

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FSS

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FSS. My name at birth was FSS. My date of birth is 1956. I am 61 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Cowdenbeath in Fife. I lived with my mum who was called and my dad, I had three older sisters called who was four years older than me, then it was and. My mum had my brother a year after me, and then there was my youngest sister, We all lived together.
3. We had a normal family life. My dad was an indentured miner and worked in the pits. My mum was a housewife with six kids. We were poor but we were happy as far as I was aware.
4. My mum was pregnant with my youngest sister, when I was three years old. She was due to give birth in and she took ill, and had to go into hospital. My dad couldn't take time off work.

5. My dad was from Ireland and had no family here. My mum's mother and step-father were ill and couldn't look after six kids. My dad asked Fife Council to help him and get us looked after.
6. The council stepped in to help. I know from my records that my dad had to pay 25 shillings per child as a contribution for us to go into foster care. It was only me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who went to a foster home. I wasn't told what was happening with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I later learned that they were sent to a children's home called Ovenstone in Fife.
7. I remember being told that we were going on holiday. I think my mum must have told us that to settle us because we had never been away from home. I don't remember leaving home, but I remember arriving at the foster home. It was in the next village, which was called [REDACTED] and my dad took us there.
8. I know from my records that this was in [REDACTED] 1959, so I was almost four years old. [REDACTED] was about two and a half, and [REDACTED] was only eighteen months old. We were only supposed to be going for five or six days, but ended up staying for just over three weeks.

Foster care – Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] FTA-FTK

9. I know from my records that the [REDACTED] FTA-FTK lived at [REDACTED] Fife. I think the woman's name was [REDACTED] FTK
10. As far as I remember, my dad took us in and then left. We got a pleasant welcome from the woman when we arrived. She was a wee, stout woman and the man was a huge, fat person. I knew from the second that we stepped in the door that he absolutely hated us. He didn't want us to be there.
11. There were three other children there: two boys and a girl. One of the boys was about a year or two older than me. His name was [REDACTED]. The other boy and

the girl were bigger than us. I don't know how old they were, but I think they were maybe about seven or eight years old. There was something not right about them.

12. At the time I thought the three other kids were the [redacted] own kids. I now know that they were probably adopted. Looking back, I don't think the [redacted] were very bright. That's the impression I get. There was definitely something not right about the kids.

Routine

13. We were too young to go to school and I didn't go to nursery. I don't remember ever leaving the house, except when we were in the back garden. The big stuff is really clear, but I can't remember the wee stuff.
14. I remember running around with only an oversized jersey on. We would have nothing on our feet or even on our legs. We never wore any pants or sock or undergarments. All we ever wore in that house were jerseys that probably belonged to the other kids.
15. [redacted] [redacted] and I shared a bed. [redacted] and I would be at the top of the bed and [redacted] would be between us at the bottom of the bed. It was nonsensical. I have got a funny feeling we were in the parents' bedroom in a single bed, but I'm not clear on that. [redacted] clearly remembers us being in the same room as them.
16. I remember standing next to the high chair where [redacted] was and he was being spoon fed. I don't remember seeing [redacted] getting fed.

Abuse at the [redacted] home

17. [redacted] and I used to be put outside, on the back step, and left there hour after hour after hour. It was [redacted] and we would be wearing only a jersey and have bare feet. We would be absolutely blue. It was freezing. I am assuming it was the mother who did that. The door would be locked. We never tried to open it; I think we were

too scared. I don't remember [REDACTED] ever being there with us. This happened a good few times to [REDACTED] and I.

