

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FBS

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FBS My date of birth is 1947. My contact details are known to the Inquiry. I was born FBS which is the name on my birth certificate but became FBS when my mum married when I was very young. It wasn't until I turned sixteen that I discovered he wasn't my father. The surname FBS comes from my fourth husband who I married fourteen years ago but who I split from six years ago.

Life before going into care

2. Our family lived in Stirling before moving to Dundee when I was eight or nine years old. I was eventually the oldest of ten children the others being FBV FDA FCZ FDB and who was the youngest and went to live with an aunt. There was roughly a year between each of us. My mum was called though she got called was the father to all my brothers and sisters but wasn't my father.
3. I thought life at home was normal until I looked back on it in later years. My mum was a grafter and would pick the potatoes and fruit to put money on the table. There was never a great variety of food and the main thing I recall is potatoes and gravy. We used to ask my mum where the meat was and she would say it had melted. There was always lots of bread though.

4. I went to school near the Hilltown, an area in Dundee, but I don't remember what it was called, I'm not great with names. I tended to be the one who looked after my younger siblings while my mum was out working and my dad was out in the pub. While my brothers and sisters were allowed out I was rarely allowed to leave the house.
5. The secondary school I went to was Fairmuir, which was also in Dundee, and was opposite the ice rink. As children we used to go to The Salvation Army which I enjoyed and we used to sing and say prayers. I always wanted to be a Salvation Army Officer but didn't think I was clever enough to be one.
6. I remember that those in the Salvation Army used to knit me gloves because I was always cold but I would give them to my sisters. My younger brothers and sisters were always my priority, although I didn't know the meaning of that word when I was young. Anything I had I would give to them to make sure they were alright.
7. ██████████ used to get me to do things I really didn't want to do. If I didn't do what he said I would get strapped across the back. I think I still have the marks on my back to this day.
8. The abuse on me from ██████████ started when we were in Singapore when I was about three years old, just before FDA ██████████ was born and it got worse when we returned to Scotland. I remember I used to get the others ready for bed and ██████████ would be telling me I wasn't doing it right. But how was I to know? I was just a kid myself.
9. I would have all the wee ones ready for bed for our mum coming home from work and then we would all go to bed together. I was terrified and I used to beg my brothers not to go to sleep before me. These days I don't sleep with my door closed or near a window. I had nightmares all my life until I heard that ██████████ was dead. It was only then that the nightmares stopped.

10. The abuse didn't always happen just because [REDACTED] was drunk, it happened when he was sober as well. I would say he was an alcoholic. If there was a fiver around he would spend it on beer rather than on food for us. We didn't count. That's the way I remember.
11. [REDACTED] would take my knickers off and touch me down below and say that if I told anybody he would kill me. It became regular and he would do it any time of day and would give me a shilling. It became the case that if my mum wasn't in I would get abused.
12. When we stayed in [REDACTED] Stirling he would send the others out and would put me on the kitchen floor and penetrate me both with his penis and his fingers. I would be screaming but nobody came to help me. He would give me a slap for screaming. He would also tell me I was daft and just a piece of dirt.
13. If you get told that when you're a kid and nobody tells you any different then that's what you grow up believing. I have no recollection of him ever being nice to me. I look back now and realise how sad I must have been.
14. After a time I just thought it was normal and sometimes the way I looked at it was at least it meant I could buy sweets for my brothers and sisters with the shilling he gave me. Sometimes he would take it back off me so I would try and spend it as quickly as possible so he couldn't get it back.
15. He used to use the strap on me a lot. If anything was done by one of the kids I would get the blame and get the strap on my back. I still have marks to this day.
16. I remember when my son was born [REDACTED] showed up and somebody pointed him out as my father. I knew the truth by that time and said he was no father of mine and told [REDACTED] I wanted nothing to do with him and he would be nothing to my son.

