.
117. I was sentenced at Paisley High Court on 18 November 2008 and was given 6 years imprisonment plus two years and three months for absconding.
118. I didn't have any convictions before I became a foster carer and I was no longer a foster carer when I was convicted.
119. Before I became a foster carer I was asked to fill out a disclosure form and police did a criminal backgrounds check.
120. I stopped being a foster carer because I had had enough by that stage and I couldn't do it any longer. I was working full time, [REDACTED] was my last placement and he was getting ready to move into his own place. I was working at the National Foster Care Association. I wouldn't think that either the local authority or Mainstay gave any reference to the National Foster Care Association for me.
121. I was able to commit these offences un-detected because I was devious and I hid everything very well. On the face of it I was doing a good job but I was abusing these boys. I don't think anyone other than the boys in question were aware of the abuse. I am sure there would have been people the boys could have spoken to but I don't know if they did. I know [REDACTED] had had psychiatric care as he had issues so there was an opportunity there for him to tell.
122. I knew what I was doing was wrong but I couldn't stop myself and in my own twisted head at the time I told myself that this was okay and that we would both enjoy it. They

weren't and I was so I don't know if they could have shared what was happening with anybody.

123. When I was in prison I did receive counselling for my behaviour. It put things into perspective for me. It doesn't excuse a lot of my behaviours but it explained a lot of them to me and what went wrong. I had an abusive [REDACTED] and it was almost like a cycle repeating itself but why did it? He was violent and I was never violent. He sexually abused me from seven years of age to eleven and I couldn't talk to anybody about it at the time. I think that might have helped my processing and that I might have felt protected by that, by my own thinking not by theirs. I don't know if they did or not or if they felt they could tell anyone
124. When I consider what could be done to help a child who was being abused speak about it I would hope that there are things in place now. I am sure there would have been a full review after I was convicted about how Perth and Kinross Council handled things. At that time within Mainstay I would be speaking about boys growing up and that they need to know about the facts of life and that sort of stuff. I was given permission to show a video channel for teenagers about sex. It was a Channel Four educational video to show them at that time but I think there needs to be within social work and foster care a way for children in care to discuss their body issues and feel comfortable with what is going on and whether it is appropriate or not. Not necessarily the responsibility of the foster carer but with the sponsoring/placement agency.
125. I had asked for permission to show the boys this video and I think it was Anna at the time who was my support worker who authorised this. It had come up, not with FIY [REDACTED] as he would have been too old at that time. This was before I had started abusing boys. With [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I had discussed it with their mum and her partner. I think it gave me permission to start abusing. I don't mean the boys gave me permission this was about me and how I was thinking.

Allegations of Abuse

Awareness of Abuse

126. I was not aware of any other person behaving abusively towards any of the foster children.
127. I was aware that [REDACTED] seemed to have a strange relationship with his criminal solicitor, [REDACTED], at the time. [REDACTED] was about sixteen at the time. He was going to his house in the evenings which I didn't think was appropriate. I thought there was something happening there but I didn't know what. I asked [REDACTED] but I can't recall if I mentioned it to anyone else at the time. I had no evidence to suggest that anything was going on. [REDACTED] denied he was even going round but I knew he was because I had seen him going into the house.

Reporting of Abuse

128. Other than me there were probably not a lot of people any of the foster kids could have spoken to about any concerns. There wasn't a lot of trust from foster care children towards the social workers because they viewed them as being out to get them. They blamed social workers for putting them in the situation that they had to be in care. I don't think Childline had even started back then so there was very little. Barnardos were there but they didn't have a lot of active workers in our area. I don't think there was a lot of options at the time.
129. I do not recall being given any written or verbal guidance or instruction about how to report any abuse or suspected abuse of any of the children in my care.
130. On reflection now I should have reported my concerns or suspicions about [REDACTED]'s solicitor and that should have probably been made to his social worker. I can't remember now who his social worker was.

Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no Criminal Conviction

131. I cannot remember what the other charges were that related to my not guilty plea being accepted for but I think they related to the same boys who were named in the charges I was convicted.

Specific Allegations that have been made to the Inquiry

132. I have not been the subject of any other complaint relating to alleged abuse of foster children until FIY ██████'s statement came through. I was quite surprised to read it. I do remember reading in his statement that he said he had reported it to police at the time but they did nothing. He then reported it again in 2009 and I was still in prison. I wasn't released until 2013.
133. FIY ██████ has said in his statement *"Polnacha O'Marthini abused me throughout the time I was in foster care. It started the first night I was there. After arriving at ██████ ... he came into the bathroom whilst I was in the bath. I remember that I had a flannel over my private parts. He told me to make sure I cleaned myself properly and told me to do this and that to get clean. I told him to leave me alone because I knew it wasn't right that he was in the room. The next think I knew was that he was pepper milling the top of my penis. I told him to leave me alone and to "fuck off." It wasn't right".* I don't even know what pepper milling is but no it never happened. Trying to get FIY ██████ into a bath or a shower was a struggle itself and it just didn't happen.
134. It is not possible the passage of time has affected my recollection. I cannot explain why FIY ██████ has made these allegations. I read in his own statement that FIY ██████ said he was homeless and that he became aware I was in prison and decided to come forward with these but FIY ██████ had ample opportunity before that to report any concerns he had. More so given that he had been so verbal about the treatment he got at Starley Hall when he was living with me. I don't understand why he would say these things.
135. I do accept that if a child was treated in the way FIY ██████ said he was that would be abuse.

