

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

IQJ

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is IQJ. My date of birth is 1966. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. At the age of eighteen my mother, moved from Aberdeen to Montreal in Canada. She was working as a nanny and she went on to meet my father, . When I was around six months old we moved to Chicago for dad's work. I am the youngest of five children, the others being twins and , and .
3. My father was a CEO for a large company and was able to provide well for us as we grew up. Mum was a loving and nurturing person and there were no issues while we all stayed together. Unfortunately, the marriage broke down and my parents divorced in 1971. We still had contact each weekend with my dad. Dad re-married about a year after the divorce, but there were no kids from that marriage.
4. After the divorce my mother's mental health began to deteriorate, but while we were in the States we were protected from that, and she was being looked after. In May 1973 my aunt was visiting from Scotland. One day when I came home from school and all our belongings were in boxes. My mother, along with my siblings and I moved to Scotland and stayed in the Aberdeen area. Initially I thought moving to Scotland was going to be fun, but I had not considered how much I would miss my father.

5. For a number of years my father continued to pay Alimony and that provided some financial help for my mother. When we moved back the twins, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were born brain damaged and had been very disruptive, which caused mum some issues. In 1971 a decision was made where [REDACTED] was to be moved to a Rudolph Steiner School in England and during the holiday periods he stayed with my Aunt [REDACTED] who lived near to him.
6. The remainder of us were all living with my maternal grandmother in a one bedroomed house. Mum, myself and my sisters slept in the bed, my gran slept on the couch and [REDACTED] slept on the floor. Once more mum's mental health went downhill and she began drinking.
7. After about six weeks we moved out of gran's house and into mum's sister, [REDACTED]'s house. This was not good for us as the conditions there were atrocious. It was cold, damp, and mouldy and a very messy house. Mum and [REDACTED] were out a lot leaving myself and my siblings to our own devices. My older sister [REDACTED] tried her best to look after us. At [REDACTED]'s there was very little to eat, and my gran would come down and give us bread and jam.
8. We would wait outside the pub where mum was, hoping an uncle would come out and give us some money for food. In those days we would try and gather used ale bottles as you could take them to the shops and get money back.
9. When we stayed with my gran we were going to Walker Road Primary School and when we moved to [REDACTED]'s we transferred to Victoria Road Primary School.
10. In October 1973 mum said she had to go back to Chicago to sort some things out. The social work became involved, and we were allocated to Mr Kerr who was to organise some foster care. [REDACTED] was put into Kingseat, [REDACTED] went to stay with mum's cousin. There were no suitable relatives to look after [REDACTED] and I. We were to be placed into foster care with Mr and Mrs [REDACTED] IQK-SPO

Foster care, Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED], Aberdeen

11. Mum had packed our clothes and went with us and Mr Kerr to IQK-SPO [REDACTED] house. We were told that our time there, would only be for a short time whilst mum was away. She explained to Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED] our likes and dislikes as far as food was concerned. She also made Mrs IQK [REDACTED] aware that I was a bed wetter and needed to get up for the toilet during the night. Arrangements were also made for my sister [REDACTED] to visit and take us out on a Saturday. Mum and Mr Kerr stayed for about 45 minutes. I was really scared because I was so attached to my mum.
12. IQK-SPO [REDACTED] had two sons, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was a bit older and had his own place. [REDACTED] was about fifteen years old, and we later found out he was a bully. Mrs IQK [REDACTED] was a horrible person, where Mr [REDACTED] was a quiet man, who kept himself more in the background. I think they were both in their 50's and although they had fostered in the past, it was usually boys. We were to find out that IQK-SPO [REDACTED] neither showed any love and were not very nurturing. At no time did they show any kind of affection.
13. The house was a gable end on two levels. There were three bedrooms with a garden in the front and back. As you went in the front door there was a bathroom, living room, kitchen. There was a table and chairs where we would eat the meals. Mr [REDACTED] was a keen gardener and grew his own vegetables. Upstairs were the three bedrooms, the first the one [REDACTED] and I would share, [REDACTED]'s room and the parents' room. In our room we had two single beds and there was a wardrobe and a bassinette beside the window.