17. I wanted to say more to him but I was in somebody else's house and didn't think you could speak of such things i.e. the sexual abuse. As far as I was aware none of my brothers or sisters had known about [REDACTED] abusing me.
18. It was only years later that I discovered that they had an inkling of what had happened. Some of us were in my sister FDA's house and my brother FBV spoke of physical abuse he suffered at the hands of [REDACTED] and then he mentioned what had happened to me.
19. It was so embarrassing, especially coming from FBV who rarely spoke to anybody. In fact people used to think FBV was deaf and dumb but he would speak to my mum. People used to not believe my mum when she said that FBV spoke to her.
20. My mum must have known what [REDACTED] was doing to me. I don't believe she couldn't have known. She used to sing songs to me and I would beg her not to sing them as they were the songs [REDACTED] would sing when I was to go through and get abused by him. But she kept singing them.
21. I ran away several times because of the abuse but nobody ever asked me why I had run away and, at that time, there was no social work involvement with our family. I remember when I was seven my mum asked me why I had run away and I took her into the kitchen and tried to tell her what [REDACTED] had been doing to me.
22. I told her that he had made me lie on the kitchen floor and took my pants off. It was obvious from her face that she didn't believe me. I was only a kid so I didn't know that what he had been doing was wrong. That's the terrible thing about kids who are abused, they don't realise it's abuse because nobody tells them otherwise until they're older.
23. When I was eleven or twelve my mum upped and left and then this woman came to our house and told us we wouldn't be staying there anymore. I assume she was from social services. I think this was a few weeks after my mum left because I remember

that some of our aunties came to stay with us to help my stepdad look after us for a while. His sister in law also stayed one night and stayed in his bed.

24. By this time there were ten of us children and me, **FBV**, **FDA**, **FCZ** and **FDB** were taken to the Shelter children's home in Dundee. **FCZ** and **FDB** were fostered to another family who I don't know while **FCZ** the youngest, had been taken in by one of our aunts not long after she was born. We learned later that **FCZ** had sold her to an aunt for a fiver. The police got involved in that and there was an **FCZ**.

Shelter Children's Home Dundee circa summer 1959

25. **Secondary Institutions - to be published later**
- 26.
- 27.
- 28.

Foster Care at the [BGC] [REDACTED] (arrived circa summer 1960)

29. When I was about thirteen me, [FBV], [REDACTED], [FDA], [FCZ] and [FDB] all went to Mrs [BGC]'s home in [REDACTED]. On our arrival it seemed wonderful and Mrs [BGC] and her children [FCC], [FJP] and [LAR] seemed such lovely people. Apparently Mr [REDACTED] had died. [FCC], [FJP] and [LAR] were all in their twenties. Mrs [BGC] and her kids have all since died. I would have said she was in her sixties.
30. On our arrival we were shown lovely rooms upstairs which were also shown to the woman who took us there. All I recall about her was that she wore a calliper on her leg.
31. However, when the social worker left we were shown to the actual place that we would be sleeping in. There were six of us and we were all to sleep on a mattress just off the kitchen, like an old maid's room, and there was very little space to move on it. There would be three of us at one end and three at the other end. Mrs [BGC] took in lodgers and the rooms we had been shown were the rooms that they used.
32. We had never met Mrs [BGC] before we arrived at her house and all we were told was that that would be our home from then on. For the first week it was really nice and we could go down to the beach. However, after that it all changed. We weren't even allowed to talk when we watched the TV and even had to ask permission to watch it.

Mealtimes / Food

33. The food was alright but there was hardly any of it and it was mainly leftovers from what the lodgers left on their plates. If we had been naughty we would be forced to eat it outside on the step though I don't know what they considered naughty as I have no recollection of being bad. Mind you, at least when we were outside none of them were annoying us.

Washing / bathing

34. We never got a bath. All we had was the kitchen sink and there was no dignity in it with everybody watching each other which was wrong. There was a bath upstairs but we were never allowed to use it.

Clothing / uniform

35. When we went to church on a Sunday we would all be dressed in our best clothes. We got new clothes once or twice a year which would become our Sunday best and the older clothes would be passed down to the younger siblings. Our clothes were always clean but we had to wash and iron them ourselves.

School

36. All I remember about school was that we went by bus and if I missed the bus I would walk to school, going the bus route way even though it was longer, rather than go back to the [BGC]. If I missed the bus I was usually about an hour late for school. I always preferred being at school than being in the house with Mrs [BGC]. At least you could speak your mind though that meant I got the strap nearly every day.

Birthdays and Christmas

37. At Christmas a social worker took us all to a hotel where there was a party where we saw [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who had all been fostered by a couple in Wishaw. Although they were there we weren't allowed to speak with them.