18. I remember [REDACTED] started crying and banging on the door one day when we were put outside. The woman tried to distract him by telling him to watch for someone coming back from school. I don't remember there ever being a reason for us being put outside. Maybe she just wanted us out from under her feet, or maybe the man did. I am certain that it was him that wanted us out the way.
19. The man used to smell of drink. In the back of my mind, I get the impression that it was him that wanted us out of the way, and she did his bidding. It wasn't a pleasant atmosphere. We didn't feel wanted. He definitely didn't want us there. He was dismissive and didn't even look at us.
20. I can only remember two or three bath times. The woman gave us a bath, but the other kids would come in. I remember one of the kids, I think it was one of the boys, washing [REDACTED] with soap powder. He was deliberately lying [REDACTED] down and putting the soap powder in his eyes. [REDACTED] was crying and shouting.
21. I was just a baby and I couldn't fight a big person off. I did try to punch one of the boys but I just got thrown back. It didn't work. It was horrible. I am sure the woman was there in the bathroom, in the background.
22. The other kids were rotten to us. Maybe it was just bullying because we were in their environment. [REDACTED] got it the worst. It was shocking for us because we had come from an environment where we hadn't seen that kind of behaviour. As a wee person, I couldn't understand why people would act like that.
23. After bath times, we would be put straight back into our jerseys and tied up. The sleeves of the jersey would be long for us. We were made to cross our arms over our front, then the long sleeves would be tied at the back. It was like a straightjacket. Then we would be left like that.

24. The three of us got tied like that. It didn't happen to the other kids. Then we were just left. We went to bed and slept like that every night, and that would be us until the morning time, or until the mother decided to release us. I remember [REDACTED] being in a high chair in the morning once and he was still tied.
25. I don't remember anybody coming to us at night time. I do remember [REDACTED] getting lifted out of bed a few times and taken into bed with the mum and dad. I can't remember why. I think one time it was because [REDACTED] had wet the bed and the bed was soaking so she lifted [REDACTED] out of the bed.
26. In the morning, we would have to stay in bed until the woman came and got us out of bed. It doesn't make sense to me, because kids are usually up at the crack of dawn, but we had to wait until later in the morning.

[REDACTED] *death*

27. I remember [REDACTED] was agitated in the night and I couldn't get to her because I was tied up. My memory is that she was in the bottom of the bed tucked between mine and [REDACTED] feet. I knew she was in distress, but I couldn't get to her. She was screaming out until she went silent. I thought she had fallen asleep. She hadn't; she had suffocated.
28. I think she was left in the bed overnight and probably found when they came to get us in the late morning.
29. The next thing I remember from the morning is that the woman was holding [REDACTED] at the sink in the kitchen. She was holding her on one arm with her hand up [REDACTED] back, and [REDACTED] head was hanging to one side. She had the tap running and was splashing water on [REDACTED]. She was frantic and was trying to revive her. I remember seeing all of this but because I was a child, I didn't really know what I was watching. It was horrific. The man was in the background but I don't remember seeing him. I just knew he was there.

30. The next thing I saw was my dad passing the window and looking in. The sink in the kitchen was just below the window, and you could see people passing by to come in through the back door. [REDACTED] was sitting in his high chair and I was standing looking up. My dad came in. Miraculously, that time we didn't have tied jerseys on; we had clothes on. We were made presentable because my dad had been sent for.
31. My records say that both my dad and the doctor were sent for but I don't remember seeing the doctor.
32. [REDACTED] memory of [REDACTED] death is different from mine. He remembers the man coming in drunk when we were tied up and in bed, and he was being his usual bolshie self. [REDACTED] remembers [REDACTED] getting upset and crying, and them lifting her out of our bed and taken her into their bed. He remembers our bed being in the same room as theirs.
33. [REDACTED] remembers the man being bigger and fatter than how I remember him. [REDACTED] says the man was drunk and started getting up to shenanigans with his wife in the bed, and that's when he rolled over and on to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is adamant about that.

Leaving foster care

34. My dad must have been sent for the morning [REDACTED] was found dead. I assume that my dad got us out of the situation as quickly as possible. I remember him coming the same morning and he was distraught.
35. The next thing I remember is the three of us being in a taxi and my mum was there. We must have gone straight to the hospital to pick her up. I don't remember the journey to the hospital to get her but I remember the journey home. My dad was sitting in the front. My mum was sitting in the back with [REDACTED] in her arms, and [REDACTED] was sitting next to my mum. I was sitting by the window.

