

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Edna BOOTH

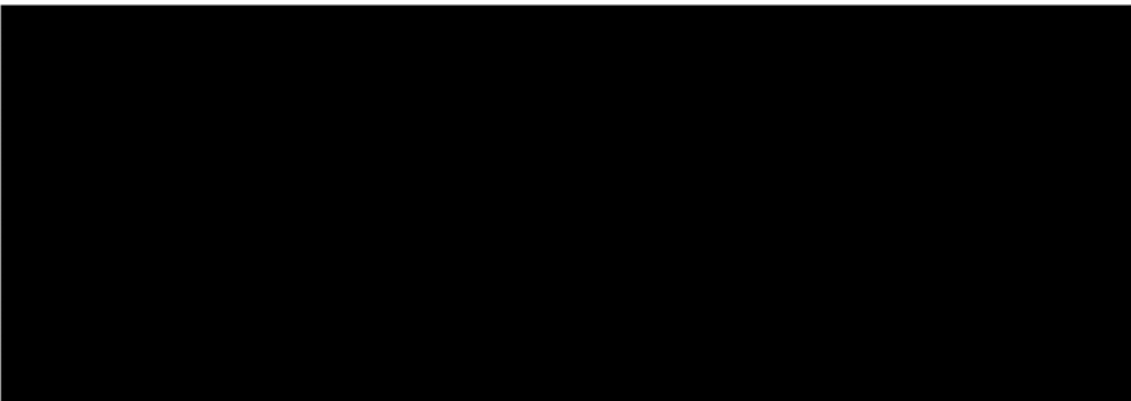
Support person present: Yes

1. My name is Edna Booth. My date of birth is [REDACTED], 1964. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in Aberdeen and stayed in [REDACTED] Woodside, Aberdeen. When I was five I moved to [REDACTED]. I lived with an alcoholic of a mother, her name was Lilian Robertson Duncan Booth. My father's name was Ernest Moir Booth. He was a fisherman and away all the time. I just can't call them parents, because they weren't. My mother was covered in psoriasis. I never knew her sober.

3.



4. I remember from the age of five or six, in [REDACTED], mother taking me for a bath. At the time you got nits in your hair and everything and she would touch me and wash me and I knew it was inappropriate. She got in the bath with me. It was the

same from the age of five to seven, when my father was away. Although he was never a father, he never gave a shit about me. She would take me down to the neighbours down the stairs. There was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They both lived downstairs at different stages. She would strip me in front of them and touch me and let them touch me, these two old men. It was like I was stuck to her like glue.

5. When my father came home from sea they would get drunk together. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I'd rather have been beaten than what I was going through. Nobody knew.
6. I never remember school because I always ran away, always skived off. I can't remember primary, I know I went to Woodside primary school but the only thing I recall is that I was always dressed like a little tramp. I was smelly, the house was smelly and my mother was smelly. I can smell her to this day.
7. Mr Chisholm was the Child Cruelty Officer. I can't remember when he started getting involved [REDACTED]. He was an old man. Even when he was involved, the abuse kept going on. She would take me down to 'The Donnie' and sit me behind a big tree and she would get drunk and abuse me. At the time I didn't see it as abuse, I saw it as her being kind, it made her happy.
8. I remember father taking me, [REDACTED] for a walk and he put his hands down [REDACTED] pants. I couldn't miss it. [REDACTED] screamed and I screamed. That was the only time I saw that happening, apart from that he was always nice to [REDACTED]. At that time you got beatings in front of the police, you got beatings in front of everybody and nobody wanted to listen. I was about nine or ten years old. I remember Chisholm coming into the house and [REDACTED] asking why he kissed my mother. It didn't seem sick at the time, she was getting beatings from my father.
9. My mother was a loud mouthed evil woman. I remember begging to be taken away and put into care. I needed away. I asked social workers and Mr Chisholm, I begged them. I don't remember how old I was. I remember my mother cutting all my hair off.

