

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ERC

Support person present: No

1. My name is ERC. When I was in care I was known as ERC. My date of birth is 1968. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I lived with my mum, dad and sister in San Diego, California. My dad was in the Navy and my mum was bringing us up. My dad was and my mum was then she married again and became. My sister was and she was three and a half years older than me. We had different dads and we never knew my sister's dad. She took on my dad's name and we were both known as growing up.
3. My first memory is of being taken away from my sister when I was two years old and she was put in a different room. I was in the arms of someone but I don't know who that person is. I remember a door being shut between me and my sister. I was looking through a square glass opening at my sister being walked away by someone else. I don't know where I was when that happened. I was screaming because I was being taken away from my sister. It's a horrible first memory to have. I don't know if that is why I was so clingy as a child. I was a thorn in my sister's side. Everyone tells me that when I first came to Scotland I was very clingy to her but she didn't want me. I didn't

cope when she wasn't with me. To me she was the one who was there when my mum abandoned us and went out.

4. My mum died quite young, before we were able to ask questions. All I know is that as a child I was in foster care in America and the foster family were called the [REDACTED]. They looked after me and my sister. My mum turned up for a visit and took us out for the day but instead she put us on a plane and took us back to Scotland. I have paperwork that shows that the [REDACTED] went to court to try and get us back. They were angry that we had basically been stolen and they did their best to try and get us back but it never happened.
5. I think I came back from America in 1972 when I was four years old. My mum and dad divorced. My father had custody of us in America. When we came to Scotland, all I remember is that my aunt and mother lived in the same stair in [REDACTED] Edinburgh. My mum lived on the first floor and my aunt lived at the top of the stair. I remember going in and out of both houses and then I started to stay more at my aunt's house.
6. We lived with my aunt and uncle and I always remember there was a giant tin bath in the living room and a coal fire. When you finished the bath the water was chucked down the tenement stair to empty it. There was an outside toilet in that tenement. That was how my life started. The tenement block was being knocked down and a lot of the families had left. There was a wrecking ball in the street knocking buildings down and that was our play area. We were in and out of these empty properties that people had left pictures and furniture in, we thought it was treasure.
7. In the [REDACTED] house my aunt and uncle slept in the living room and the five of us slept in one bed in the bedroom. It was a poor start to life. I had three cousins. The eldest was [REDACTED], she wasn't [REDACTED]'s daughter but she took [REDACTED]'s name. She was born in [REDACTED] 1967. [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED] 1968 so he was the same age as me. [REDACTED] was born in [REDACTED] 1970 and she was a couple of years younger than us. [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]'s favourite and [REDACTED] was [REDACTED]'s favourite. My aunt was [REDACTED] and my uncle was [REDACTED]. My aunt was my mum's

sister but things went on after that and they didn't have a good relationship. They hated each other.

8. My mum was going out and we would be left with my aunt and uncle. My mum and my aunt disappeared for a few days. [ERS] asked their dad, our grandpa, where they were but no one knew. They left my uncle with his three children and me and [REDACTED]. My uncle couldn't cope because it was hard enough with his own three kids so he phoned the social work to take [REDACTED] and me. My mum and my aunt came back that day and my aunt told social workers that she would take us. I didn't know this at the time but I found out about it from paperwork. If they had arrived home a few hours later then it may have been a different story.
9. I was four years old when I was in [REDACTED] and the social work decided that we were going to live with my aunt and uncle. We weren't really told why we weren't able to live with mum. We were just told that we were going to live with them. We weren't allowed to go near my mum or visit her. I think it was down to "abandonment" on some of the paperwork that I had. The social work didn't speak to me or ask me what I wanted. I was made a ward of court and they made decisions for me.
10. Life was very poor and all I remember was that we were given a new house that was in Wester Hailes. I remember being on a long bus journey to get there. We were one of the last families to come out of [REDACTED] because my aunt and uncle had rent arrears. We were one of the last to move out and we were there to the end. I remember that there were rats that were running around. We thought they were just pets.

Foster care with [ERR-ERS], Wester Hailes, Edinburgh

11. I think I was still four when we moved to Wester Hailes because I hadn't started school. When we first moved to Wester Hailes I was a little American girl who spoke differently and no one could pronounce my name. At that time my mum lived in [REDACTED] and

my dad was still in the Navy. [REDACTED] had his own room which was understandable. ERR [REDACTED] and ERS [REDACTED] had their own room. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I shared a room and [REDACTED] had a single room downstairs.

12. The house was light, sparkly and all new. It had an indoor toilet and a bath inside. It was in a seven-in-a-block stair and we were on the top landing. There was a drying green at the side of the house. You walked in the main door and you were met by another door about a meter in front of you and a stair going up to the right. There was a long dark cupboard to the left. You entered the next door and that was the living room. There was a downstairs bedroom that [REDACTED] had next to the kitchen. There was a hatch between the living room and the kitchen that you could slide open and shut. When you went up the stairs there was a toilet. The room I shared with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was at the top of the stairs and then it was ERR [REDACTED] and ERS [REDACTED]'s and [REDACTED]'s faced you.

Routine

First day

13. We took a bus to the house in Wester Hailes and I left my teddy on the bus. I never got it back and I was upset. It was a bit of fun being there because we had friends. One of my Uncle ERS [REDACTED]'s sisters lived there as well and [REDACTED] was the same age as her daughter so [REDACTED] felt she had friends as well because we met family we hadn't met before.

Mornings and bedtime

14. [REDACTED] tended to have her own bed but [REDACTED] and I tended to share a bed. At first the three of us shared a double bed and then there was a single bed and another bed in the room.

Mealtimes/Food

15. Our breakfast tended to be porridge. We had dried milk that you had to add water to and all it was just white water so you either had cornflakes with white water or porridge. You never had milk in your tea. It was disgusting. I still see that milk in the dried section of the shops.
16. You had to eat whatever was put down in front of you and you wouldn't be allowed to leave the table until you had eaten it. You had to sit in that room until you had eaten it. They would say that there were starving kids in Africa. You didn't move until you had eaten it and even if it was cold then you still had to eat it. I hated spaghetti bolognaise when I was younger because the pasta was disgusting to me. I sat for about an hour and a half and the pasta was cold and gluey but I still had to stay there until I had eaten it. I would be gagging and feeling sick. It was **ERR** who made me do that. She was the same towards her own children. We all had to sit until we finished dinner. She shut kitchen door so that we couldn't feed it to the dog.
17. I never eat cod roe anymore because I hated that and fishcakes are the same. We were just given whatever my Aunt **ERR** could afford. We had stovies. It was whatever she could make up that was cheap. My Uncle **ERS** went fishing as a hobby so we ate what he caught. I can't touch fish anymore because it was flat fish that he brought home and it was disgusting. We ate whatever they could put on the table.
18. At primary school my cousins were given free dinners for a period of time but **ERR** and I weren't entitled to them because we were foster children. At that point my family couldn't afford to feed their own kids who were getting school dinners but I had to go home from school for dinner. My Aunt **ERR** used to make me a packet of vegetable soup which was hot water with floating peppers on top. When I left home at fourteen I was 7 stones and 2 pounds. I'm five foot seven. I was very skinny and gaunt and that was me growing up. Everyone saw me as a skinny lanky lass but that was all we had.
19. We all knew when the cheque came in for **ERR** and I and we would get excited because we would get a corned beef sandwich for tea as a treat. We either had hotdogs or corned beef sandwiches and we thought that was such an excitement. We

were given a packet of crisps or a biscuit with that meal because the cheque had come in. We were all aware that there was a cheque to support me and my sister. My aunt and uncle were paid to watch me and my sister and I think the cheque came from the social work.

20. We had to ask for money to do home baking at school and we never ate what we made because it was to be taken home and you would be scared to eat one cake in case she noticed. It was just strict.