Visits / Inspections/ Review of Detention

38. Our mum would come and see us at least once a year and I remember her telling us that she had to give the social workers half her wages to pay for our upkeep with Mrs [BGC] and pay for our uniforms and clothes. I also recall that one day in summer

██████████ and ██████████ came to see us. I don't remember them actually coming into the house but I recall seeing them across the road.

39. Social workers came to the house twice that I recall. When they came Mrs ██████████ would show them the lovely rooms upstairs and say that was where we slept. We were too scared to tell them the truth. If we did say anything we would get a slap from Mrs ██████████. I don't remember anyone else coming to see the house.

Healthcare

40. I have no recollection of ever seeing a doctor while at the ██████████. I do recall one time we were taken to see somebody and all had to strip off and be examined. I have no idea if that was a doctor or not. To this day I won't let a male doctor examine me.

Running away

41. I used to run away to a friend's from school. One time I ran away with a friend and we slept in a field overnight. When we went to school the next day I got taken by a social worker back to Mrs ██████████ who pretended she had been so concerned about me. As soon as the social worker left she slapped me across the face and told me I was a dirty bitch.
42. The social worker didn't ask me why I had run away. She simply picked me up from school and took me back to Mrs ██████████. It was the woman with the calliper but I don't recall her name though her first name might be Ruth.
43. Looking back I found it strange that I ran away. My siblings also ran away at times. The thing is that we were the ones being bullied so why should it be us that had to run away?

Bed Wetting

44. My young brother **FDB** tended to get the blame for everything, especially if one of us wet the bed and we would blame **FDB**. If **FJP** and **FCC** found out **FDB** had wet the bed they would put him in a cold sink of water. In winter they would make us take him down to the beach and we had to throw him into the freezing sea. If we refused to do it **FCC** and **FJP** would hit us with a belt.
45. We were always locked in the room through the night and the only toilet facility we had was a bucket but none of us ever wanted to use that.

Abuse at the **BGC**

46. I can think of no good memories that I have of my time in foster care at the **BGC**. We were basically their slaves and had to do all the cleaning, including cleaning the rooms used by the lodgers. We would have to make our own breakfast and our own bed and press our own clothes. We also had to sew all the pleated skirts which took hours.
47. Saturdays and Sundays were the worst. We weren't allowed out to play like all the other children and had to do all the cleaning, hoovering and dusting and would have to do Mrs **BGC**'s shopping for her. The only thing we weren't allowed to do was make dinner. It was particularly bad in the summer when all the other kids would be out playing. When I did the shopping I often had to steal from the shop so as my siblings could get something.
48. Mrs **BGC**'s daughter, **FJP** used to sprinkle soap powder on biscuits and tell us it was icing. She used to then make us eat them even though we knew she was lying about it being icing. If biscuits were on the table we weren't allowed to touch them.
49. **FJP** was particularly nasty to us and regularly kicked me on the leg. She once cut off my blonde curly hair saying I was the ugliest person she had ever met and that she wanted people to laugh at me. For years after that I used to run everywhere in

case people were looking at me. To this day I still feel that people are looking at me and thinking me ugly.

50. FJP used to call me a dirty mare and say I would never marry or have kids. Mrs BGC knew what FJP was doing but never intervened probably because they were very close to each other and very much alike. Mrs BGC used to constantly call me a dirty mare as well because I ran away and tell me I was daft. She would also constantly call me a bitch or a cunt which is a word I hate.
51. FCC would also hit us, usually with his hands on the backside. His hands were massive. I think it was usually FJP that would put him up to it. I don't recall any of them using a belt or a stick to hit us. I would have to say that Mrs BGC's other son, LAR was brilliant. He was always nice to us but he lived with his girlfriend and was rarely there.
52. I used to deliver rolls in the morning, getting up at 5:00 am to do so and I always had to get myself up. One good thing about that was I could eat as many of the rolls as I wanted. I would get paid for delivering the rolls but Mrs BGC would take my wages saying that she would put the money in the bank for me so I could get a new bike but I never did see the money or a new bike.
53. Another thing was that a lot of the girls in my class wore a bra while, despite the fact that I was well developed for my age, I wasn't allowed one so I stole a corset from next door's washing line. It was soaking wet but I put it on anyway. I got asked about it later and I think Mrs BGC gave me a slap for stealing the corset.
54. The house Mrs BGC had was lovely and she could have made things so much better for us but she was just a dreadful human being that should never have been allowed to foster children. In no way did Mrs BGC ever give me or any of us support or any sort of guidance in life. There was never any love or affection shown to us.
55. We were never allowed to see our younger siblings [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] I remember one of my first jobs was in Woolworths and I saw these three young

children and I asked them if they were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and they couldn't work out how I knew them. I hadn't seen them for years.