36. I remember my mum was sobbing and howling in the taxi. I couldn't understand why she was crying and I was telling her it would be alright. I remember her saying it was because she had been in the hospital so long and her legs were sore. I didn't understand at that age that she was crying because she had just heard that [REDACTED] had died.
37. I know from my records that we were only supposed to be in foster care for a few days while my mum was in hospital, but my mum was kept in so we ended up staying for three weeks.
38. I remember my dad coming the morning [REDACTED] died, and then us being in a taxi with my mum when she got out of hospital, and all going home. I remember this all happening on the same morning. I always thought that was [REDACTED] 1959, and that is what we have on [REDACTED] gravestone. From reading the letters in my records, it seems that [REDACTED] died on [REDACTED] 1959, my mum got out of hospital, and me and [REDACTED] went home.

Life after care

39. We saw the FTA-FTK [REDACTED] again a few weeks later. They came to our house around my fourth birthday in [REDACTED] Maybe they came to pass on their condolences. I remember the two boys being with them. I remember this because another incident then occurred when they came to our house.
40. One of their boys abused [REDACTED] in the outside by a hedge. I am not sure which of the boys did it. I don't think [REDACTED] knows either and she never went into detail about what happened.
41. I don't remember much about the time after we went home. I just remember a real sadness. My dad was supposed to pay for [REDACTED] funeral on his own, and I think he buried her on his own too. We couldn't afford a gravestone for her. My dad became withdrawn and had a complete nervous breakdown within days after the

- burial. He was taken to a psychiatric hospital in [REDACTED] and was in and out of hospital for years after that. He received many sessions of electro-convulsive therapy, ECT, which completely changed his personality.
42. My dad wasn't able to work after his break down so he had no wages coming in because he was an indentured miner. That was the beginning of us being dirt poor.
43. My next memory is my mum being upset about something. The council were chasing them for the funeral payment, as well as for the 25 shillings each for [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I being in care for those three weeks. My mum was upset that they kept getting letters for that money for the care that we supposedly got.
44. The council even wanted the money for [REDACTED] care and for her funeral. It is unbelievable when you think about it. They wanted money for her care when she died in care, and they also wanted money for her funeral.
45. My mum was trying to cope with all these kids and a new baby. We all believed that my mum and dad had given [REDACTED] to these folk because [REDACTED] had come. Poor [REDACTED] suffered because we hated her for it. We blamed her for a long time because death doesn't make sense to a bairn. It was a horrible time.
46. As soon as we were back home, I started telling my older sisters about the horrible time we had at the [REDACTED] and I kept saying that I thought [REDACTED] had been murdered. That was the word I used. I kept saying it over and over again. My story has never changed from when I was four years old to now.
47. I didn't think it was deliberate murder but I think it was neglect, stupidity and greed. The [REDACTED] were just interested in money. They weren't interested in us or whether we were happy or cared for. Their motivation was only money and their neglect caused [REDACTED] death. I believe that without a shadow of a doubt in my mind.
48. My older sisters kept telling me at the time that I needed to tell mum. I didn't want to tell her because she was already upset and was crying all the time. When the letters

kept coming in for the payment of our care, the girls said that I had to tell them. I told my mum everything that happened to us. I told about us being tied up.

49. My parents believed me even though I was just a bairn. That kept me going for all these years; that I was believed. I only found out recently, after getting my records, that my dad had tried to do something about it.

50.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

51. I went to St Bride's Primary School in Cowdenbeath. The teachers must have known what was going on because we had no money and were starving. I had no dress to wear for my holy communion and my mum asked the school if they had a spare one. They didn't. My mum cut [REDACTED] christening gown up for me to wear. It was a horrible sensation standing with all the others in their beautiful dresses.
52. We got no help from any charity. We used to pick turnips and tatties from the fields at night. We also used to steal chickens from the chicken run. We never had hot water. Dishes and clothes got washed in the same water. We had no sanitary products, shampoo or even toilet paper.
53. [REDACTED] wouldn't eat when he was in primary school so I would get pulled out of class to spoon feed him. [REDACTED] wet the bed until he was about fourteen years old. The doctor said he'd help him to stop. They gave him a rubber sheet to sleep on and it was attached to electrodes, so he got an electric shock when he wet the bed. [REDACTED] is still desperately traumatised about his childhood to this day.
54. I suffered from epilepsy when I was younger and my dad had to nail with windows shut to stop me jumping out. I think that must have been the reaction to the drugs they were giving me.