Routine at Foster care, Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED], Aberdeen

14. As soon as mum and Mr Kerr left the house Mrs IQK [REDACTED] completely changed from the friendly personality to the complete bully. She took us up the stairs and made us change out of our own clothes and told us we had to put on the boy's clothes which

she kept at the house. They were mainly her son's old clothes. We were then told some of the rules she expected us to follow while we stayed there.

15. We were told we were only allowed to be in the living room and there was some Lego and a toy farmhouse, which were the only toys we were to play with. The only time we were to be in the kitchen was when we were eating our meals.
16. The older son [REDACTED] did visit the house a couple of times when we stayed there. When he spoke with us he was very nice. He made model aeroplanes and showed them to us.

Mornings and bedtime

17. The first night after our bath, made to sit on the toilet for ages and then we were marched to our bedroom. I had the bed nearer the door. When we were in the room, Mrs IQK [REDACTED] left and then I heard a click. When I checked the door handle I found it was locked. We lay on our beds and were both crying. I started having some flashbacks of the good times in America. I could even hear in my head Mary Hopkins singing, "Those were the Days."
18. Each night we were in the room the locked door became normal. We could not get out to go to the toilet. We were in the room from around six o'clock in the evening until six in the morning and never allowed out, even to the bathroom.
19. When she woke us around 6 am, she would unlock the door and we would get washed, dressed and into the kitchen for breakfast. We would then walk to school where we would have our lunch. After school we had to be back in the house until supper time. We learned not to drink too much before going to bed.

Mealtimes/Food

20. When mum had explained about our likes and dislikes one of them was that we did not like liver. The first night that was what Mrs IQK [REDACTED] decided to feed us. It was boiled

liver, potatoes, and processed peas. I tried to tell her about not liking liver and she told us that is what we were being given and we would stay at the table until we finished it all. The family ate something different for themselves and obviously much nicer. Mrs IQK told me that if I was sick while eating the liver, I would have to eat that as well. I had to force the food down to make sure I was not in trouble. We were fed the liver several times a week. Even to this day liver is not allowed in my house, even though my husband likes it.

21. After having that first meal we had to eat flour covered soft cakes, which were horrible. If [REDACTED] or I did not eat food quickly enough Mrs IQK would give us a slap over the face. Sometimes [REDACTED] would do that as well, in front of his parents, who did nothing to stop him.
22. There was a time [REDACTED] was eating her peas and one fell on the floor. The family dog stood on the pea, and this was seen by Mrs IQK. Mrs IQK then insisted [REDACTED] pick it up and eat it.
23. There were occasions when we were fed some chicken, but that was unusual. It was always vegetables with each meal, followed by custard or tapioca, neither of which [REDACTED] and I liked.
24. One day when [REDACTED] and Mrs IQK were out of the house, Mr [REDACTED] gave [REDACTED] and I, a gobstopper sweet each. He told us we could have them, but we were not to tell Mrs IQK.

Washing/bathing

25. I was always shy as a child and would not even get undressed in front of my siblings. After our supper that first night we were told we were to have a bath. When we were in the bathroom they wanted me to go to the toilet, as they stood and watched. I could not go with them watching and I had to sit for ages before I was able to go. Both Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO were in the bathroom, and we were told to take our clothes off. I was refusing and crying as I had never had to do this in front of strangers. Mrs IQK

grabbed me and forced my clothes off me. Mr [REDACTED] just stood and watched, but never said a word. [REDACTED] took my hand and said just do as we were asked. They stood and watched as we washed ourselves. This again was extremely traumatising for me. I'd never let a man see me undressed before and to have a man standing there with the cruel woman was terrifying.