Washing/bathing

21. We had one bath a week which was on a Sunday. Every one of us shared that same bath.

Healthcare

22. I was taken to the doctors and found out I had scabies. I also had a type of measles where I wasn't to have light in the room. I remember being shut in the downstairs bedroom for two weeks in the dark. I was taken to the doctors when I was ill.
23. When I started menstruating I couldn't tell my Aunt [ERR] I stood in the kitchen and shouted through to her in the living room during a lunch break and then she came through. There was one packet of towels in the cupboard and I was given them but they were never replaced. When I ran out of them I couldn't go to her. I was menstruating but I didn't have menstrual products. Growing up in that house there wasn't a lot of toilet roll and a lot of the time we used cut up newspaper. I couldn't use that when I was menstrual so Monday to Friday I used toilet roll from the school and put it in my pants. I hoped it would stay there but it never did because there was nothing to keep it there.
24. We thought [] hadn't started menstruating and she was older than me. My aunt was about to take her to the doctor and then [] told her that she had started years ago. She was doing the same as me. It wasn't just me that couldn't approach [ERR] [ERR]

had told us that she had been pregnant and she found out that she had cancer of the womb. Her womb was removed so she couldn't have any more children and she didn't menstruate. She made it very uncomfortable and we never spoke about girls' things. There were five girls in the house but we were made to feel like it wasn't normal and it was a dirty thing.

Chores / Pocket money

25. We all did chores. We used to take the big bin out and put it down the chute and we never had black bags so then we had to scrub the dirty bin. In high school one of my chores was to walk two miles to the petrol station in Sighthill with two big gallon tubs that I had to fill with two gallons of paraffin. It was ok going there because the cartons were empty and it was all downhill but coming back it was all uphill and the canisters would cut into my hands and my hands would be stinking of paraffin because it would spill over. I had to constantly put them down to swap hands. When I was doing that my aunt would also ask me to get her a bag of sweets from a shop in Sighthill but I was terrified to take one because I assumed that she would notice that I had taken one. I was on my own when I was sent to Sighthill.

26. We knew when the cheque came in. We weren't given pocket money regularly but if they had it then they would give us pocket money. I think the most I was given was 25 pence. I have good memories of one of us buying a torpedo cake and another one buying a bag of sweets. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I would share them in the bedroom. We would all club together and come Easter we all bought chocolate to make our own Easter eggs because we never got that kind of thing.

Clothing/uniform

27. My cousins were entitled to grants for school uniform and [REDACTED] and I weren't. That was strange when we were classed as a family but we weren't ever a family. I never had a new uniform. I don't remember ever going to buy a uniform. I was just given clothes and told that was what I would be wearing. My Aunt [REDACTED] ERR and Uncle [REDACTED] ERS

really struggled through our childhood. It was just whatever they could give us was what we had to take.

28. When we went to high school there wasn't a school uniform or a dress code so they bought whatever they could afford. I remember going to a shop to get clothes but I was tall so everything I tried on was too short and I still had to get a pair of trousers out of that shop even though I looked ridiculous because it was all that they could afford. I was teased and bullied at school because of my height, among other things, and none of my trousers fitted me in length.
29. When I was younger my grandfather, my mum's dad, was a caretaker down in Leith and whatever people put in the bins of the high flats he would bring for us to wear so if mini-skirts were in then we were given gypsy skirts. People would clear out their cupboards and throw clothes down the chute that he would then keep for us.
30. [REDACTED] had a bit of a better childhood because she was the oldest and everything she got was new. We were given [REDACTED]'s hand downs.

Schooling

31. I started school once we moved to Wester Hailes and I went to Hailesland Primary. We all went there and we all attended. We had a strict upbringing and we did what we were told so we wouldn't have missed school. I went to Wester Hailes Education Centre for secondary school.
32. In primary school we couldn't go to school one day because the dog had eaten our pants. All of our dirty laundry sat in the corner and the dog ate them. There were four girls and a woman in the house and none of us had pants. We had to stay off school for a few days. My aunt wrote a note explaining why we had to stay off and the teacher read the note out in front of the class and questioned me about not being able to go to school because the dog ate my pants. I laugh about it now but it wasn't funny, it was my life. People saw me as someone who was always soaking, who was stinking of pee and who couldn't come to school because the dog ate my pants. It was a good

few days we had off school because we didn't have money so we had to wait for my Uncle **ERS** to be paid so that we could buy pants. I think I was in primary four.

33. In primary school I would wet myself in class because I didn't have the confidence to put my hand up and ask to go to the toilet. I was terrified of adults. I didn't like the attention on me so I wouldn't put my hand up and draw attention to myself. Because of that I would wet myself which would draw even more unwanted attention. I was just scared. I think I had asked once and been told that I was to wait until break. I never questioned adults so after that I never put my hand up to ask.
34. The other thing that haunts me is Harvest Day. You were meant to bring in a tin or dried food to give to the teachers and then it all went to the church. I found that a torture. There were four of us at the same age going to my aunt and asking for something to bring for Harvest Day but our cupboards were empty so she didn't have four tins. The school had a list and would ask me if I had brought it in. They would tell me that I had to bring it in. It wasn't if you could afford to pay it so I had to go home and face the wrath of my aunt. Harvest Day was meant to help those that struggled but they seemed to think that only pensioners at the local church needed help and forgot about the rest of us.
35. If the school had anything that you had to pay towards, like a cooking class, then I would find that tough because there were four of us asking. Cooking class wasn't free when we were at school and you had to pay to be in the class. You had to make a contribution to be able to make the product that you were cooking that week. I found all that tough because **ERR** was so unapproachable. At the time, I wondered why **ERR** and **ERS** never gave us that because I knew they were given a cheque for us and I felt they weren't looking after us. Now that I am older I understand it more. I can see they struggled for money.

Clubs /organisations

36. I started going to a drama class in Colinton. It was with school but the teacher who took the class started doing it outside of school. **ERR** and **ERS** never once came

to a show that I was in. They didn't come to school reviews never mind anything else. The teacher drove a few of us to the class. Parents and guardians were meant to stay to watch the show and take you home but they never came so I would be standing on my own at the end of the night. I would be asked if anyone had come to collect me and I would say that they hadn't. The teacher had to arrange for other parents who were strangers to me to drive me home because they couldn't leave me to walk home from Colinton at nine o'clock at night. ERR and ERS would have left me to walk home from Colinton and then I would have been given into trouble for coming in late. I was always the one whose parents didn't come but they were never called parents because we were foster kids and everyone called them our guardians.

37. I joined a bible group when I was in the later years of primary school. The old granny who ran the bible group was a home baker and she made jam and cakes. I would go to the bible group to get some cake. She introduced me to a church in Oxgangs. My uncle hated that I went to a church and I got into trouble but I never stopped going.
38. My uncle was in the orange lodge and we used to go to the orange lodge marches which I thought were fun as a child because there was music and crowds. I didn't realise the extent of it until I was a teenager and he said that we had to support Rangers. I can't say the words that were used but he didn't say Catholic and Protestant he used different names and I was brought up saying those names. When you walked into the living room, the first thing you saw were orange walk things on the main wall. There was the red hand of ulster, orange lodge pictures and sashes on the wall.
39. I remember the police coming to the door because the neighbours were Catholic and my uncle was playing sectarian songs. The police confiscated his records.
40. I was going to a Catholic church but I just saw it as a bible group. My Uncle ERS was against that and that was when I really noticed that I was beginning to change because I wanted to do things that were nice. I wasn't trying to say that I was Catholic or Protestant, I was just doing things that were interesting to me.

41. The old lady who ran the group was lovely and she brought me to a church in Dalry which was full of black people and she was teaching me that there were different types of churches. When [ERS] realised I had gone there he was not happy.
42. I went to the church in Oxfords without their knowledge. I would just walk there if I didn't have a bus fare and I had lots of friends in Oxfords. Before I moved away I was hanging about in Oxfords and they didn't know my friends anymore. Before they would find out who my friends were through my cousins because we lived in the same area and were the same age. All of a sudden I was twelve or thirteen and I was disappearing into areas that they didn't know. That was when the friction started but I wasn't doing anything bad, I was going to church.

