

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ERV

Support person present: No

1. My name is ERV My date of birth is 1991. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. My mother's name is The person I call my father is He lived with us since I was seven or eight months old, so he deserves the title of being my father. My biological father is I just found him two and a half years ago. Someone at the funeral told me that my father drank in the Wetherspools as you get off the train at Paisley. So I went down and within twenty-four hours I found out his sister had a shop. He had been up in Inverness for ten years when he met my mother.
3. From there I found out I had a brother seven months older than me, who was lying in the cemetery, and another brother who was seven months younger than me. He lives two schemes across from me. They were my father's children. My brother apparently knew about me, but never told me. I have another brother and sister who live away from Geilsland Residential School, where I was in care. My dad stayed there, and he knew I was there. So when I was in care someone was feeding him information about where I was.
4. I grew up in Inverness. My mother is the longest occupant in the seventy flats there. I went to Crown Primary School, which was a

school in the posh area of Inverness. All the old Victorian houses are around there. I came from a rough area, with a traveller's surname. It made things quite interesting to say the least. I got on okay at school. I wasn't the smartest out of that bunch, but I didn't do too bad. They were the children of doctors and things like that.

5. I had a little sister called [REDACTED] who is eight years younger than me. We lived in a two bedroomed house, which was too small. I had my bedroom and my mum had hers, then I had bunk beds in mine for six years. I was turning twelve and I understood what was going on.
6. I was in first year at Millburn Academy when I went into care. My resentment built towards [REDACTED] as I was told he wasn't my dad when I was five years old even though I had a gut feeling about it. He is from Chesterfield and I remember my granny telling me I don't have any English blood in me. I began to rebel and told [REDACTED] to stop telling me what to do. It came to a head when I went to school one day with a carpet burn across my face. [REDACTED] had been restraining me. The school told me that my uncle [REDACTED] was picking me up from school, then I was told to go back to the offices and that it would be a social worker coming to get me and I was going to McDonald's.
7. I'd had multiple support workers over the years. I believe this was for respite for my mother. They would pick me up and take me out for the day. My mother was in the system as she had been abused in the past. [REDACTED] worked in [REDACTED] a factory bakery, which is where I got my first Saturday job. There were lots of arguments between my mum, [REDACTED] and myself. I would be the trigger sometimes, even though I didn't know the concept of what I was doing wrong.
8. I had a support worker for as long as I can remember. Every member of staff from Ashton Road Children's Home had been my support worker. I went to multiple children's panels over the years. They were my 'Get out of jail free' card, because I'd have to come up to Inverness for the panels. I'd also been in a number of respite places for a couple of weeks at a time before I actually went into care. I remember staying with this really Catholic woman when I was about eight, and I remember

being somewhere else before that for three or four nights. These were all organised by the social work.

9. I was about twelve years old when the incident with the carpet burn happened. Everybody noticed I as it was hard to miss. Teachers asked a couple of questions about it, but I didn't go into the specifics. I was taken by social work to a house in Dalneigh, which is a scheme in Inverness. I was told I was going to McDonald's. I can't remember names of social workers. In my last year in care I had nine different social workers. I believe it was a doctor's house I was taken to. I had to strip naked and I was examined. They had a diagram of a person on a piece of paper and another with the back of a person and they made notes on all the marks on me. I had bruises where I had been grabbed and things like that. I told them I was throwing punches back. I believe there were three people there. I felt ashamed because I had no choice. They thought it wasn't safe for me to go back home even though my dad told them he was only restraining me. The police were involved and he got community service I believe. I didn't give evidence as I was in care and wasn't allowed.

The [REDACTED] foster care, Invergordon

10. After the incident and the examination I went to my first foster home. The social work took me to a go-kart track and they explained that I would be staying with a family for a couple of nights, then they took me to Invergordon. I had the feeling that it would be longer than that, because of the circumstances involved.
11. The couple were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They had [REDACTED] terriers. They stayed in Invergordon but I can't remember their exact address. They stayed in a cottage next to [REDACTED]. I don't know their ages, but they were getting on. They were strict, but they treated me very well. I don't know if they worked, but I do remember one of them being out of the house for a period of time during the day. I can't remember which one.

12. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had a son who stayed up a set of creaky stairs in an extension room they had put on to the house. He was about fifteen or sixteen. I can't remember his name. I remember he had a lot of freedom. He could come and go. They had another foster boy there. He came three to four weeks after I got there. I can't remember his name.
13. I was there for about four months. I spent my thirteenth birthday there. We went to a [REDACTED] in Edinburgh on my birthday. I think there were four bedrooms in the house. I had my own bedroom, then they promoted me up the creaky stairs, because their son, I think he was adopted, had left.

Schooling

14. While I was there I carried on going to Millburn Academy. It cost eighty pounds a day in a taxi, there and back. [REDACTED] would waken me in the morning, but I would argue as I hated getting up, but basically I played ball. When I was at my mother's she stayed [REDACTED] from the school and I was regularly late.

Clothing

15. The [REDACTED] were very stable people. They weren't just doing it for the money, they did care. They made me feel like I was part of the family. They took me shopping for clothes and told me to pick what I wanted as they weren't paying for it, the social work were. They were trying to not make me feel bad about it.

Chores

16. I did chores when I was there, bringing in the coal, stoking the fire, cleaning my room and walking the dogs down by the fishery. I remember when I was there it snowed heavily. I loved the snow. I had a big thick jacket on, shoes that kept me warm, gloves and a hat on. I was thinking, I could just take off home and tell them how much I missed living at home, but I thought that would be betraying [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Visits

17. I felt resentment towards my mum as she didn't come and see me on my birthday. She sent my little sister instead. This was the day before my birthday. The social work brought her through. I told them I wanted to go home so they wanted to reassure me and show me a familiar face. I got visits from the social work every three or three and a half weeks. I had a lot of social workers even before going into care, I can't remember names.

Birthdays & Christmas

18. On my birthday we went down to the [REDACTED] in Edinburgh. We just stayed the day and drove back up. They were showing their dogs. I'm sure they won a rosette. I must have been there for Christmas, but I don't remember. I must have a mental block.

Personal possessions & leisure time

19. I had my own personal possessions while I was there. I had 'Bionics', which was a brand of toy, and Lego. They had a PC and I was allowed to use it. I remember playing a game on it called 'Age of Empires'. I enjoyed taking the dogs out down to [REDACTED], just getting away from everything.

Leaving the [REDACTED] foster care, Invergordon

20. From Invergordon I went to another foster placement in Nairn, on the seafront. I was taken there to see it, but told them I would rather stay in Invergordon. However I was told that the [REDACTED] contract had expired. I believe they tried to extend their contract, but couldn't.

Foster care in Nairn

21. The house in Nairn was right on the seafront. It was a [REDACTED] house with a long front garden that looked [REDACTED] on the front. The woman's name was also [REDACTED] and her husband's name started with an [REDACTED] but I can't remember it, or their surname. I was there for about three weeks.
22. I shared a room with another boy who was in care. His name was [REDACTED]. I think there was a year between us. I can't remember if he was older or younger. We had bunk beds in our room. There were another two boys there that were fostered. They shared a room, but they got on well. I can't remember their names.
23. I was still going to Millburn Academy by taxi. It wasn't as far from Nairn as it was from Invergordon. I remember [REDACTED] got me a big snowboarders jacket and I would throw it under the stairs at school. I didn't want to be seen in it. I would go and get it at half past three when I finished school. I was acting out. I started to smoke cannabis with my friends so that I would sleep when I got back to Nairn. I had been doing okay at school, I was even going to drama class, but then I began not to care.
24. [REDACTED] continually exposed himself and masturbated. It made me feel very uncomfortable. I kept telling him to stop it or I would tell [REDACTED] but he kept doing it, so I hit him. I told [REDACTED] who told him to stop it. I got the vibe that she wasn't overly shocked about it.
25. I left that night and planned to walk from Nairn to Inverness, which is twelve or thirteen miles. I got to four miles from Inverness and saw a telephone box, so I called my granny and reversed the charges. She went mad. The police picked me up and took me back to the station. [REDACTED] and her husband came and picked me up and gave me a bollocking. I told the social work why I left. I don't think anything happened to [REDACTED] but I was moved the next day or the day after. I was moved from there to Coulpark Children's Home. I was still thirteen.