55. We were all clever so we escaped into books. Two of my sisters passed their school qualifying exam and went to St Andrew's High School because they were so clever. My mum had to provide the uniforms. My mum should have got help.
56. Things only changed a bit when my older siblings started working and would give my mum money.
57. I got engaged when I was seventeen and got married at 21. I had my daughter at 23 and then later had another two kids. Everything in my head with [REDACTED] got mixed up and I got really depressed. My husband has a difficult time with me because I used to drink.
58. I ended up in [REDACTED] psychiatric hospital when I was in my twenties. They tried to tell me that my condition was genetic. I told them what had happened with [REDACTED] and they told me that I was having false memories. That was a confusing time for a few years. I had been saying the same thing about [REDACTED] since I was a child and I was so clear about it.
59. I have never had any counselling but my daughter is a psychiatrist so I get all my counselling from her.
60. My mum died about 23 years ago, and she was buried in the three tier plot with [REDACTED]. When they dug the grave for my mum, they discovered [REDACTED] hadn't been put into the grave deep enough. This meant the undertakers had to put [REDACTED] down deeper into the grave. They didn't have to go to the court to get permission to exhume her to do this, because she'd also been put into the grave the wrong way.
61. We put a headstone on the grave for my mum. My dad died six weeks later and is buried in the same plot. We put all of their names on the gravestone. We put [REDACTED] death as [REDACTED] 1959. That was what we always thought it was, and my mum and dad never spoke about it. I now think from records that it was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1959.

62. [REDACTED] death has haunted me my whole life. I couldn't get to her when she needed me.
63. I never saw the [REDACTED] again except for the younger boy, [REDACTED] who lives not far from me. I saw him as an adult and recognised him immediately. I don't have any bad feelings towards him. The guy is not very bright.

Reporting of abuse

64. I know from my records that my dad went to see a lawyer to get advice after I told my mum what had happened at the [REDACTED] house and that I thought [REDACTED] had been murdered. My dad went to the council and asked for an Inquiry, but he had been dismissed.
65. My dad got a letter back from the council saying that they had looked into the matter and that they didn't think there was anything suspicious. There was no police inquiry.
66. [REDACTED] won't talk about what happened and I can't force him to.
67. The police contacted me recently about [REDACTED] death. A policeman came to see me three times but couldn't find anything on the [REDACTED]. They interviewed [REDACTED] who is now a [REDACTED] in Cowdenbeath. The sister who had lived there had committed suicide and the police said something had been going on. The older boy went to Australia and I think he died there. Nothing came of the investigation.

Impact

68. Our time in care was short but it had such a huge impact on all our lives.
69. We never spoke about [REDACTED] death in our family. The only time I spoke about it was shortly after we came out of foster care and I told my mum about what had happened. That led to catastrophic events with my dad having a breakdown.

70. My dad was in and out of hospital after having a breakdown and couldn't work. There was a two child cap on benefits in those days and my mum had six children. We were actually starving. It was horrific. We had nothing.
71. The whole dynamic of our family changed after [REDACTED] death and my dad's breakdown. It affected the rest of his life. He was a very clever man but the electro-convulsive therapy changed him completely. My dad turned into a monster. He never had a smile. We weren't allowed to watch cartoons or even speak. [REDACTED] got beaten regularly by my dad, and the rest of us got beaten too. My mother had a terrible life.
72. My dad had changed completely and became cruel. I couldn't recognise him from the man he was before. He had never laid a finger on us before and used to read to us.
73. Poor [REDACTED] never had a birthday celebrated. We hated her because we thought [REDACTED] had been swapped for [REDACTED]. We weren't allowed to talk about [REDACTED] so we never knew what happened. We didn't even talk about it as adults.
74. I think it is only because we were clever that me and my siblings didn't succumb to other things. [REDACTED] is still desperately traumatised now about what happened to him as a child.
75. I am terrified of being cold now. I live in layers of clothes and thermals. I am always cold. I think that comes from being made to stand outside in the cold without having proper clothes to wear when we were in foster care.
76. I suffered post natal depression when I had my daughter but it wasn't diagnosed. Later, when I had my son, it all went downhill. I think it triggered all the memories about [REDACTED]. I started to get so depressed and used to drink. I attempted suicide a couple of times. I ended up in a psychiatric hospital. My husband was impacted by this and had a difficult time with me.