56. The strange thing about my time at the BGC [REDACTED] was that, as dreadful as it was, it was better for me than it was for my siblings as at least I wasn't being sexually abused there the way I was when I lived at home. Having said that, we were all physically and emotionally abused by the BGC [REDACTED] on an almost daily occurrence, especially at the weekend when they would all be in. I think it was worse when they were together than when they were on their own.

Reporting of abuse at the BGC [REDACTED]

57. The only person I remember trying to tell about our treatment at the BGC [REDACTED] was my teacher at school, Mrs Wilson. However, when I tried to speak to her about it she told me off saying I shouldn't be saying things like that and said we couldn't talk about it.

Leaving Foster care with the BGC [REDACTED]

58. One day I just ran away and went to my Aunt [REDACTED]s and I think I had been in the BGC [REDACTED]s for about a year and a half. I think it was the next day that a welfare officer, I can't remember who, came to the door and said I had to go back to Mrs BGC [REDACTED]s. I told her I didn't want to go back there but wanted to stay with my aunt. She was an alcoholic but had never done me any harm.
59. The welfare officer said I couldn't stay with my aunt but did arrange for me to go to another foster family who stayed in Dundee. I stayed with that family for about six months, maybe a year, and though I don't recall much about my time there, or their name, I do recall that it was nice and they were always nice to me, I certainly felt better there.

60. While I was with that family I worked in one of the factories doing potato sacks then I worked in the white jeans factory making white jeans. Both of these were in Dundee. I think when I left that foster family it was because I had turned sixteen.

Life after being in care

61. When I turned sixteen years of age I moved to Glasgow and stayed with my mum for a while though I remember wishing that I could have stayed with the foster family in Dundee. When I turned sixteen I was no longer under the welfare service. I had left it without receiving any preparation at all and they gave me no support whatsoever. I basically had to teach myself how to get on in life.
62. Living with my mum was a bit of a nightmare. Even when I had my own children she would hit me. I always thought you didn't get hit as an adult. I was obviously wrong.
63. I met my first boyfriend and had my first child when I was 21 after which I moved into my boyfriend's parent's house in [REDACTED]. We later married but split up and I moved to Stirling where I met another man who I then had two children with. The next boyfriend I had seemed nice at first but he became abusive and possessive so I left and moved to Dover and by this time I had given birth to my fourth child.
64. My children are called [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. In the end I couldn't cope with the stress and asked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s dad to look after them for a while. [REDACTED] went to stay with my sister [REDACTED] FDA [REDACTED] stayed with me. I didn't see my sons for years and it was only recently that my youngest son visited me and called me "mum". I was delighted at that.
65. While living in Dover I worked on the ferries as a cleaner going from [REDACTED] for thirty years. I loved that job so much that I didn't even take a holiday for the first two years.

Impact

66. I think of my time in care almost daily but there are some things you just have to put to the back of your mind and shut them out. I know not everybody can do that but it's the best way to survive. When I think of the things that happened to me when I was young I just think that I'm too old to have that on my mind anymore.
67. One of the reasons I came forward to the Inquiry was to at last talk to somebody about my early life in the hope that I can then go home and think that, at last, somebody has listened to me and believed me. There are times I'm up till the early hours of the morning thinking about my early life. It's maybe too late for me but at least somebody has at last listened to me.
68. I left two of my sons with their dad because I didn't want them to see me getting beat up by my then husband. I just didn't want them to go through a bad childhood the way I did.
69. Between my bad childhood and an abusive marriage I got very depressed when I was in my thirties [REDACTED] I went to bed with a cigarette which was something I never did. I was just sick of life and wondered why we even brought kids into such a life.
70. My time in care definitely affected how I brought up my children. For instance, they all had to have their own individual towels and face-cloths and their own cups and plates. I think that was because we didn't have such things in the BGC [REDACTED].
71. I'm not a great reader but I do read books by people who were also abused as children. I think it somehow gives me comfort to know that I wasn't the only person to have gone through the sort of childhood that I endured.
72. When I started school I was apparently quite bright but as a result of being abused at home and by the BGC [REDACTED] my education fell away. Also, given the fact that I was

always being called daft and stupid I think that I eventually started to believe it and just gave up.

