

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FBA

Support person present: No

1. My name is FBA. I was FBA as a child. My date of birth is 1967. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in hospital in Aberdeen. My mother was and my father was. I have twin sisters called and who are older than me. My mother's date of birth is 1947. I don't know my dad's date of birth. My twin sisters' birthday is 1966.
3. I don't know where we lived or where I would've been brought home to. I vaguely remember a flat when we were younger. I have a memory of sitting behind a sofa in a flat picking beads off a purse but I have no idea where it was. That's all I can remember. I don't know if my dad lived with us. I know from my social work notes that my dad was a labourer. I don't think my mum worked but I don't really know.
4. Reading between the lines, I don't know if my parents were ever together or if we were ever together as a family. I can't remember my mum and dad ever being together.
5. I have very little memories but I didn't have a happy childhood. Even from a very early age, I always seemed to be on my own.

6. I must have been at school before going into foster care, because it mentions school in my notes so I must have just started school but I can't remember it. My notes say that I was advised to stay at the same school when I started foster care.
7. I don't know how I came to be in foster care. I have looked through my records to find out. My mum abandoned us and left us with my dad. I can remember being at my dad's a bit. He couldn't cope so I think we stayed with my dad's parents and then ended up with my mum's mum. My notes state that I stayed with dad's parents but I have no memory of it. I can remember being in care but I can't remember how I got there.

Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED], [REDACTED], Aberdeenshire

8. I can't remember what I called her but I know from my notes we went to stay with a woman called Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED]. I was five or six when I went there with my sisters. All I can remember about the place is a set of stairs. I think Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED] stayed in a farmhouse just outside the village in [REDACTED]. I can't remember the name of the farmhouse but it's in my records. I think it might have been "[REDACTED]" something.

Routine at Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED]'s

First day

9. I think I must have been wondering what on earth was going on. I didn't know why I was there. I had always felt on my own and suddenly I was somewhere I didn't know where I was. I can't remember anyone taking me there or any social workers coming to speak me. I was there for about a year.
10. Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED] was married. I never really saw much of her husband but he was a nice man. He wasn't behind any of the abuse. He was a farmer so he was working quite a bit. I can't remember much else about him. I have no memory of what Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED] looked like or what age she would have been.

11. There were two other children there too. Originally I thought they were their own children but I know now, from my notes, that they were fostered too. They were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I think they were older than us but I can't remember how much older.

Routine

12. I honestly can't remember day to day routine but I do remember that there was always cheese. I hated cheese and I had to eat it. I think it was a case of knowing that if I didn't eat the food I'd be in trouble. I was scared of what would happen if I didn't but I don't have any specific memories linked to not eating.
13. I can't really remember going to school, either leaving the house or coming home. I used to go out the class and drink the wee bottles of milk. I never got given a play piece so I would go through the other children's bags and steal theirs. I must have been hungry. I think one girl told the teacher that I had taken her play piece once. I can't remember if anything was done about it. I don't have any memories of doing schoolwork with Mrs [REDACTED] I can't remember being outside playing at school.
14. I remember going downstairs on Christmas morning and Mrs [REDACTED] telling us that Santa hadn't been. There were no presents. I can remember standing with my sisters feeling devastated that Santa hadn't been. I can't remember anything else about that day. I can't remember birthdays at all. I think I might have tried to run away once but I'm not sure.

Abuse at Mrs [REDACTED]'s

15. I can't remember my room or if I shared with anyone. The things I can remember are that I was a bed wetter. I don't know if I wet the bed before I went there but I continued to do it after I left. I can remember being thrown down the stairs by Mrs [REDACTED]. I just have an image of stairs in front of me. I can also remember something being rammed down my throat. It was either the wet sheets or wet socks. I think it was probably the

case I wet the bed a lot so she probably used the sheets. Mrs FAD rammed the sheets or socks into my mouth. I can't remember if she said anything to me.