Leisure time / books/ games

43. I had no restrictions and they didn't know where I was. We had a dog and I would take the dog and walk all the way up the Pentland Hills. Bonaly was my favourite place in the world. That was where my friend lived that I later ran away to. It was a beautiful scenic place. I would walk the dog for hours and that was my escape. I would walk to Currie. No one knew where I was. I used to walk past these posh houses at Colinton and pray that someone would see how run down I was and come and save me. I was a dreamer.

Birthdays and Christmas

44. I always remember our Christmases. The number seven man came to the door for the tick and you would buy things earlier in the year but pay for it the whole year round so we were given a few presents. Me, [] and [] tended to get the same thing because we were all around the same age. [] got the boy's toys. We were all given similar presents. In the weeks after Christmas we had to go to the door and tell the number seven man that [ERR] and [ERS] weren't in. I hated going because he knew we were lying.

45. They always ordered a hamper and the food was delivered which was exciting. There was alcohol in the hamper and that was what the adults were excited about. At New Year we always had a big party that everyone turned up to because of the alcohol.
46. When my mum met my stepfather he was a chef and he would make us a birthday cake but it always had alcohol in it and we didn't like the taste so we never ate it. That was when I was a teenager. I remember getting a big bouquet of flowers one year from my father and I got very excited. I remember my mum gave me the odd toy when I was very young. We got the odd thing but nothing extreme.
47. Easter was the same, you got a little bit of chocolate. We had our own little fun bits when we were growing up.

Personal possessions

48. I still have a suitcase that is two feet wide and about a foot and a half long. I left home with that and it contained all of my belongings after fifteen years. It wasn't full at the time. When I left home I had a couple of pieces of clothes but when I got to the children's home they deemed that they weren't suitable.

Trips and holidays

49. We went on our first and only holiday to Dunbar and we stayed in a [REDACTED]ERS friend's caravan. We had a fantastic time down at the beach collecting crabs and mussels. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and I were the same age and [REDACTED] was there so we did have fun times even though they were hard times. It was only in our teenage years when we struggled because my cousins realised that they could have a better life without us in it and I felt the same.

Family Contact

50. Apart from a very few occasions when we first moved to Wester Hailes, I can't remember my mum visiting. There was a family argument so we never really saw my

mum as children. Her visits were right at the beginning of my life. We never discussed mum at home. My Aunt^{ERR} was jealous of her. My mum was their father's favourite.

51. My mum remarried. When she remarried the social work came to the house and asked if we wanted to live with my mum or stay where we were. I was confused because I had never been allowed any contact with my mum before that. I don't know what changed I said that I wanted to live with my mum and my sister said she would stay. I was shut down and the social worker said that we both wanted to stay with my aunt and uncle which wasn't true. ■■■■■ didn't want to go so we had to stay there. I had a lot of hate against my sister because she was making me live there. I thought if you know things then tell me why we can't stay with my mum.
52. The social worker took the choice away from me and I didn't understand why they had asked me and then not listened to me. I had said that I wanted to move to my mum's in front of my Aunt^{ERR} and she was furious. I wondered why the social worker had put me into that position.
53. My dad came over from America a couple of times during my childhood. I got very excited when we were at primary school because my dad wanted to bring us over to America for a holiday. I was probably about ten years old. I dreamed that someone would come and rescue me and I was excited that my dad would come and we would go to America. I remember telling people that my dad was coming and I told the school. However, the social work talked to Aunt^{ERR} and ^{ERS} and said that they didn't think it was a good idea because my dad might try to keep us. We started to be told horror stories that my dad might not let us go back to Scotland so ■■■■■ said that she wasn't going to go. I still wanted to go but it was shut down. The social worker made the decision for me.
54. When I was younger adults in the family told me that my real dad had a lot of money. He lived a navy life and he would send lots of photos of him in different places, on boats, skiing holidays and riding Harley bikes. To us he had a fantastic life. He was like a dream in my head and I wanted him to come and take me away but he never did. Each time he would ask if we wanted to go on holiday he was told no. My uncle

ERS worked in Shetland and my dad was told that we were moving to Shetland. He thought we had moved away from Wester Hailes.

55. I remember my grandfather coming to the house. He was always there for visits and we were there but he came to see the adults. He told stories and did magic which I found fascinating. He was always our first foot at New Year. He brought coal and would play the bagpipes in the stair.

Supervision oversight / inspection by fostering authority

56. We always knew what day and time the social worker was going to visit so the whole family was there. I don't know how often they came but I think it was about every few months. Our social worker would change occasionally. I don't remember the social workers from my younger days. When I was older I seemed to have a lot of social workers. Years ago I requested some files and I think that the social workers names might be in them. They may be on my panel reports.
57. I never had a relationship with any of the social workers and I saw them as being there to see the adults. They would ask if we were happy in front of the adults and of course we would say that we were. We would just agree. I never really spoke to them as such. When I was growing up I was aware of little comments suggesting that the social work were my parents. We never had a phone number for the social work department. I knew where the social work department was when I was a teenager but I never accessed that on my own. I was never told that I could.
58. My primary school head teacher, Mr Duff, came to every one of my panel reviews. He wrote truthfully in the reports and I feel like he was the only one who tried. I wasn't aware of it at the time but, looking back at old reports, he would write that I had a hygiene issue. I was always classed as a dirty, little girl. I used to be so terrified to tell adults that I needed the toilet in primary school that I would end up wetting myself. He would write that down and it was also put in the reports that nobody attended parents' night. It's sad to look back and read some of the comments especially the hygiene ones. Those comments are made every year from

primary one to primary seven. I feel that he tried his hardest to let people know and no one really picked up on that.

59. He wrote a report for the social work every year and he put in the report that I lived with my aunt and uncle and I was very loyal. I was almost defensive. Even though I was being treated in a way that wasn't right by my family, I would never say a bad word about my family. He probably asked me questions to get to know me but I don't remember that. He wrote a few times that I was very loyal so he must have been probing me but I would never have spoken about home or how we were treated. I thought this was normal, why would I talk about it? I was a damaged child that grew up in a bad home but I would never have voiced that. If my aunt and uncle found out that I had voiced anything then I knew what I would get. I would never do anything to be punished by my aunt ERR I would never go against her because I wanted her to like me but I was never good enough.
60. In report cards my headmaster notes my appearance. I wet the bed but our beds weren't stripped and you wore the same wet pyjamas every night. There was only a laundry once a week which was usually a Sunday and we had one bath a week which was on a Sunday. If you wet the bed and get up and get dressed then you smell so my hygiene was written on my report cards. As a child we were never told to have a wash in the sink before we put the clothes on. We weren't taught about hygiene.
61. Mr Duff would ask me about my hygiene querying if I knew that I smelled. I knew that I smelled. If my clothes weren't clean then I had to put dirty clothes back on. I had no choice. All the way through primary and into high school I would never pull my socks up because they never had elastic. They would fall down and be round my ankle and I would never pull them up because the wrinkles from them being down would have left lines of dirt round the socks.
62. We went to the children's panel once a year and they had the information there but no one ever did anything about that and that was the bit that I found difficult as an adult. People could have seen and known. When a social worker issues an

appointment and gives you a day and time then of course you will be dressed and clean for them coming. We never had a private appointment, we sat as a family in the lounge and told them we were fine. You were only spoken to in a crowd and never on your own. I never spoke to a social worker on my own until late teenage years. My sister and I did well at school and they found that surprising.