26. When we were finished Mrs IQK [REDACTED] used a metal comb and dragged it down our heads. As she dragged it down, she cut our ears. Each time this happened I could feel the blood dripping down the side of my ear. She would just open the wounds as each night she would use that comb. She even cut my hair short and still used the comb. I was then told to go to the toilet. Once more both Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED] stood at the door watching as I tried to go to the toilet. I was so stressed I had difficulty in going. Mrs IQK [REDACTED] kept shouting for me to go and do the toilet. Eventually after sitting for ages, I was able to go. Why did two adult strangers have to stand and watch me?

Clothing/uniform

27. We had our own clothes when we moved in with IQK-SPO [REDACTED] family. Mrs IQK [REDACTED] kept our clothes in the wardrobe in our room and we had to wear the son's old clothes. We were allowed to wear our own clothes if out with our family.
28. Most of the schools we attended the uniform was standard grey pinafore or skirt and a white blouse.

Leisure time

29. Apart from being allowed to play with the Lego in the living room, we were not allowed out to play. We could not visit anyone from the school or have them around to the house. At one point IQK-SPO [REDACTED] thought I might be deaf and dumb because I never spoke to them.
30. On a Sunday we would be left in the house with Mr [REDACTED], while Mrs IQK [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would be going to church. When he was with us he never did anything bad.

31. There was an orphanage just four doors down from IQK-SPO. There were a couple of girls aged with [REDACTED] and I. We did manage to speak with them a couple of times.

School

32. We were at IQK-SPO for about a week before school started again, after the holidays. During that time they walked us once to the school, to show us where it was. The first day at the school we walked back and forward on our own. Once we were there for a little while there were twin girls that we got to know, and we would walk with them to the school.
33. When we went to the school we would be able to wear standard dress for school. As soon as we were back at the house we were to get changed into the boy's clothing. I don't remember us ever having homework. IQK-SPO never took any interest in our education.

Work

34. The only chores we were tasked with doing was around our own room. We made our bed each day and kept the room in a neat and tidy condition. IQK-SPO had a doll which was kept in the bassinet at the window. We weren't allowed to touch that at any time.

Visits/Inspections

35. There were no visits from Mr Kerr or any other social worker to check on how things were going on at IQK-SPO House.

Sibling

36. On each Saturday my sister [REDACTED] would call and take [REDACTED] and I out for the day. For those days out we were able to wear our own clothes. When we were finished she

returned us to [IQK-SPO] house after supper time. When [] took us back, Mrs [IQK] was very nice and polite with her. As soon as [] left, Mrs [IQK] went back to her usual bullying.

37. Sometimes when we were out we would go to the local park to meet up with some of our relatives. These days out were so good, being away from [IQK-SPO] I never told [] or any of those relatives what was happening to us. To this day I don't know why I never spoke up. She did notice that we did not want to go back to the house, but [] was only thirteen and would not know to probe and ask if there was anything wrong. I would be crying each day we were taken back.

Family contact

38. My mum was in America the whole time we were in foster care. She left us with a purse and some money. After taking some money from our purse that mum had left us, [] and I went once the local van and buy some chips. We had to make sure we had eaten them before getting in the house.

Abuse at Foster care, Mr and Mrs [IQK-SPO] [], Aberdeen

39. It seemed the abuse started The abuse started with Mrs [IQK] saying she hated American's. We tried to tell them we were not American but were Canadian. That made no difference to her. The kids at the school would make fun of our accents.
40. When we were locked in the bedroom at night we could bang on the door to try to get to the toilet, but it was always ignored. I never wet the bed as I was so scared but there were times [] and I had to pee on the floor. One day when we came back from school we were marched upstairs to our room, where Mrs [IQK] pointed out the pee on the floor. [] took the blame for it. Mrs [IQK] grabbed her, pulled her pants down and smacked her on the bare bottom as hard as she could. I tried to get her to stop but was just slapped away. When she finished smacking her she then used her fingers to twist []'s sore buttocks to cause her even more pain and bruising to her

bum. While [REDACTED] stayed upstairs, Mrs IQK [REDACTED] told me to go downstairs. Her son, [REDACTED], was standing in the living room and he was watching and laughing at us as I cried. He slapped me in the face. If Mrs IQK [REDACTED] found we had wet the floor she would make [REDACTED] scrub the floor. This happened every time we wet the floor. I don't think [REDACTED] would ever have been locked in his room.