16. I remember being locked in a cupboard upstairs. It happened quite a lot. It was so dark. I would be absolutely screaming. I think it was maybe because I couldn't do my reading or spelling so Mrs FAD locked me in the cupboard. It went on and on. It seemed like I was in there for an eternity. I got wise and knew that if I looked through a thin crack that there was light, so I would focus on that and stop screaming. I don't know if she stopped putting me in there after that because it didn't have any effect. I don't know if anyone else was put in the cupboard.
17. I think another time Mrs FAD was standing watching me when I was over someone's knee being smacked. I have an image of her standing watching. Those are the main things that I can remember.
18. The only memory I have of my sisters there, was one night, round the tea table when Mrs FAD was checking our nails. My sisters both bit their nails and I can remember saying something like, "mine are fine I don't bite mine". I remember thinking to myself, "well mine are fine, so I won't be in trouble". I think Mrs FAD sat with us at the table but I can't remember the other two kids being there.

Leaving Mrs FAD's

19. My records state that we left Mrs FAD's on the [REDACTED] 1973. I can't remember anything happening but my notes state that "due to an incident" we had to be removed. The records state that my neck was all marked and bruised. They also state that what I said happened didn't match what Mrs FAD said. The records aren't very detailed. I have no memory of how I got the injuries to my neck. The records say that the other children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s, social worker was notified too.
20. I can't remember leaving Mrs FAD's but I can remember being back at my granny's, my mum's mum. My gran was called [REDACTED]. She stayed at [REDACTED].

Life after care

21. I have a recollection of early one morning, hearing my mum's voice and saying to my sisters, "that's mum's voice". Then my mum came in with a baby in her arms. The baby was my brother, [REDACTED]. He's six years younger than me. I don't know long we had been back at my granny's by then. I can remember us three girls being in the same room. I think it was a two bedroom house.
22. We moved to a different house in [REDACTED] with my granny. It was my mum, my sisters, my baby brother and me. I shared a bedroom with my sisters again. I was still going to [REDACTED] Primary school. It was probably about twenty minutes away. We got the bus there. I can remember being scared of my granny and my mum.
23. We moved to Inverurie when I was in primary four. So we went from living in [REDACTED] with them both to just living with my mum. I went to [REDACTED] Primary. We lived at [REDACTED] in Inverurie.
24. Life wasn't good. I always felt like I was totally on my own. My sisters had each other. My mother had always wanted a boy. She made it blatantly obvious that I was a mistake. I think I seemed to spend my whole childhood trying to get her approval or just to get her to like me.
25. My mum had numerous male friends. I was sexually abused by one of their sons. I was about eight or nine at the time. It went on for quite a while and I have carried that with me for all those years.
26. I saw my dad in Inverurie once. He picked us up and we went out for the day. When we got home, my mum didn't speak to me for weeks. She did that quite a lot, she would just ignore me.
27. I can't remember any social workers being involved with us. I can't understand how we ended up back with her. I went to Inverurie Academy. I didn't really have friends because we weren't allowed to take friends back to the house. I was a prime target for

the bullies because I came from a single parent family and I didn't have money for the right clothes. I hated school, I just hated it. I made friends but in all the wrong ways. I got in with the wrong crowd. I was smoking and drinking. It was my way of trying to be liked.

28. I didn't do very well at school, I got by but I was nothing to write home about. I left school just before my sixteenth birthday. I went into a Youth Training Scheme for a year. I was sent out on placements for work experience. I eventually got a job working for an oil and gas company.
29. My mum took up with an old partner when I was nineteen or twenty. She ended up leaving and moving to Manchester. She married him. In my eyes, even though I was older and working, she wasn't really bothered about what was happening to me. She upped and left again. I had to move out of the house so I moved into a flat in Aberdeen with one of my sisters. At that point, I was working for the [REDACTED] Department at Aberdeen City Council. I was doing their budgets and accounts.
30. I met my husband when I was twenty. He's put up with a lot over the years. It was a blind date. My sister and her partner at the time set us up. We went out and I got blind drunk. I went to the toilet, passed out and never came back through. We're still together 34 years later. We got married after five years together. We have two sons, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They're both still living at home.
31. I have always worked full time until I had the boys. After that I didn't work for five years while I was caring for them. I've just set up my own business as a registered childminder. I have worked hard over the years to gain qualifications but studying doesn't come naturally. I have an SVQ in play work and a qualification in understanding mental health in children and young people.