63. When I went to the children's panel Mr Duff was there. It was a long bus journey for us to go from Wester Hailes to Newington. When we got there I remember there being an oval table and there would be all these people on one side. Mr Duff, my social worker and my foster parents would be there and they would ask us, in front of everyone, if we were happy. It was all just ticking a box that we were happy and doing well at school.
64. Mr Duff would make a comment and the social worker would say that the school has raised a hygiene issue but that it hadn't been evident when they had visited us. That used to really get to me because I thought that they shouldn't make appointments. They never asked to go into our rooms and they sat in the living room the whole time. They never asked to see our toys or what we liked. I felt they were seeing the comments and I didn't know why they then sent us back.
65. There were other warnings. It is noted that I was always getting into fights in the playground at primary. If someone said something about me smelling then I would retaliate but I would also retaliate for my three cousins. I was the protector for my three cousins.
66. When I was in primary six or seven there was a teacher who put in a report card that I used to write about wanting a family of my own. I wrote that I would never treat my family the way that I was treated. I wonder why no one questioned that remark.

Relationship with foster parents / other children

67. I think my relationship with my cousins was good. We had family squabbles occasionally but I thought it was good. We were all about the same age and we had

the same friends. My cousins and I got on well and it was only when we started high school that things changed. My memories of the beginning are fun.

68. ██████ was Uncle ^{ERS} ██████'s favourite. We all knew she was the favourite. She would ask for a biscuit and be told "yes" but if I came up behind her and asked for a biscuit then I would be told "no". We were all treated differently. You shouldn't have a favourite but we were always aware that there was always a favourite.
69. When I was really young I was very clingy to my sister but my sister didn't want any part of me. When we first came over from America I just wanted my sister but my sister wanted cousins that were a similar age to her and not an annoying wee sister. I had my sister on a pedestal and I wanted to be like her. When I read back social work reports that I have it says that I was very clingy with my sister. ██████ made friends but I struggled with that in my early years.

Discipline

70. ^{ERR} ██████ was the boss of the house because ^{ERS} ██████ was mostly at work so you did what ^{ERR} ██████ said. ^{ERS} ██████ was a labourer but his punishment was that he would look at you and you would run. There was a cartoon years ago with a song that went "wait until your father gets home." We knew that when Uncle ^{ERS} ██████ was coming home we were to be seen and not heard. You just disappeared when adults came.
71. ^{ERR} ██████ was very strict. We did all the chores. That might have just been a rule of being brought up. We came in from school and had to peel potatoes and get tea prepared and do all these other jobs. She was just strict. A few of my reports say that she wasn't motherly, she wasn't caring and she didn't show affection. She was just so cold.

Running away

72. I was about twelve, going on thirteen, when I found out that my sister was engaged and moving away. She married young to get away from the house and she was out

the door by eighteen. She married someone who joined the Navy and off she went and left me. I always thought she would take me.

73. I disappeared through the whole of the summer holiday and I was living with a family friend. I popped back in a few times to get clean clothes but I stayed away for most of the summer holiday. They knew where I was but they weren't concerned.
74. When I went away to live with the family over the summer, the family had one girl and four boys. [ERR] and [ERS] thought that I was becoming interested in boys and I was running away to be with the boys. When I got back my Aunt [ERR] was calling me names and trying to make me feel ashamed. She said that I was a teenage girl, interested in boys and she called me a slag. She would say that to me at the weekend when she was drunk. I would think of the old nursery rhyme "stick and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt me." I was wrong because her put downs did hurt me mentally for the rest of my life but I knew that it would get worse if I argued with her so I said nothing.
75. I started rebelling a bit because I didn't like it there and I was trying to do things for people to ask why I was doing it. I started to steal pennies out of her purse to get myself noticed and it did get me noticed. She thought that I had stolen money to go to the Fayre in Wester Hailes but it was to cover my paper round. I started a paper round to get more money for myself. I needed money so that I could get the bus to go and see my friends in Oxfords. People weren't paying the paper round and I would be missing five pounds or ten pounds. I got into a big argument with my Aunt [ERR] because I would take the money out of my her purse when she was drunk so I wouldn't get in trouble with the paper lady but I got busted. There were wee silly things. I just let them say what they wanted but when I came back, having been away all summer, my relationship with [ERR] was bad and I ran away to my mum when I was thirteen.
76. I wasn't meant to be in my mum's company but I had already been sneaking away to visit her at weekends. My mum worked in [REDACTED] as a caretaker of a building and I had been secretly visiting her. We weren't allowed to mention my mum and I only had contact with her when I sneaked out or very occasionally when [ERR] would

give permission for me to go with my cousins. I never understood why I couldn't go and visit my mum so when I was twelve or thirteen I thought I would go and see her.

77. I was starting to get to know my mother at the age of twelve. I was asking to see her more often and I would occasionally get the bus at the weekend with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and go and see her. I think that my Aunt^{ERR} [REDACTED] was getting jealous that I was becoming closer to my mum. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were there as my Aunt^{ERR} [REDACTED]'s eyes and ears. They would go back and tell my Aunt^{ERR} [REDACTED] everything that had been done and said during the visit. I saw my mum as a friend and I had her on a pedestal at that time. I had never lived with her and every time I visited her she did seem perfect.
78. When I came back from the six weeks with the family over the holidays, I was trying to get close to my mum and she was trying to get close to me. I talked to her as if we were friends and I should never have done that. I told her that I had met a boy and what I had done and the first thing that my mum thought was that she had something on her sister. I had told my mum that I had had a sexual relationship. I thought it was a sexual relationship but looking back now I know that it wasn't.
79. Both my mum and my Aunt^{ERR} [REDACTED] were alcoholics. We didn't have a phone and the neighbour downstairs had a phone. My mum phoned and told my aunt what I had said. I was asleep at the time and I woke up to a gorilla pounding on my back. [REDACTED] was in the room. [REDACTED] had moved out and [REDACTED] had her room. I couldn't move because I was lying flat and ^{ERR} [REDACTED] was pounding on me. Uncle ^{ERS} [REDACTED] was in his bed. At that point I thought I'm not taking this, she hasn't even asked me if it's true. A lot of it was story telling because I was trying to impress my mum. I was bruised after that and I ran away to my mum's having been beaten black and blue.
80. I stayed with my mum for a good few weeks but they brought the social work in. Bob Cowie was my social worker at the time and I told him that I wasn't going back because I was beat up all of the time. He told me that I couldn't stay with my mum and I knew that I couldn't but I wanted to. I was sent back to my aunt's and the relationship with my aunt broke down. Then my mum died when I was fourteen, in [REDACTED] 1983. At that

point it was breaking down in the house. I was what they saw as an unruly teenager because I had a voice.

81. I had found out when I lived with my mum that she had had an affair with my uncle and that was why they didn't speak. In an argument where they started to call me names about being with boys I chucked it back in their court and they didn't like that. I looked like my mum and I was tarred with what my mum had done to her and I think that was why she hated me.

Bed Wetting

82. I wet the bed every night. Nobody dealt with it. I wasn't the only one in the family who wet the bed. We had old mattresses which were like wool. It never dried and it wasn't aired. We would get up, be embarrassed about wetting the bed and pull the bed up. We hoped that Aunt **ERR** wouldn't know that we had wet the bed but the room stank and you knew that we wet the bed. The bed was never changed so we went in and tried to find a dry spot on the bed but there never was a dry spot so we went into a wet bed every night.
83. We wouldn't bring friends into the house apart from **ERR** and I never brought friends into the house because we were embarrassed. We went to our friends' houses to be out of our own.

Abuse at **ERR-ERS, Wester Hailes**

ERR

84. Growing up my Aunt **ERR** was a secret drinker. When our cheque came in we were excited about getting a corned beef sandwich but then after that we would be nervous because that was when Aunt **ERR** could afford her Carlsberg Lagers. She used to hide them from my Uncle **ERS** and she would sit there getting drunker and drunker. You could tell when she drank, her eyes would get bigger and speech

slurred. My Uncle ERS would come in and ask if she had been drinking and she would say she hadn't but she couldn't hide it. She was nasty when she was drunk.