I remember her taking me to different men's houses and undressing me and getting a kick out of putting a bone comb through my hair. These men would be behind me, touching me and she would touch me. In those days everyone was your uncle or your auntie. I wanted the abuse to stop, [REDACTED]

10. When I was eleven, coming up to twelve I begged the system to take me into care. My father was so horrible he didn't care. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I just wanted away from it. The place was so dirty, they were so dirty. The social work saw that the place was filthy, they saw that she was an alcoholic. They saw that he was an alcoholic. I remember they were put into 'Rossie', an alcoholic place back in the day. I didn't care if there was help for them, I just needed away.

11. In my early years I had a fantastic grandmother. She was amazing, but [REDACTED] got put into other houses, many houses. Betty Graham was the mother of an older boy who was my babysitter. This was when it all went out of control. Mum would just drink and drink and leave me in Betty Graham's house in [REDACTED]. She would put me in the bedroom out the road with her son, Alexander. I remember every detail of that bedroom as if it was yesterday. I remember everything about him, how he dressed, how he smelt, how big he was, how tiny his hands were. He used to bob me up and down on the bed, playing games, if that's the way you want to put it. It wasn't games. He would put his hand up my skirt, inside my underwear. I knew it was wrong, but it was being away from the smell of alcoholics. It was like getting sweeties out of a sweetie shop. It was normal. Nobody talked about it. I was about five or six when this started. It went on for years, until I was fifteen.

12. I remember being abused by Alexander Graham and getting pennies and they were like gold dust. Betty was disabled. She would sit on the couch all the time and play patience. She wasn't capable of doing anything for herself. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Years later I took Alexander to court, he abused me from the age of six to fifteen. I don't know his age, to me he was a man. He wore dress trousers and tucked his jumper inside his trousers. You could smell his smell. His hands were so tiny. His penis was so small, his hands were small but

they covered his penis. The bedroom had, like aircrafts hanging from the ceiling, made from paper and things. I remember every single detail. It's not something you can forget. He was exactly the same when he walked into court years later.

13. Even at grandma's I remember [REDACTED]. He would touch me. I was just a kid. This was before I went into care, well before. I begged to be taken into care. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I think I spoke to Mr Chisholm, I begged him to put me into care.

14. The social work weren't aware I was being abused. You couldn't tell people then. We were belted, caned, beaten. It didn't matter then, nobody cared, police didn't care. I just wanted away. The social work must have known. They saw it was a filthy house and I was going to school like a tramp. You couldn't tell them, but they must have known. You didn't dare say anything because you got beaten, regardless, but we did eventually get taken into care.

Seafield Children's Home & Brimmond Assessment Centre, Aberdeen

15. [REDACTED] I went to Seafield Children's Home in Aberdeen. I was twelve years

old [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

16.

17.

18.

19. Secondary Institutions - to be published later I was put into Brimmond Assessment Centre. I can't recall what age I was. It was a locked up school in Aberdeen. You couldn't run away, it was in the middle of nowhere.
20. All the girls had to wear the same thing, shorts and purple t-shirts, and all the boys had to wear the same thing. I had to go to school in there. I was back and forward between Brimmond and Seafield and I was still being put home at weekends, even though I'd told the social work what was going on. I still ran away. I was put to Brimmond and there was no place to run. There was so many other things going on in Brimmond at the time.
21. Mr and Mrs ERL-ERM were SNR of Brimmond. They lived in a flat next to the home. The matron, Mrs ERL was having an affair with a man who worked there called KEF. Boys in Brimmond were saying they were being abused by KEF I wasn't. The only time we got to wear our own clothes was on a Sunday if we went to church, so we did, just to get dressed.

22. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published later On home visits my mother and Alexander Graham were still abusing me.
23. My mum came to visit me a couple of times at Brimmond. She was pissed. My dad never came. He hated me for making the allegations about there being incest at home. At Seafield I said there was incest at home, I didn't say what that was or anything.
24. I remember the panel saying it was all in my head and I wasn't believed. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. They decided I was just looking for leniency and I think they put me to Brimmond, and I think they put me to a place in Edinburgh too. I seemed to be going back and forward from Seafield and Brimmond for a long time.
25. A lot of people were saying they were being beaten or they were being taken into rooms and abused by KEF but it wasn't happening to me. I was shutting everything off. It was boys. I didn't take a lot of it in. I was closed off. Why tell me? Nobody believes me.
26. I can't remember KEF last name. Mrs ERL was a small woman with grey hair, her husband was a tall man, at least six foot four or five. I remember KEF starting to work at Brimmond and you could see the shine Mrs ERL was having on him. Mr ERM didn't have anything to do with the home. He stayed in his house. You couldn't miss KEF and Mrs ERL having an affair. Things dramatically changed at Brimmond when KEF arrived. Mr Keith was the head teacher, there were two Mr and Mrs that worked at the home. KPP was the cleaner.
27. There have been so many that went up and said they have been abused by KEF even now. I put my story on Google years ago when Alexander Graham got sentenced to ten years and I had this guy who got in touch with me. I can't remember his name. He had been abused by KEF in Brimmond and asked if I could say that he'd been abused and that I was there and could prove that. But there's one