Impact

32. When I first met my husband, [REDACTED], I would have nightmares and would wake up screaming. He would find me curled up in a corner. Those were the early days.

33. I found it very hard to show affection, particularly very early on in my relationship with my husband. I think it was because I had never had it. My husband found it very hard to understand why I am the way I am. He is very much of the opinion that "it happened, it's in the past".
34. We've had our struggles over the years. In the past our relationship has been quite volatile and that has been down to me. I had a lot of pent up anger and frustration.
35. It got to the point, just before my fiftieth, I had a complete meltdown. I would say that my marriage was in difficulty and it was because of me and how I was feeling. At that point, I decided to go for counselling. I couldn't communicate with my husband because in my eyes he just didn't understand. I knew I loved him and I didn't want to lose him. I mean we've come through it and we're stronger than ever now.
36. I would like to think I've been a good mum. My sons are two lovely young men so I can't have done that badly. When I found out I was pregnant, I just remember thinking I didn't want them to go through what I went through. I couldn't talk to my mum about anything but I know my sons can talk to me. I always looked after them on my own, I didn't allow anyone else to look after them. It was always me.
37. It sounds strange but I have never been able to go into a room without the key. The key has to be inside rather outside. I've got to keep the key with me. My thought is always being locked in the cupboard.
38. I think my education was impacted. My mum wasn't interested so there was no encouragement from home.
39. I have used alcohol throughout my life to dull the pain. It's caused so many problems over the years. I thought drink was the answer. I was drinking excessively in 2019. I almost lost everything. I had too much to lose so I had to stop drinking. My friend introduced me to a fitness programme. I starting doing the programme and cut down

the drinking until I stopped drinking completely. The group is a closed group and they have been so supportive to me. I have been sober for seven months now.

40. Once I left home, my relationship with my mum was probably better, but she was never like a mum. I was still trying to get her approval up until she passed away. My dad was never in my life. After my mum passed away, he put an advert in the paper asking for us to get in touch. My sisters didn't want anything to do with it. I did because I wanted to know what his explanation was for not being there. He spun a story saying that he tried to keep in touch but my records say differently.
41. I found out that the man who my mum went on to marry was, in fact, my sister's dad. My mum told them when they were eighteen. I only found out that we didn't have the same dad not long ago.
42. I would never have mentioned anything to my mum. I can remember going through my childhood and there would be weeks where she wouldn't speak to me. I've spoken to one of my sisters about it but she doesn't really remember.

Treatment/support

43. I found counselling beneficial to a certain extent. I also did some cognitive behavioural therapy sessions as well. I suffer badly with anxiety and panic attacks. I've been on an anti-depressant for the last two to three years.

Reporting of abuse at Mrs FAD's

44. I have never reported anything to the police.

Records

45. I received my social work records around this time last year. I think I requested them before lockdown and they came through just after the start of lockdown. I thought for years that I had imagined some of what happened. I think seeing it in black and white

gave me confirmation that I didn't imagine it. I was getting to the stage where I was thinking maybe I wasn't in care at all.

46. I wanted to find out what had been recorded and if Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED] was still able to go on fostering. I think that was my thinking. The records were very vague. They stated "it was a pity it had to end this way as Mrs ^{FAD} [REDACTED] was an okay carer".

Lessons to be learned

47. Obviously back when I was in care, social work weren't as involved as they are today. I like to think that there is no way that they would get away with what they did back then. Back then, carers weren't vetted to the extent they are today.
48. The bottom line is, regardless of age, you really have got to listen to the children. It's the biggest thing. If there had been someone checking in on me on a regular basis, I would obviously have got to know them and I would have been able to talk to them. You've got to be able to listen to them and take on board what they're saying and not dismiss them.
49. I think being caring, supportive and trusting is a big thing. You've got to be aware of signs that a child is unhappy or being abused and know what you're looking for. I was always crying when I was at primary school. Now I realise it was probably me crying out for help or trying to get attention. There was no thought given to why I was always crying.
50. In my opinion, I should never have gone back to my mum. In my mind, she abandoned us and came back after a number of years.
51. After all these years, for me to actually be listened to and to be believed are the biggest things.

Other information

52. 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.

FBA


Signed.....

21 April 2021

Dated.....