41. One day when we came back from school we were round the garden to go in the back door as always instructed. [REDACTED] was in the garden and as we approached he grabbed [REDACTED] and lifted her off the ground and then threw her into the dung heap. [REDACTED] was in such a mess from head to toe and crying. Mrs IQK [REDACTED] came out and saw the state [REDACTED] was in. Rather than giving [REDACTED] a row, she just called [REDACTED] "A little pig." She laid newspaper on the kitchen floor and made [REDACTED] stand on the newspaper. She was told she would stand there until it was bath time some hours later. [REDACTED] was not given any meal that night. Later she moved the newspaper into the living room, where [REDACTED] stood until bath time. We were made to share the bath even though [REDACTED] was still covered in dung.
42. I have also been reminded by [REDACTED] that when we were being punished, Mrs IQK [REDACTED] would drag us to the room by pulling us by the ears. That was so bad we ended up with really bad purple bruising to our ears.
43. The time in foster care was awful, Mrs IQK [REDACTED] treated us with cruelty and hatefulness. We were constantly scared and anxious there.

**Reporting of abuse at foster care, Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED]
Aberdeen**

44. I told mum about the abuse, and she reported it to our social worker, Mr Kerr. He did not believe us and took no further action. Mr Kerr told my mum that we were lying just to get out of being in care.

Leaving Foster care, Mr and Mrs IQK-SPO [REDACTED], Aberdeen

45. I think it was in [REDACTED] time when the phone had rung, and Mrs IQK [REDACTED] said that mum wanted to see us, and we were going in a very short time. She hurriedly got us changed out of the boy's clothes and into our own set. [REDACTED] called at the house and took us to see mum. When we went with her to Aunt [REDACTED]'s house there were many other members of the wider family there as well. When we arrived, everybody was drinking and happy. Mum gave each of us a doll she had brought back from Chicago.
46. I did not know the plan was we were supposed to be going back to Mrs IQK [REDACTED]'s. I could not take it anymore and I burst out crying and begging not to go back. I was able to tell everybody what was happening to [REDACTED] and I. Mum immediately telephoned Mrs IQK [REDACTED] and was having it out with her. There was a lot of shouting taking place. She told us we would not have to go back. The following day she telephoned Mr Kerr and told him what was going on. He refused to believe us and was believing the IQK-SPO [REDACTED] and was actually praising them. Mum told him that she believed us before she believed anyone else. He was still trying to pressurise mum to send us back. We ended up staying with Aunt [REDACTED].
47. We were staying with Aunt [REDACTED] for a while and went back to Victoria Road Primary. Later mum and her had a fall out. The social work were able to get us a room in an old people's home, out by [REDACTED]. I don't know the name of the home. When we stayed there we had to stay in our rooms until the elderly residents had finished their meals. That was when we were allowed out of the room to eat.
48. We stayed in that old Peoples home for two nights and then had to leave. When we left I can remember we walked across a field, still deep with snow, to another road. A car stopped and offered us a lift into the city centre. We managed to find a one room flat in [REDACTED]. The toilet for the flat was outside. The couch folded down into a double bed. There was a coal fire for some heat, which mum lit right away. We all just cuddled up together and ate some of the snacks she had bought. I felt like my old mum was back with us.