85. It started off fun because when she became a wee bit tipsy and we could ask her for ten pence and she would forget that she had given it to us. We would put the records on and sing along. We thought it was fun and that she was spoiling us.
86. Something would flick in her mind and she would start asking how much we loved her. We would say "this much" and stretch our arms apart. We were never allowed to talk about my mum or mention my mum. My Aunt would ask who we loved most and if your arms were a little bit further apart for mum then you would be hit because she was the one bringing you up. You should love her more. Anything would become a weapon to her. It could be a pot, or whatever she could find, and she would hit you with it.
87. We kept out of her road because one of us was going to get it and it was just which one of us was going to get it that night. The majority of the time we were slapped very hard. If I got in her road or did something wrong then I just waited for the ringing in my ear. She came at us quickly so we all scattered. She hit quite a bit as well. I don't know why got it sometimes. I remember she hit him with a pot and the pot bent. She was just nasty when she was drunk. She was violent when she was drunk.
88. If she could have Carlsberg every Friday then she would. It came the weekend and we would all disappear. We all got out of her road when the drink came out. I used to try and stay out late but that got me into trouble. I didn't want to go back to the house. If you were out with your friends then you didn't want to go back but you couldn't hide from it because you had to go back sometime. I was never far away and she could see me out of the window. I would hear her screaming my name out of the window. It was another way to embarrass me in front of the people I was with. I would be sitting out late with other children who were slightly older than me because it was late but we weren't doing anything. I would try and wait until she was so drunk that she was sleeping when I came back in but I was never that lucky.

89. When it came to New Year and the hamper arrived then we knew there would be loads of drink and we just kept out of the road until the drink was gone. She wasn't violent all the time but her words could be very nasty. Our mum became the target of her abuse. When we were younger something would happen and my mum would phone them. She would come off the phone and then, maybe because I looked like my mum, I seemed to get it.
90. I was hit but I wasn't injured. To us it was normal that if she asked you to do something and you didn't do it then you were given a clout. She hardly hit us when she wasn't drunk. When she hit us it was mostly with her hands. It could be round your head, your ears or your bum. If she asked you to peel potatoes but you took too much off then she would hit you. If you have been out too long and you came back late then you would be hit. I would disappear from morning to night at the weekend and I wouldn't go back.
91. When I was young I didn't want to wear shoes and my Aunt **ERR** put me in the cloakroom cupboard downstairs and shut the door. It was just a big, black cupboard and I had to stay in there until I would wear shoes. I remember being four or five and being put in the cupboard. I think she only left me in there for five minutes but I was a child sitting in this cupboard that was three meters long by a meter wide. It was pitch black and I was scared. The sad thing is that I probably could have pushed the door open but I didn't. Any punishment I was given I never questioned. We wouldn't speak back to adults or talk to them. It was old school and we were to be seen and not heard.
92. **ERR** would tell you, when you were going to bed, that there was a bogey man under your bed. I would check under my bed and in the cupboard before I went to my bed because I was scared. She made silly comments that she thought were funny but I was scared.

ERS

93. The only time I remember Uncle ^{ERS} being violent was when fifty pence went missing from the mantle. We were always told to swear on the bible so the bible came out and you had to raise your hand and swear on the bible. He got his belt out and we were all hit by him because no one admitted that they had taken it. We were hit across our backs and bums. We were wearing our pyjamas and we were hit over them. He told us that one of us had to admit it or we would have to line up and we would all be hit as we went past him. It was like the gauntlet, you had to run through the two chairs. My sister was the last one standing and she admitted it but we had all been hit by then.
94. We were scared of Uncle ^{ERS} just because of the strict sound of his voice. When he came home we would disappear. I don't remember him hitting us apart from that incident. It was always ^{ERR} who came for us. He saw her give us the odd clout but not to the same extent that it happened when he wasn't there. He worked away in Shetland and he wasn't always there when we were young.
95. On one occasion he came back from work and he had heard something about us being dirty. He took each of us into the kitchen and scrubbed the back of our necks over the sink to get rid of tide marks.

Mother's death

96. After my mum had told my aunt what we had spoken about, I stopped talking to her. There was one day I was outside playing and Aunt ^{ERR} came out of the stair. She never went very far from home so we asked her where she was going and she told me that she was going to visit my mum in the hospital. I didn't know what she was in hospital for at that point. I asked to go with her and she said that I couldn't go because my clothes were dirty. I said that I would go and get cleaned up and she still said that I couldn't go because there wasn't time for me to get changed before she had to catch a bus. ^{ERR} who was out playing with me asked if she could go and ^{ERR} said that she could so ^{ERR} went to see my mum.

97. I didn't get to see my mum in the hospital, that was my chance. [REDACTED] loved my mum and when she came back she told me some horror stories. Her whole life we were told that my mum was a hypochondriac. There was always something wrong with her so when someone told me that my mum was ill I didn't believe it until [REDACTED] came home and her face told me it all. My mum was a big woman, like my aunt. They were drinkers and eaters. [REDACTED] came back and told me that my mum was like a skeleton and I should go and see her but I had no money to go and see her. One of the social workers asked me if I didn't want to go and see my mum. I didn't want to say that my aunt hadn't let me go so I said that I didn't want to see my mum looking ill. I was a teenager protecting my family so I told her that I didn't want to go. I wish the social worker had offered to take me but I was protecting my family and I never saw her. She went into hospital in [REDACTED] and she passed by [REDACTED]
98. I didn't realise that my sister had been up to see my mum with her husband. When I found out, I didn't know why my sister hadn't asked me to go up with her. That's why I was so angry with my sister.
99. One day I was in Oxgangs with my friends and I walked into the house at tea time to be bawled in the face "where the fuck have you been? Your mum's dead". My Aunt [ERR] was in my face shouting that my mum had just died and demanding to know where I had been. [REDACTED] had brought a friend round for dinner and I was told to sit at the table and eat my dinner. You were told something and then told not to show emotion. I didn't show emotion because we were taught not to speak about my mum.
100. The social workers thought I was cold but no one asked me how I felt. My Aunt [ERR] had told the social workers after my mum's death that I wasn't showing emotion. That was the first time that I was asked to go on my own to the social work department. I went after school with a friend. I was asked in front of my friend about my mum but I didn't want to be cornered about my mum in front of my friend.
101. They said I wasn't showing any emotion about my mum but I had taken the dog for a walk up the Pentland Hills and sat there showing my emotion. I wasn't going to show

my emotions to them after they had told me all my life that my mum wasn't ill. I have a lot of anger towards them that I wasn't given any chance to say goodbye.

102. I was taken to the funeral of my mum but not of my grandfather who had died six months or a year earlier. When I came out of the funeral [REDACTED] my stepfather, gave me a big hug and told me to keep in touch. My sister had married in June the year before and didn't invite my mum to the wedding. I was getting close to my mum at that time and I was angry because my mum was ready and waiting for a last minute invite and she didn't get one. I started to distance myself from my sister at that point. I had a lot of pent up anger at a young age.
103. I don't know what my mum had told her when they were younger but my Aunt [ERR] had thought that my mum had left her a life insurance policy for taking care of [REDACTED] and I. I was screamed at that my mum had lied to her and there was no insurance policy. My mum died in [REDACTED] and by [REDACTED] I was in a care home.
104. When my Aunt took us in she was pregnant with a fourth child which she lost because she had cancer of the womb. We were told that she had taken us in because she couldn't have more children. We were made to feel guilty that she couldn't have kids and she took us in. We were told that it was her that watched us, we should be grateful and shouldn't love our mum more than her.
105. I think she took us in so that she could tell her father that she was the good one, watching all these kids and his favourite was out gallivanting. As soon as my mum died, there was no insurance policy, my dad wasn't giving her any money and her dad had died a year before, [ERR] had nothing to prove anymore. Once her dad had died and my mum had died she didn't need to prove anything so I felt I was chucked away.

Reporting of abuse at [ERR-ERS], Wester Hailes

106. When I ran away from [ERR] and [ERS] I left a note saying that they hit me and that if they hit me when I came back then I would run away again. I think that was the first

thing I put in writing. I think I spoke to my social worker, Anne, about why I didn't want to be there.