136. FIY [REDACTED] then goes on to say “things in [REDACTED] progressed to him trying to get me to masturbate him and do other things to him. I remember him lying flat on his back on his bed with his penis out asking me to give him a blow job. I told him to fuck off and to leave me alone”. It didn’t happen and it is not possible the passage of time has affected my memory.
137. FIY [REDACTED] also says “in [REDACTED] Polnacha O’Marthini would take myself and my foster brothers into his lounge, put on a video of *The Joy of Sex*, or something like that, and sit down with us. I remember him doing that with myself, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. He would say that we needed to learn about what was on the video. I don’t know why the boys I saw in the lounge felt the need that they had to masturbate themselves when he put that video on. Polnacha O’Marthini would sit there in the loose jogging bottoms he always used to wear with his hand down his pants. You just knew he was up to something. Although you couldn’t see what was happening it was pretty clear what he was doing with his hand beneath his jogging bottoms. I never saw him going further than showing the porn movies to my foster brothers but given what I experienced I think he would have likely gone further”. The incident wasn’t a porno movie but a Channel Four programme. That did happen but nothing else happened and nothing else is true of that statement. I did regularly wear jogging bottoms as it was part of my uniform working at the leisure centre. I did not have my hand down my jogging bottoms.
138. FIY [REDACTED] has also said “[REDACTED] and [REDACTED] came on that “holiday” to America with us. It was just another opportunity for Polnacha O’Marthini to sexually abuse myself, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]”. No it didn’t happen and I didn’t abuse FIY [REDACTED] at all at any point. I have admitted my guilt in abusing [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in America. They were in the same cottage as me as they were younger than FIY [REDACTED]. I abused [REDACTED], not [REDACTED] there. FIY [REDACTED] was in a different dormitory.
139. The police came to speak to me in prison and told me that FIY [REDACTED] had made allegations against me from when he was living with me. I had been in Peterhead Prison for two years but they visited me after then when I was in Glenochil. They said they wanted a statement from me about the facts but I never abused FIY [REDACTED] either

physically, mentally or sexually. I refute those allegations wholeheartedly. My solicitor updated me a couple of months down the line to say that there was no further action being taken.

140. My thoughts of [REDACTED] and some of which I have already mentioned are that he could be a very engaging young man. He was an intelligent young man but his physical size alone was domineering. He could be challenging and difficult so it was [REDACTED]'s way or no way. He didn't have boundaries which was very difficult and he didn't know when enough was enough. When it stopped being a game and was more serious. He was like that for the two years he was with me.
141. It is my feelings that [REDACTED] is making these allegations up. I don't know why and I can't work that out. [REDACTED] has been damaged from an early age and he lives out fantasies in his mind. He feels hard done by society and rightly so in some instances.
142. I felt very hurt that he had made these allegations when I read them. I know I am a convicted child abuser, I don't shy away from that whatsoever. I am not that person I was then and I never would or will do it again. Given that he came to see me many times after he left care, he would just pop up and he was always made welcome at [REDACTED]. He also turned up at my mum and dad's in Ireland of his own accord because he just seemed to drift from place to place but he was brought in and made to feel welcome. I spoke to him on the phone when he was over there. I don't know why he is doing this.

Reflections of dealing with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

143. It was quite a shock when I initially got the letter to say that the Inquiry wanted to interview me. I couldn't think why the Inquiry would want to interview someone who is a convicted child abuser and who was a foster carer. It was only one of the boys in foster care that I abused. I understand it more now because I became aware that [REDACTED] had made allegations about me. My life has moved on and I am not the same person I was when I was 25-30 years old. I am very happily married with a lovely supportive wife who has supported me all through this. She is aware of everything but

not aware of anything in **FIY**'s statement. She has seen everything from all the previous allegations.

144. She feels a little bit excluded from this process but she understands why because she has not signed a confidentiality undertaking and I don't want her to do that at this stage. I feel my wife has been through enough. We have rebuilt our lives and probably those that I have abused and many in society would not think that I deserve to have a happy life but I have still got to live. I had originally thought it was Lady Smith who sentenced me in 2008 however I now know this was Lady Dorrian following information provided to me by the Inquiry. I do commend what she is doing with the Inquiry as I do think it needs looked into. I got away with it for so long, for four and a half years. I don't want to see that happen to any other child or young person within the care system. It is not just foster care it is endemic throughout the care system. It frightens me what may happen going forward but I have still got to live day to day.

Helping the Inquiry

145. I think that lessons have already been learned but there is always room for improvement. We can't rest on our laurels in anything we do. I come from a commercial background now, no two days are the same but every day we are looking to improve what we do. I am very focussed on customers now. Children in care are the customers of the state and everyone has got to be looked after and things have got to improve.
146. I think I got off with abusing children for four and a half years because no-one really looked. As long as I was taking the boys and continuing to foster no-one really looked deep enough. I came across as confident and able so they just let me get on with it.
147. If I was in a position where I selected foster carers I wouldn't select a 25 year old single man because they don't have the life experiences. I had no experiences other than my own family of growing up which was totally different from the background of most of the kids I fostered. I would question the motives of any man of that age group to do fostering. My motives should have been questioned. I didn't get into foster care to

abuse kids. There were other reasons why I abused and that was my own lack of confidence and life experience but I would have still questioned it. In hindsight the authorities made a mistake appointing me as a foster carer but if I hadn't been convicted and I was sitting talking with the Inquiry today as a foster carer I would say no because I would actually be able to say that I hadn't actually abused some kids and had done a good job.

Other information

- 148. 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.....
DocuSigned by:
[Redacted Signature]
43266C93F8D84DF...
Dated..... 09 March 2022