thing being abused and it happening and you seeing it, but there's another thing about lying about being abused and someone being labelled an abuser and he's innocent and I would never lie for another. Seemingly KEF has been taken to court as far as I know.

The Good Shepherd, Colinton Road, Edinburgh

28. The next place I went to was the Good Shepherd in Colinton Road, Edinburgh. It was a nuns convent. I remember Sister Margaret there, she was like an angel. She was the first person that showed me love, emotions, feelings. I'd never known that. She was amazing. I still had to go home, she knew I didn't want to, and I'd run away. None of my family wanted to know me. My father hated me, [REDACTED]. I don't know how, but Sister Margaret knew that nobody cared. I got no visits, I've never had a birthday card, no Christmas cards. She was amazing. She knew none of them cared. I was going [REDACTED] on home leave, but she would take me to my mothers. She never knew how bad things were. I always had contact with my mother, regardless. I'd be sent to my mothers, but my parents had split up and my dad had married someone else. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

29. I was thirteen or fourteen in the Good Shepherd. Sister Margaret was in charge. It was like she believed in me. We didn't talk about the abuse, her heart was enough for me. She just knew nobody cared. She knew nobody bothered about me. I didn't tell her about the abuse. I didn't tell anyone else. If you aren't believed by social work or a children's panel, who's going to believe you? They are meant to be people trained in kids with different types of behaviour. There was no-one else I could tell. I kept it to myself. I never ran away from the Good Shepherd.

Foster care, near Banchory

30. I remember vaguely being in foster care. I can't remember the couple's name. They stayed out in the country, near Banchory. I remember being taken there. I guess I was being a good girl and they thought that would be good. I don't know where I went there from. It was very brief. They had their own daughter, I can't remember her name. I was given a beautiful room. It was so clean, immaculate, but I wondered if I'd get abused. I wondered if they were abusing their daughter. How come they were putting me here? I questioned everything in my head. I thought it was too good to be true. I can't recall the daughter much, I think she may have been a bit older than me. All I did was run away and run away, and hide. I couldn't trust anyone. You are lucky if I have trusted five or six people all my life.
31. Foster care was when I was fourteen, maybe going on fifteen. I can't remember where I went after it, but it was back into care after that.


32. I remember getting out of care when I was fifteen [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Reporting of abuse at home and from babysitter


33. I reported the abuse I suffered to [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later the social work department and to the children's panel, however I was told it was all in my head and I was just looking for more home visits. Because of this I didn't tell anyone else.

Leaving care

34. I was put out on the street when I was fifteen. It was two weeks before my sixteenth birthday. I got no support from anyone, social work, nobody. I was on the street sleeping in bus shelters and bus stations. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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35. I remember being left standing in Union Street and there was an army recruiting office there. I went in and asked if I could join the army. I was told I was too small. It was like I was looking to be controlled. After that I was back on the street. Just before I was eighteen I got married. I never had a house before that.