107. I never reported any of **ERS** and **ERR**'s behaviour to police.

Leaving foster care

108. When I returned from my mum's they wanted me to stay in the house one night a week. They wanted me to bring friends to the house because they didn't know who I was going out with. I said I would stay in one night a week and watch television with them. I thought it could be a different night each week but they said it had to be a set night. I asked for a different one each week in case I wanted to go out with my friends.
109. They wanted my friends to come to the house and that was a big problem because they didn't know who I mucked about with and their imaginations ran wild. I didn't want to bring my friends to the house because I couldn't take them in my room when the beds were stinking of urine. I was embarrassed. We had never taken friends home so I wouldn't do that as a teenager. I always went to my friend's houses.
110. At that point, unbeknownst to me, my Aunt **ERR** was getting my cousins to bring my old friends from Wester Hailes into my room when I wasn't there. I would find out when I returned from being out all day. I was told that they had had my friends in the house and my friends had been jumping on my bed and they had noticed that it was wet. It was just embarrassing. **ERR** was trying to embarrass me and I thought it wasn't working so when they threatened me with a care home, I agreed. It was a flippant threat that she made but I took that option.
111. My Aunt **ERR** a social worker and I went to visit a care home and I think she thought I would get scared and then buckle but I wanted to move in. I think the social worker who got me out of the house was a lady called Anne. She took me to see Canaan Lodge and she was my social worker at that time. Bob had finished. I was only meant to go for ten weeks but in that ten weeks none of my family visited me once. At the

end of the ten weeks the care home manager told me it was time to go back to **ERR** and **ERS** and I said that I didn't want to. He said that he just had to ask me if I wanted to go so I told him that I wanted to stay in care and I wouldn't go back. I had just turned fifteen. I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't walked out of that house because I was getting into the wrong crowd in the wrong area.

Canaan Lodge, Edinburgh

112. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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159. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

160. The social work were trying to give me options at that point. They talked to me about places that I could go and I was taken for day visits. I was asked which home I thought would be best for me. I would walk into a home and everyone would seem really nice but I had to try and work out if they were really nice or not.

161. The social workers asked me if I wanted to go back into the foster system. I said that I couldn't live in someone else's house. My fear was that it would just be the same at my Aunt [REDACTED]s. I didn't know there were different types of foster parents. I didn't want to go back to someone like my Aunt [REDACTED] so I refused foster care when it might have been my best option. I was too young and I never understood the process.

South Gyle Children's Home, Edinburgh

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Calder Grove Children's Home, Edinburgh

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Howden Hall Assessment Centre, Edinburgh

216. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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223. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Leaving Howden Hall Assessment Centre, Edinburgh

229. I was in there for no more than four weeks. It was such a short period again and then I was moved to Moredun and that was my final home until I was chucked out when I was eighteen. I don't know if it was a member of staff or a social worker who transferred me.

Moredun Young Peoples Centre, Edinburgh

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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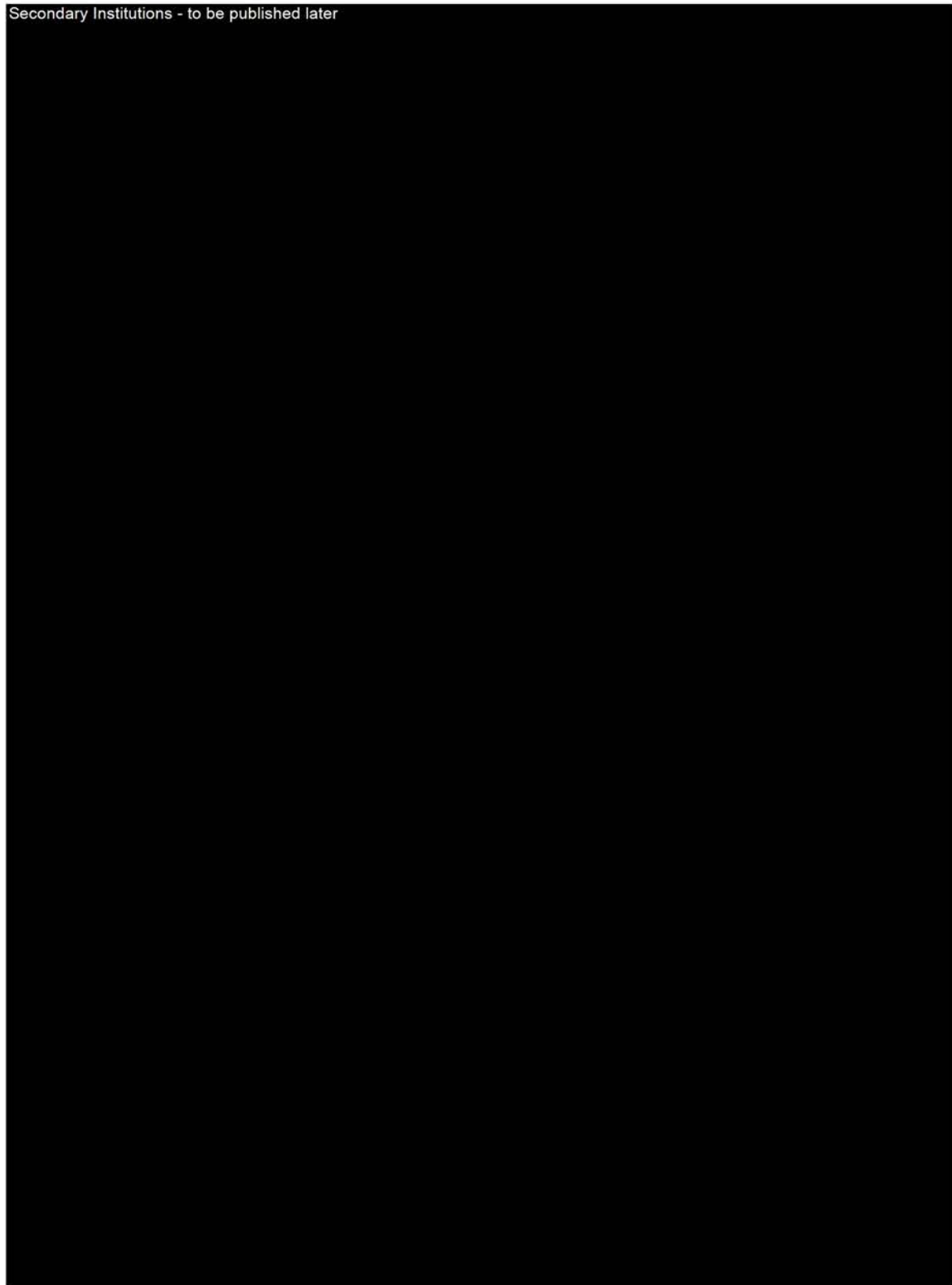
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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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259. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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261. I remember Marion took me to Pennywell to see a high-storey flat. The flat was horrendous. She took me to a Bed and Breakfast and I didn't want to go in there. I kept telling her that I wasn't good at budgeting. I thought that if I ended up in a Bed and Breakfast, then I wouldn't be here now, I would be dead. I was worried about being there with no support. I was already self-harming and I think I would have just killed myself.

262. I considered going to stay with [REDACTED] ERS [REDACTED] and ERR [REDACTED] had split up. [REDACTED] had gone with ERS [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was still with ERR [REDACTED] had found herself living with a boy and she had just had a baby. Just before leaving Moredun I was given one hundred pounds to spend on things like a toaster, kettle and a duvet. I didn't have anywhere to put them because I had nowhere to go so [REDACTED] took them.

263. I went to stay with [REDACTED] my stepfather. I was close to him and I knew he was there if I needed anything. If I got into trouble with the police then he paid my fine. He looked out for me in a sense. He never judged or asked questions, he was just there.