77. My relationship with my own children was testy at the very beginning because I wasn't physically or mentally able to cope with them at all. I have a fantastic relationship with them now, but that is down to them.
78. I was on Valium for years, but they won't give me it now. I haven't touched a drink for three years now and I am not on any medication.
79. I have night terrors every other night. I wake up screaming and am uncontrollable. My husband tries to calm me down. He will tell me the following morning that I have had a night terror but I don't remember it.
80. I have carried [REDACTED] death with me forever and it will never leave me. I believed it was my fault she died, and I have believed that my whole life. I couldn't help her because I was tied up. I'll never forgive myself.
81. I want [REDACTED] to have a voice because she was killed. It wasn't an accident.

Records

82. I got records from Fife Council very recently. There are letters that seem to be missing, and what they have given me is redacted. It appears from the records that we were with the FTA-FTK from [REDACTED] 1959 until [REDACTED] 1959.
83. There is a report dated [REDACTED] 1959, which says that all three children have settled very happily. It says that we are all clean in our habits and well trained, although we wet the bed. It notes that we are thin and pale, but that Mrs FTK [REDACTED] has said that we have good appetites and eat whatever is put in front of us. It mentions that I am protective of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and address them as: "wee pet." It also says we are very likeable and attractive children.
84. It says in one of the letters that the man, Mr FTA [REDACTED] didn't want us there.

85. There is a letter from the assistant children's officer to Mrs FTK [REDACTED] dated [REDACTED] 1959. It says that we will be staying with her for another week because my mum would be in hospital for another week. It also says in the letter that the officer is very pleased to see how well we had settled there, and how well we looked.
86. I absolutely do not remember anybody from outside ever coming to see us while we were at the FTA-FTK [REDACTED]
87. There are letters in my records that say that [REDACTED] died on [REDACTED] 1959. It talks about the fatality of [REDACTED] and how she was suffocated by bedclothes. Another letter also states that my father was sent for immediately and that me and [REDACTED] went home with him. Another letter says that my mother was due out of hospital the day the baby died.
88. We thought that [REDACTED] death had just been covered up, but we found out from the records that her cause of death was recorded as being suffocation. This is on her death certificate and also mentioned in social work letters. One letter says that when Mrs FTK [REDACTED] went to wake the children, she found that [REDACTED] had crawled under the bedclothes and had been smothered. That was impossible. We were immobile, having been tied up each night for bed.
89. There is a letter in my records from the council. It says that the council have carried out an inquiry into [REDACTED] death. It says that the assistant children's officer made a number of calls upon the FTA-FTK [REDACTED] and that they believe it was an accidental death. There is a sentence in the letter that says: *"I am of the opinion that there was no negligence on the part of the county council or their employees."*
90. It seems that they just sent one of their own officers to talk to the FTA-FTK [REDACTED] and then took their word for it. I don't believe there was ever a proper inquiry into [REDACTED] death. The police weren't involved and there was definitely no investigation.

91. Secondary Institutions - to be published later



Other information

92. We never felt wanted when we were in foster care. I think there were just doing it for the money. It even says in the records that the man didn't want us there.

93. My sister died because of the neglect and stupidity of the foster carers. It shouldn't have happened. I blame the council for placing us with people who weren't suitable. Then after my sister died, they added pressure to my family by demanding money when we had nothing.

94. The council dismissed my dad by saying there had been an investigation when there hadn't been. They should now be looking into their archives to see if they have any more paperwork that could help us. I am sure there was a cover up.

95. Carers need to be checked properly before being allowed to care for children.

96. 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... .....

Dated... 28/03/18.....