49. When it was coming up to Christmas she managed to arrange for a private let. This was a two bedroomed furnished flat, in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] came back to stay with us, and we were all able to stay together. We moved school to Skene Square Primary. We were able to stay in that flat for around a year before she managed to get a flat through the council.
50. When we moved into the flat mum's mental health issues returned and she was back drinking again. When mum was drinking she was not a nice person and was bitter towards my dad. Mum was still getting the alimony from dad, until 1976. Dad then disappeared and could not be found. The alimony stopped and mum was left with no choice but to start claiming benefits. We moved to another house which was a block of two up and two down. When we moved in there, mum was regularly drinking and taking overdoses. When mum was like that I would hide on the top shelf of the linen cupboard or in the wardrobe. During this period there was no involvement with the social work.
51. In 1976, not long after I had just turned 10, I came home from school and a man was in our house. His name was [REDACTED], and he had a cockney accent. He told us that he was to be our new dad and had moved in. That day mum was lying unconscious on the sofa through him drugging her and [REDACTED] told us that she had agreed to marry him.
52. He would cook each night. Mum was there but she was not aware of her surroundings and was like a zombie when she was awake. I think he was there for two or three weeks. We went to school but when we were back in the house [REDACTED] would not allow us out of the house or to make contact with our wider family.
53. One day we heard mum screaming and we found out later on when we were older [REDACTED] was raping her. We were really scared of him, and [REDACTED] was trying her best to look after us, letting me sleep in her bed with her. On another day I came in from school with [REDACTED] and was sitting in the living room near the door. Mum was out somewhere that day. [REDACTED] then grabbed [REDACTED] by the arm and took her over to

the couch, and sat there with her. He did things to [REDACTED], and I saw what was happening. I tried to hide behind the clothes horse at the side of the chair.

54. There was another day when [REDACTED] woke us, saying mum was calling from outside. [REDACTED] went out and found mum naked in the communal garden. It was obvious she was not right. [REDACTED] got a blanket to cover her and managed to get back into the house. All throughout this [REDACTED] was shouting at us. He pushed her onto the chair and then started punching [REDACTED], as he stood over us, he continued to punch her in the face. We were screaming for him to stop. We tried to stop him, but he just kept punching her. He eventually stopped leaving me with mum. He took [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] into our room. I was trying to waken mum properly and begging for her to help us. [REDACTED] came back and threw me into the bedroom with my sisters. About fifteen minutes later I could hear mum shouting at him in the hall. [REDACTED] opened the door and saw mum shouting at him to get out of the house. He stood across the road staring at the house for ages. Mum collapsed on the living room floor, unconscious.
55. [REDACTED] managed to telephone Uncle [REDACTED] and told him what was happening with [REDACTED]. He came over to the house and when he arrived and saw the state of us all he contacted gran and the police. Not long after that my gran and a cousin arrived to look after us. The CID were phoned but mum was still unconscious. We told them what had happened to [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and mum.
56. Mum was taken to the hospital at [REDACTED] and ended up staying there for a long time. It was found that [REDACTED] had been spiking mums' drinks with LSD and this was why she was behaving the way she did. When she was in the hospital for the next few months, she did not even know she had children.
57. We stayed with different relatives for a few weeks at a time and this was to be our life for the next couple of years.
58. Sometime around 1978 [REDACTED] and I came home from school and when we went into our house we saw Mr Kerr, the social worker, was there. He and mum were telling us that because of mum's illness we were to once more to be placed into care. I was

begging them not to put us back into foster care. Mr Kerr said that was not where we go but it was to be a children's home, Seafeld Cottage, Aberdeen.

59. When I went to Seafeld I was still in Primary 7 at the school, and I know I spent two birthdays at the home. During my time at Seafeld there were some periods where I would be back staying with mum and would be there for a few weeks or months and then have to be back in at Seafeld.

Seafeld Cottage, Viewfield Road, Aberdeen

First day

60. I can remember [REDACTED] and I being in Mr Kerr's care and him taking us to the home. I have memories of the journey including the tree lined road, Anderson Drive, as we neared Viewfield Road. [REDACTED] and I were terrified about being away from mum. He said when mum was better we would be able to get home at weekends to see her. [REDACTED]

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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We were then put into the police van and taken away to Brimmond. I was crying and begging not to go there.