73. I was never taught how to look after children. What taught me was looking after my young brothers and sisters. That was why I had to send my two sons to their father and another to my sister when I was stressed. I now live with my daughter in Dundee. It's not perfect but we get by.
74. I think that when I look back I was a mum from the age of six. Who on earth is a mother at that age? That was all I ever knew.
75. I was married four times and they were all abusive, especially my last marriage to [REDACTED]. However, having lived the childhood I had, I had no confidence or self-esteem having been constantly called stupid and daft all my life.
76. I've always been in touch with my siblings but at times it felt as if we had to be all reintroduced having all been separated for so long. As far as I'm aware we all get on well together.
77. One thing I've never been able to understand is why my mother didn't stop [REDACTED] abusing me. She must have known. I tried calling her on the phone but she just hung up the phone. I would love to have just sat down and talked with her about it but of course that's not possible now.
78. I think back to all the pain I suffered and can't help but wonder if the pains that I suffer from now in my groin area have anything to do with the pain I endured all those years ago as a child. I've always found it hard to talk about what [REDACTED] did to me and, in fact, this is the first time I have ever spoken about it.
79. I've always found it difficult to trust people. If I meet somebody I don't like I have to work it out in my own mind why I don't like them. If I don't like them I don't speak with them again as I simply can't be two-faced with people and I don't like to be horrible. That's the only way I can cope with it.

80. One thing I have learned in life is that there are bullies in all walks of life whether it's at home or at work. I've learned that if you stand up to them they leave you alone but you really have to give and take in life.
81. I've lived with the abuse I suffered for almost seventy years and I feel that talking about it today has possibly been the first time I can feel freer from the load I have carried all my life. I honestly feel as if I've lost ten stone by having somebody listen to me and I honestly feel I can get on with my life now.

Reporting of Abuse

82. Other than trying to tell my mother about the abuse I received from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I never told anybody about it. I think if I had I wouldn't be here today as he was a very violent man and would certainly have taken revenge on me if I told anybody. I didn't report the abuse from the BGC [REDACTED].

Counselling

83. I've never sought counselling but I recall watching a TV programme about child abuse once, this would be about forty years ago, and I called them and spoke to a woman. I told her that I had been abused and she said I was very brave for speaking about it but I never heard any more from her. My way of thinking is that I don't want to talk about it and just put it to the back of my mind and get on with life.

Records

84. I've never tried to recover my records and have never thought about getting them. I believe that my sisters tried to get there's but were told that the records for those of us who stayed with the BGC [REDACTED] were destroyed in a fire.

Hopes for the Inquiry

85. I hope that by coming forward I can help even just one child. It would be nice for children today to live as children, to enjoy their childhood. They should get the chance, if anything goes wrong, to be able to speak to somebody as a child and not have to wait until they are adults.
86. I know that in my case there are times when I look back and wonder if it really happened. I know it did but as you get older you find it more difficult to believe that somebody could behave in such a way. If you explain it as a child it's all fresher in your memory.
87. Maybe not everyone is like me but I would have loved the chance to talk to somebody as a child and tell them what was happening. If children of the future get that chance then I would be delighted. The scary thing is that children who are abused can themselves become abusers if not dealt with properly.
88. I think those who are abused have two choices. To become abusers or choose a different path. I chose a different path. It might not always have been the right path I chose but I chose it to be a better person. It might not always have worked out for me but I was never an abuser.
89. If I think about it I could also have turned to prostitution. I mean that's how [REDACTED] was treating me, paying me a shilling to have sex with him.
90. Another thing that needs improved is supervision by social workers. We were very poorly supervised by them and they simply didn't look into our welfare enough. They shouldn't go team handed as a child would feel overwhelmed but there should be at least one responsible person that a child can confide in.
91. I also think that schools should do a better job of preparing children for life. Show them how to manage money and how important it is to know how to run their finances properly.

92. 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 FBS

Dated 23rd OCTOBER 2019