26. I didn't like the place in Nairn. [REDACTED]'s husband went to work and came home and said, 'Hello'. That was it. He made no effort to make you feel comfortable. There was me and another three foster children. I think [REDACTED] was doing it for the money, whereas the [REDACTED] weren't.

**Coulpark Children's Centre, Ainess, and Ashton Road Children's Home,
Inverness**

27. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Applied Care And Development, Moniaive, Dumfriesshire

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Geilsland Residential School, Beith, North Ayrshire

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Life after being in care

61. About three weeks after leaving I went to an emergency panel and begged them to take me back, but they wouldn't do it. I have been in every bed and breakfast in Inverness. The whole of my twenties were spent in bed and breakfasts, you're only meant to be in them for two years before you are offered a house. I was told it was because my time was split by going into jail, but altogether I was in jail for four months. So I spent seven years and several months in bed and breakfasts.
62. I got a job in [REDACTED] bar in [REDACTED] as a bus boy. I did that from when I was seventeen until I was eighteen and a half. I was put in jail and they kept my job for me. I went back when I was around twenty-four or twenty-five, when it was under new management, but my uncle got me the sack after an incident in the place.
63. From sixteen to twenty-five I was in and out of jail. The last time I was in was because someone robbed my grandad in the ICU at Raigmore Hospital on New Year's Eve and I went looking for them.
64. I have had my own flat for four years. It should have only been two years. I hate it. It was on a ground floor and people just keep chapping on my window. I've stopped taking drugs but where I live they are constantly there.

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Impact

66. For people who were meant to stabilise me, they threw me about from pillar to post too much and I never got a grasp of what stabilisation felt like. They caused abandonment issues. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be
67. You can't build trust in people in the care system. When I go into the doctors I feel like I'm going into battle to keep my diazepam prescription. I don't compare myself to anyone else, I compare myself to who I was yesterday. I put a wall up, a barrier, not allowing people in.
68. It has affected my relationship with my mum, as I've told her she could have taken me back. But she got used to having too much free time because my sister was in care too, when she was young. My sister looks down on me now. She doesn't acknowledge me when she sees me in the street.
69. When I went in to care I was meant to go to a production in Edinburgh, because I went to drama and done theatre. My drama teacher put my name forward for an equity card, but the social work didn't want to pay for it. This was when I was twelve. I feel you are set up to fail when you are in your mid-teens in care.
70. I was in touch with Amber from Future Pathways before lockdown, so there was no excuse then for not meeting me. But over the last two years they said they can only have telephone consultations. The only support I've had from my doctor is keeping me on a stable prescription. I spoke to my doctor about diagnosing me with ADHD, but he told me that because I'm on diazepam he can't diagnose me.

Records

71. I know my records will be sitting in that mansion house in Geilsland. I am trying to get them. I contacted the Highland Council but I was told I need a Subject Access form to get them. I wouldn't know where to get that.

Lessons to be learned

72. I know staff should have solidarity between each other, but they shouldn't underestimate the fact that a child always tells the truth, and if they tell you something then you have to listen. I had a loss of connection with the social work and had abandonment issues with them, like I was on a waltzer in the system.

73.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Hopes for the Inquiry

74. I've been told they are now using children who were in care in Children's panels now. That's a good idea because they have lived that life, even though I think they are mollicoddled in care today.

Other information

75. 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.

ERV


Signed.....

Dated..... 8/2/22