Brimmond House, Aberdeen

112. The only staff name I know was Mr **ERM** and he was the man who was **SNR** of the home. We knew from previous residents about the physical and sexual abuse that had taken place there. **KEF**, the gym teacher, I don't know his surname, abused girls, and beat boys.

Routine at Brimmond House, Aberdeen

113. As soon as we arrived I was taken from the police van straight to the cells, just like the ones you have in a police station. [REDACTED] was placed in another room which was in the corridor. The cell I was placed in was accessed through a door in the corridor. This door led to a very small hallway. There was a bathroom and sink off that hallway. The cell was also accessed off this small hallway. There was a Perspex window in the cell, a wooden bench and a potty. The way it was designed was the cell was actually right next to the one where [REDACTED] had been placed.

Mornings and bedtime

114. I spent the whole of my time in the cell and do not know what the routine would have been as a normal resident within Brimmond House. When it was getting dark in the evening, the lights were put on. About nine o'clock a woman officer, I never found out her name, would come in and I was given a mattress which was filled with a sawdust like material. This mattress was packed tight and really uncomfortable. A sheet, pillow and a grey blanket were also handed over. They were all put on top of the wooden bench. There was no toilet in the cell, and I was given a potty.
115. In the morning you were told to sluice the potty out in the toilet. I was allowed to get a quick wash and brush my teeth. I was then given a bucket, a scrubbing brush, and a cloth. I was made to clean the floor of the cell. She would then bring your breakfast to you in the cell.

Mealtimes/Food

116. All my food was brought to me in the cell. I don't recall much about it.

Abuse at Brimmond House, Aberdeen

117. Apart from being kept in the cell there I did not receive any physical abuse, but the mental side from being locked up all day was immense. On the second night in Brimmond I did hear the abuse and beatings carried out on [REDACTED].

Reporting of abuse at Brimmond House, Aberdeen

118. As it was the staff carrying out the abuse there was no one we could approach. We were never out of the cells and did not see anyone except the staff looking after us. We were always threatened that if we did not change our behaviour we would end up being there permanently.

Leaving Brimmond House, Aberdeen

119. I was in Brimmond House for three nights and four days, but on my records they say I was only there for two days. I know that on the third night the lights were not put on. I tried banging on the door, but no one came. By the time I was getting to leave there I was totally broken, and I would have done anything not to get into trouble again. When [REDACTED] came out of the cell he was covered in black and blue bruises, and a burst mouth.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Later in life, probably, as a result of his time in care, [REDACTED] committed suicide, after being addicted to heroin.

120. When I left Brimmond I was sent back to Seafield.

Seafield Cottage, Aberdeen

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Seafeld Cottage, Viewfield Road, Aberdeen

137. My time at Seafeld ended when I was sent home to stay with mum. Again, that time with mum was proving difficult, and after around two or three months, I was placed on a compulsory care order, as mum did not want us in the house. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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139. The social worker was either Jill West or Jean McLean, I can't recall which one, said I would go to Westburn Home. When I was to go there it would be on a trial basis. If I behaved then I would be able to stay there and if not it would have to be Seafeld or Brimmond. This would have been in the , and I was still fourteen.

Westburn Home, Aberdeen

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Westburn Home, Aberdeen

162. I was sixteen when I met the man who was to become my husband. Secondary Institutions - to be

Secondary Institutions - to be published later One day I was on the back of his scooter when we were involved in a crash. A female came out of her house, and she contacted the home and phoned the ambulance. By the time I arrived at the hospital, Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

163. As a result of the injuries to my legs and back I ended up being in traction for around seven weeks. Because of this I ended up missing my sister's wedding. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later Mum had not been told until a few days after I was in the hospital. Mum and my sister came to visit me. At that time was actually working as a nurse in that hospital.

164. I was initially told by the hospital that there would be no long-term effects from the injuries, but that has not been the case. One of my legs is shorter than the other which meant I would always have to wear a lift in my shoes. This has also impacted on my spine and now have issues with the vertebrae which are now damaged. I now suffer from Fibromyalgia and arthritis.