Life after being in care

264. I went to live in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and my mum were the caretakers of the [REDACTED] building. There were office buildings all the way up and they stayed in a top corner flat. It should have been a bedroom, a living room and a small pantry but it used to just be two sitting rooms. He slept in one sitting room and I slept on the sofa in the other room. It was my mum's sitting room and it hadn't changed. Her ashes sat in the lounge where I slept. It was a bit strange. I was in Moredun from the [REDACTED] 1984 and then I went to him in [REDACTED] 1986. I stayed there for three or four months. I lived with [REDACTED] but he was very unwell. He had been drinking too much since my mum died and he had to go to the hospital twice a week for kidney dialysis.
265. I went into supported accommodation and Marion passed me to another lady who only dealt with supported accommodation. The lady remained in contact with me while I was there and Marion signed me off. I was eighteen at that point and she could wash her hands of me. Even if that lady hadn't stayed in contact with me, I still think Marion would have washed her hands of me.
266. Once Marion left I took over the supported accommodation flat and that was how I started my adult life. When I went into supported accommodation I was given a furnished flat. I had to pay it up but at least I had a flat with a bed and a sofa. My supported accommodation was in a multi-storey flat in Gracemount. Everyone knew that the residents in the supported accommodation flats were children from care. There must have been complaints. That flat changed from being supported accommodation to being my own tenancy. I think that might have been because the neighbours might not have wanted to have supported accommodation in the block because kids were constantly moved in and out of them. When the flats stopped being supported accommodation I was lucky to have the same flat signed over to me. I stayed there for quite a while.
267. I met my husband and had two children. I married when I was twenty one in 1990. I lived with my husband before I got married. I've have two daughters. It took me a

while to have the children. It wasn't until they were little that I started to get a job. Life was hard because we never had much money in those days but we were happy. I have been with my husband for over thirty five years.

268. I had a few little jobs. I ran the nursery when the kids were younger, until they went to school. Then I worked night shifts and my husband worked during the day because we had no childcare, we had no family and no money. We were passing strangers but I was still able to take the kids to school. I didn't get much sleep in those days but I managed it.

Impact

269. There were things that happened to me during my life that I am not happy about but I understand that it's the system that I'm not happy with. I shouldn't have been put in that situation. My Aunt ^{ERR} and Uncle ^{ERS} were struggling to feed their own three kids without having an extra two. Sometimes my anger is directed towards them but it shouldn't be. I should ask why I was left in that environment. My foster family could have had a different life if we weren't part of it. We struggled and we made them struggle with having us.
270. For years I blamed my aunt and uncle for the way I was brought up but when I look back now I think they were doing their best and they took us in because they were made promises. It wasn't their fault, it was the system. Social workers visiting us should have seen that we were struggling. The social workers just ticked a box and said everything was fine but they must have seen. I wonder if it was just easier to leave us there and if it made their lives easier. Social workers visiting us should have seen that we were struggling as a family.
271. Teachers were putting things in report cards about me that showed that there were issues so if the social workers didn't see what was happening themselves then they could have read about it in those reports. They failed in their duty of care to deal with

that. I wondered why they never stopped that. I have lots of feelings about my childhood and a lot of it is frustration that I was let down.

272. Social workers should have a skill to alleviate pain and suffering. That is something they should be able to do. They should be a shoulder to cry on. They should have listened to me and talked to me. They should value people and be non-judgemental. Everyone deserves to be listened to. I was not shown that respect by the adults that were ultimately responsible for protecting me.
273. I feel I have seen the worst in adults who were there to protect me and I now find it hard to have faith in people. I have serious mental health issues from losing my mother, drinking alcohol, self-harming, running away, tattooing, promiscuous behaviour and overdosing when I was a vulnerable child. I could not have done more to show that I was hurting than I did but no one took any notice.
274. I found it hard that my cousins were entitled to school dinners but we weren't entitled to them because we were foster children. My whole life we were classed as "the foster children". There was the family and "the foster children". Everyone in the school system knew us as that. When I finally went into care I was stigmatised because I was "in care". At the age that I was in care there was a stigma that because you were a foster kid and then you were in care, then you must be bad. There was a label placed on you.
275. I keep everyone at arm's length. I think my family are untrustworthy and I don't like having my extended family around me. When I went into supported accommodation I was still seeing [REDACTED] and occasionally [REDACTED] if I was in the area and I visited her but my relationship with my cousins ended while I was in supported accommodation. I never saw [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] after my time in supported accommodation.
276. I keep my sister at arm's length. I could go without seeing my sister for years and it wouldn't bother me but then I would think that she was my only sister and I should get in contact. I felt I had to speak to her because I didn't have extended family and she is the last member of my family. I have tried to have a conversation about my childhood

with my sister. I said to her that she must remember more because she is three and a half years older than me but my sister has her own demons and she rushed to get out of there as well. She says that she can't remember. She doesn't want to talk about it.

277. I'm not honest and I don't open up with my daughters when they ask about my childhood. The reason that I don't open up to them is because I'm embarrassed about my childhood. I wonder why I didn't speak out and why I let it happen. I wonder why I didn't scream and shout to be heard. I was a very scared child. That is what I try to protect them from. It's a sad thing not to be able to talk to your family about your childhood because it is a big part of your life.
278. I find that hard because my youngest daughter has been interested in my past. It has had a big impact on them. When I don't see my sister then they don't see that part of the family. My oldest daughter is married and has my granddaughter. My youngest one says that if she gets married then she will have no family at the wedding. They don't know why I don't want to talk to the extended family but they know there are cousins out there. My youngest daughter says that the only people I let in are us four. My two daughters, my husband and now my granddaughter. I'm happy if I don't have anyone else in my life apart from them. We are very close.
279. I don't trust other people who seem to care about me. I'm always cynical and wondering what they are after. That might be because of the way the boys treated me when I was younger. I was used by them and I fell for it every time. I can also be quite naive and I would believe anyone's sob story. People seem to know that and they use me for that. I would give my last penny away if I thought someone else needed it, even if I was skint.
280. I think my time in care effected how I parented my children. I could be over-powering when they were younger. I wanted to show them the love that I never had and they were my pride and joy. I am still like that now, I am an over-protective mother. If we have an argument then, even if I am in the right, I can't let it go on. I need to have them in my life. I don't want anyone to ever hurt them like I have been hurt.

281. I will still never understand why I was left and abandoned by my mum. There is nothing that I'm allowed to see in my paperwork to explain why I was left and I will never have any answers. I find that upsetting. I have my paperwork but a lot of it redacted.
282. I have depression and it has been like a rollercoaster. I would be down for a time, then for two years I would be ok and then I would be back at the doctors again and again. I was given counselling through having gone to the doctor and asking for help. The counselling I had wasn't helpful at the time. He wasn't the type of counsellor that I needed. Looking back I think I needed trauma counselling to deal with the mental health issues that came from my past trauma.
283. When I was given counselling I would try and open up about what had happened in my past but I don't know if it was the right type of counselling. He would talk about how my mother had abandoned me and she didn't love me. We would get to the next session and then he would repeat that my mother had abandoned me and she didn't love me as a summary of the last session. It would take me a year to get my head in the right place again after those sessions. When I look back on my life I can see that I have had lots of times when I have been hampered. I think that the potential I had for employment was hampered by my depression throughout my life.
284. I feel like I was never good enough in whatever I did because I worry about everything and what people think. I worry about whether my best is good enough. Am I a good employee, mother, wife, sister or friend? Do you like me? I feel like I am never good enough. I feel like I must not be good enough because my mum gave me away, my sister doesn't want to know me and my dad never came and got me either.
285. I was being bullied in the work place. There was a gentleman who had been there forever and I was bullied by him. It became so bad that I was sent to counselling by my employer. I think that opening up in the counselling sessions brought me back to my childhood because they asked if I had been depressed before and what had happened. I had to walk away from my work because it wasn't getting better and my health was suffering.

286. I don't like drawing attention to myself. I tried to draw attention to myself in the homes to seek help and I was ignored. I will now not ask for help. I've moved house because of it. I moved to the house I am in now because I was struggling with my condition. I have been diagnosed with fibromyalgia. The neighbours would see me with a walking stick one day and not the next and they would ask questions. I could be fine when they asked me one day but then I could be in my bed for two days and they didn't understand my condition. The attention I was getting from my neighbours was too much and I felt like I was being judged again. We moved house because I felt like the neighbours were all talking about me. No one understood what was happening to me and it felt a bit like when I had been in the homes. If I was working and I became depressed then I wouldn't go back to that work place because they knew something was wrong. That is part of my of lack of confidence.
287. It has put a lot onto my husband because I had worked all my days and I had a fantastic wage. We had worked hard so that we could have nice things and then all of a sudden I had to walk away from everything. He now works long hours, seven days a week, for me not to work because of my health.
288. I haven't worked for a good few years because of my disability and in the last few years it seems to be getting worse. I have wondered if that is because I have more time on my hands. When the kids were younger and I was working, I loved my jobs. I really miss my work life. I was a kitchen designer and I loved making my clients' dreams come true. I miss being out their seeing people and talking to people.
289. All my reports from school when I am around twelve say that I could have passed my O-Grades but I walked out with nothing because things were going south with my foster family. I did manage to work and I had well paid jobs but they weren't the jobs that I would have liked to have had. I struggled when applying for jobs in my younger years. There was a stigma around the school I had been to, that I was brought up by guardians and in care. I had tattoos and I was judged on my looks and not on the person I was.

290. I am still the little girl who was taught to be seen and not heard and I still have that mentality. When I was eighteen and an adult wanted to talk to me, I didn't know how to speak to them. If anything happens within the family then I am the quiet one who sits at the back. When I was younger I was the one who would protect my family from bullies but now my sister has a strong attitude. She has come through her husband and her daughter surviving cancer and she now has a selfish but strong attitude. It used to be me that was strong and she would cry at everything but now we have swapped roles. I feel weak now because of my disability and my mental health.
291. I still bite my nails today. I have tried to stop for years but I can't. My aunt tried to put the liquid on them to make it taste bad but I still bit them. I'm just a worrier.
292. Over the last year I have thought about my time in care a lot but that may be because I have been in contact with the Inquiry. It took me six months to contact the Inquiry so I had six months of thinking about it before I did anything. I have only told my husband about it and nobody else knows.
293. I will never understand why no one loved me and that is why I have had anger and mood swings over my life. I get confused and withdraw from everyone else because I don't want to tell people about my life. I have struggled. I had destructive behaviour including the sexual encounters where I was trying to be loved, the self-harm and the suicide attempts.
294. I went to see my real father when I was about eighteen. He paid for my ticket. His first reaction when he saw me was to ask what my tattoos were. They were horrendous when I look back. There were pictures of scissors with dots that said "cut here" next to them. He could see I had self-harmed. At that time I had been trying to cut the tattoos open to put vinegar and bleach in them. I was trying to get rid of the dark ink.
295. He took me to a doctor in America to see about having my tattoos removed and he had booked me in to have it done. They were going to slice off the layers of skin to

get rid of the tattoo. The day I was to go in, I refused because I was told that I would be left with open wounds and then my skin would be in steps and scarred. I always wore long sleeves and no matter what the weather, I would never show my arms. If my arms were in steps and scarred then I would have felt the same way and I would still have hidden my arms. There were certain jobs with short sleeved tops as the uniform and that restricted what I would apply for.

296. When I came back there was a new place that had opened in Glasgow and my husband and I went for a consultation. They told us the price and we were the first clients to go for that new treatment but, just as I was going to do that, a doctor's surgery in Leith began giving the same treatment. I went there and he said it was very painful but I had a high pain threshold. I had to go for twenty sessions to remove thirteen tattoos. I was embarrassed to go but when I went there was a policeman sat next to me who had "love" and "hate" tattooed over his fingers. He said to me that we all do silly things as a kid and that made me feel better. Removing my tattoos was the best thing I ever did because now there is no sign that I ever had tattoos. It cost a lot of money at the time.
297. I never had a relationship with my dad. I went to see him and then kept in contact by phone for a few years before it dwindled out. He was American and he wanted to hold my hand going down the street and he wanted to cuddle me. I had never had that before and I found it awkward. He had remarried for the fourth time. When I saw him, he told me how much he loved my mum and I found that hard to understand. I was still looking for answers at that time. He was more like a friendly uncle than a dad. I saw my step-dad [REDACTED] as being more like a dad because he was always there for me. My actual dad was more like an uncle who I had seen three or four times in my life. I had a bit of anger about where he had been. He was having a good life in America and he would send me photos of him snowboarding, skiing and visiting beautiful places all without me. I recently found out that my dad had passed away a few years ago. That has stopped me wondering what he is doing and it has been a door to my past shut.

Records

298. I requested my records around 2014. There was an office at Castle Terrace and I went into somewhere there to collect them. I was disappointed because I thought my records would run from the beginning to the end. I was trying to find out more about my mum and I wanted to know why I was in care. I wanted to know what my mum had done in America which caused us to be placed with a foster family. I wanted to know what she had done when we came back that was classed as abandonment and meant we were placed in my Aunt **ERR**'s custody.
299. The file that came back was about my later life. It hadn't been explained to me but I realised that may only be part of my records so then I requested them again around 2018 or 2019 but a lot of mine were destroyed because of my age. The ones I have are heavily redacted because I was in a family home and anything to do with my guardians, my parents, my cousins or sister is redacted. The only things I can see fully are my primary school reports because they only relate to me. The others you can only read a couple of lines on each page. You get the gist of things but not the full story.
300. I was angry and frustrated reading them. I thought that this was my life and they had blanked it out. I felt social work were hiding things from me. They were protecting themselves but not protecting me by showing me what happened. I will never get answers about what my mum did. I got to know my mum when I was twelve and by the time I was fourteen she was dead. At that age I never asked the right questions. I don't know about any of the family's medical history. We don't know anything.

Lessons to be Learned

301. I hated the children's panel and the oval table where the adults sat on one side. They never asked me and my sister to go in first or pulled us aside to ask us more questions about how things were really going. If we had been pulled aside then we might have said that we were wetting the bed and we didn't have a washing

machine. I don't think my family were supported in that way. If they had been aware of that then we might not have had to go into wet beds but we didn't talk about things.

302. I don't think the social workers should have been speaking to us in front of the whole family. They should have been there to speak to me and [REDACTED]. I don't know how they would have found a quiet space in a family house but our social work department was on our doorstep. My sister was three and a half years older so we could have met them at the social work department and not in the house. We could have been brought into an office for a chat on our own and then the adults could have been brought in later. If you are brought up to be seen and not heard then you will protect the family. I still find it hard to say anything against them today.
303. I wish someone had explained to me that I could have gone into another foster care and that not all foster care families were the same. I wish they had said that we could look at a children's home and also go and see another foster family to see the difference. If I had seen that then I might have gone to another family but I assumed that all families were the same so there was no way that I was going back into foster care. I thought the children's home would be a better option but not all of the homes were the same as I had experienced in Canaan Lodge where it felt like a family.
304. There were a lot of warnings about my mental health as a child but no one took any notice and I was given no mental health support. I was lucky to survive and still be here today. None of the signs were acted on and they should have been. The signs should have been seen in all of the homes I was in and I was in four in the space of about a year. Staff need more training on mental health to recognise the signs given by children and then to act on them because not all children will talk to adults about their feelings, they will harm themselves instead.
305. My hope is that no child goes through anything that I went through in care. I hope that what people are saying is taken on board and things change. I hear horror stories about mistakes made by the social work department which end up on the

news and I wonder how many mistakes can be made. There are so many people trying to have their voices heard and they just need to listen.

- 306. I am still frustrated at the system that let me down as a child. I have tried to understand what I have been through and to look forward to thinking that today's children in care will have a better chance in life than I did by not going through the same journey in life that I had to endure. All children should be happy.

Other information

- 307. 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..... 10 August 2021