165. When I was released from the hospital I went back to Westburn. Secondary Institutions - to

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

I spent a long time to learn to walk and needed help when I was getting dressed at night. I was so dependent on others to help me. Within three weeks of me leaving Westburn and live independently with two other girls from the home.

166. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Life after being in care

168. Being 17 I was helped by the social work to get my flat at [REDACTED], and my boyfriend, now husband, came to help me with the move. I was staying there with the two other girls from Westburn. This flat had been identified for us before the accident, but we were not aware of the date we were to go there. It was on three floors, and we had a room each. There were two toilets, one bathroom. Downstairs was an open plan living room/kitchen, which we all shared. The downstairs was furnished but we had to get our things for the bedroom. The social work applied for grants to help us with this. I think I stayed there for just short of a year.

169. During this period, I was still having to go back and forward to the hospital and had to do that for around eight months before things really started getting better. There was

a hearing for me to be released from social work care. I think that was held at the Albyn Terrace offices. I was still 17 years old.

170. We had never been shown how to budget our money or what bills we should be paying. I was on benefits, and we spent most of the money on cider and parties. When we were released from social work care we were supposed be paying rent for the flat. For

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later. This felt like total rejection and was hurtful at the time as it left us with nowhere to turn to for support.

171. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

172. Not long after this I was pregnant with my first child. My partner and I moved in with his parents. We got a flat when our daughter was about 4-6 weeks old. We got some compensation for the crash we were in and used that to furnish the flat. We also got married 2 years later and now have our 5 children, 3 boys and 2 girls.

173. When I was 28 I took up distance learning to get qualifications in the care environment, and then waited until my last son had started school. When I was 40 I got my degree qualification as a social worker. During the time I studied Social Work and Psychology I began to understand myself. Why I felt the way I did and my reactions to things etc.

174. About twenty years ago I was with my family in Braemar when we saw the IQK-SPO family. It was Mrs IQK that I recognised straight away. I just froze when I saw her. She wouldn't have recognised me as a grown up. That was the first time I told my own kids about some of the abuse I suffered when I was in their care.

Impact

175. The staff and some of the kids at the schools never cared because we were just "Homey" kids. They just saw us as bad kids. At one of the schools there was an issue with barbiturates being passed around. I was seen to pass a cigarette out of a window to another pupil which was seen by a member of staff. They automatically assumed because I was in care that I was the one responsible for the drugs. We never knew who was doing it, but we were getting the blame for it. Later in life I met a friend's husband and was talking about it. He said he was really sorry as it was him and his mates. He had stolen the tablets from a relative and was passing them out at the school. School was very discriminating against the kids in care. Most of us were expelled for some reason but I managed to avoid that.
176. As a result of the constant abuse from the adults who were caring for me, I find it really difficult to trust people. My whole self-esteem has been affected. I always thought my husband would leave me as I felt I was different from everyone else, and I never felt good enough. I always believed he would find someone better than me. I couldn't go anywhere myself for years. I still suffer from bouts of depression and anxiety.
177. My experiences in care have never left me. I have talked about some of those experiences with my family and some close friends, but never gone through about my life from beginning to end.
178. I have been to counselling twice, but that was not for anything to do with my time in care. I have been on anti-depressants for around 20 years.
179. I am hyper vigilant, and I still assume that the worst will happen. This has all affected how I have reacted to my children. I have probably been overprotective with them. I often find that if I cannot get them on the phone straight away then I immediately think something bad has happened. I was always scared if they were playing with their friends and feared something was going to happen to them. I made sure if they were outside they had to play somewhere I could see them. I have even reported my son missing to the police as he was not answering his phone. It turned out when they went

to his door he was with his girlfriend. I have tried to explain to them of those fears and I always hope that they have understood.

180. Because I had witnessed issues with alcohol and drugs as I grew up, I did not allow myself to go down that route. My children were and are the most important thing in my life, so I wanted a better life for them.
181. My education really suffered, and it was not until later in life that I was able to get the qualifications that I had wanted for years. Everything I missed out on at schools, such as parent's nights, I have made sure my children never missed out.
182. Parents who spent time in care, are assumed to be living with shame and will not make as good parents, as those who did not spend time in care. This stigma is still taking place today. It was assumed I could not cope with many issues as my family grew. However, I strived to be a good parent and managed to care for my children without social services support. All five of my children are grown now and have good jobs, homes and families of their own. This despite the emotional baggage I still carry from my childhood trauma.

Reporting of Abuse

183. Other than my family I have not reported any of the abuse to the police or other authority. You could not report any of the abuse to the police because they were involved and in collusion with staff from the homes.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Records

184. I tried to get my records in April 2023, which was supposed to be sorted within four weeks, but despite having submitted a Subject Access Request, followed up with phone calls and voice mail, I never received any reply. Being employed as a social

worker I decided to use work address and sent an email to the Chief Executive and other senior staff explaining what I was after and what I had done to that date. I also made them aware that I was due to provide evidence to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry in August 2023. Very quickly thereafter I was contacted by Gaynor Clark, staff, who then assisted in getting some of my records. In August 2023 she did get the some from Westburn Home. She is having difficulty in tracing the ones from my time at Seafeld, apart from one log book. For some reason inside the Westburn records were two pages from a review during my time at Seafeld.

185.

186.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Lessons to be learned

187. We need to stop placing children in certain care placements purely on financial reasons. The placements should be centred on the needs of the children. When a child is in care they should be cared for and nurtured to help promote their self esteem. The right people need to be employed in the care system, by doing this they will look after the needs of the children. Every child in care is unique, some are more resilient than others, but all were treated the same.

188. An example of finances meaning more than the needs of the child was I had a manager that had instructed that a boy be moved out of a therapeutic foster placement to another placement in Aberdeen. I disagreed as having spoken to this boy he had settled in school and was feeling safe and no longer having issues. This placement was to end as it was costing too much money and he was to be placed in a group home. I tried to point out that the law was stating at that time that finance should not be a reason for moving a child if it was not in the interest of the child.
189. During a LAC review my manager was still insisting the boy be moved. The boy's parents, his foster parents, the school all were unhappy and saying that it was not in his best interest, and he should stay where he was. My manager was instructing me to follow her instructions and not to show any disagreement. I knew it was coming to near the end of school term and was asking that he should at least be allowed to complete that term. She was still refusing. I was shut down by manager who then submitted a complaint that I was disruptive during this hearing. The others in the meeting put in statements saying I was doing my job and supporting the child.
190. The manager did move the boy to a different home and that caused the boy to go downhill again. When he was nineteen he took his own life. That should never have happened. If they left him in the nurturing foster placement I think he would still be alive.
191. I was disciplined and lost my job. I appealed and other staff submitted evidence of her bullying. It took just short of a year to sort it and I got my job back. I got my pay backdated. I moved to Intensive Support work. All of this took place because one woman was only looking at a cost and not the interest of a child. I will always speak up for the child over money, any day.
192. I have been more resilient than some of the children I was in care with. Many of them are no longer with us, having taken their own lives, because of the trauma they had to live with and the lack of support after leaving care.

Other information

193. I feel there must be an acknowledgement for people who have suffered abuse while in care. There should be an apology from the Government to the people who suffered in care.
194. Legislation must be put in place to make the needs of the children in care the priority and not the funding. Give the correct financial backing to social care. There must be changes in having children placed in multiple establishments. There must be more mental health awareness of the children in care and the appropriate services made available for those with mental health issues. There should be more therapeutic services made available for the kids. Staff need to keep looking to praise the children and not concentrate on punishing them. Budgets for children's services should be ring fenced so councils can't cut services from them.
195. 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... 16/10/2023