Life after being in care

36. I was on the streets or on couches before I got married. I saw the social work throughout my marriage. I never got any help from them, or anyone else, family, nothing. I never worked through that time. I've never worked.
37. I got married when I was young. It was ok but I couldn't give him kids. There was no belief, no fight left in me. I started taking amphetamine because I didn't want to go to sleep. It was the one drug that I took. I got married again. I told him what happened to me when I was younger and he blackmailed me and put me on the streets as a prostitute, beat me and battered me. I could take the beatings because it just numbed all the other pain. I had to give him money or he would tell everyone what happened to me. I still took the amphetamine, then I started drinking. He ended up killing himself. I didn't know it, but he was taking heroin. I found out and I walked away and the next thing I knew he was dead.
38. I got married again and the same thing happened because he knew I'd been on the street, he made me do it again. I hated myself and my body felt nothing. I felt numb. I got beaten and beaten. I got tattoos on my body because I just wanted to feel the pain. It was like I was brain dead. So many times I tried to take my life.
39. I had to get away from Aberdeen. I couldn't live there anymore. I then met my son's dad. He was a decent man. He was in the army too, for sixteen years. He had PTSD from being on the front line in Belfast, everywhere, he did the full thing. Then I had my son . I was thirty-four when I had him. Since the day he was born I was so

protective of him. I wouldn't let the doctors and nurses take him away from me. As he got a little bit older I wouldn't let him go to P.E. as I thought people would be looking at him changing, the teachers. Everything was going through my head. I wouldn't let him go swimming, thinking everyone would be looking at him. I've never been to a swimming pool with him. I wouldn't let him wear shorts or even a t-shirt. I smothered him so badly that his dad, and his girlfriend, had to take him when he was eight. His dad was good. He was tough because he had been in the army. I got [REDACTED] at weekends and holidays. I got a good social worker when [REDACTED] was taken from me. I was all over the place, I had got worse. His grades were falling and it was because of me. He went to his dad's, who was pretty angry and quite rightly.

40. I then got into another abusive relationship. My son saved me when he was fifteen. I was in tears, I had just been battered, I was black and blue. My nephew came in his car to get me and I didn't know [REDACTED] was in the car. My nephew told me they were there to take me away. I didn't know it was [REDACTED] in the passenger seat and all I could hear was, "Mum, mum, mum", and he pulled down his hood and it was my son. He told me I had to walk out that house. He took me to Forres. His dad gave me his house as he had been given a war veteran house and my son stayed with me, and he never let me go.

Impact

41. I always take the blame, I always say I'm sorry. I was forced into prostitution years and years ago. I'll never forget that. If I didn't have my son I wouldn't be here today. I've never loved a man. I've never known what a proper sexual relationship is. I've never known what proper sex is, how to be a woman. I don't feel like one and I've never felt like one. The abuse from Alexander Graham was always going on, not from my mum when I was older, but always from him. Even during home visits from the Good Shepherd.
42. I never knew who my father really was, or my mother. I could smell her, the alcohol, it reeks. I still can, and no matter how much you want to move on, it's always there. You try to move on in life but it's there all the time.

43. It has an impact every single day. There's not a day that I can't get it out of my head. I don't watch TV in case something triggers me off. I can't have a normal day like people do, down at the beach. I can't have fun like normal people do. I hate summer time. I know a lot of people get abused, but when it's your own so called family it's the worst nightmare to live and I live it every day and night. I know I couldn't abuse anyone but if I walk down the street I see people and think they may be abusers, anybody. That's the impact.
44. I live with it every day. I'd put my fingers in my ears, I didn't want to hear any noise and rock myself to sleep every day. Even to this day I wake up and rock myself back to sleep. The psychiatrist said it's mental health and PTSD and rocking is a comfort thing, but it's not. It's not a comfort thing at all, it's a horrible thing, but I'm so used to it over the years and the first thing that comes into my head is I know why I do it. It never goes away.
45. I shut myself away, it's like I hide myself away, for months. I can't go out. I can't remember the last time I went out socialising, I can't do it. I see kids going to school, young girls with really short skirts and think, what kind of parent lets that happen. It's every day. It's a trauma, a disgusting trauma. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
46. I've been in hospital for taking overdoses. I haven't been put into a mental ward. I was on Omeprazole for twenty-two years. They are for acid reflux, but I was eating them like sweets. For a long time I was writing texts in Japanese and Chinese and everything. I didn't know I was doing it, but everyone else did. For a long time [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] said I had mental health disorders. It freaked me out. That made me even worse.

47. During lockdown I had my blood tested on a Wednesday and a Dr Kennedy phoned me on the Thursday and told me an ambulance is going to be outside my door within the hour. He told me to pack a bag. I just got into the ambulance and I was out of it. I was on a high dependence of pre-gabapentin, 900 mg per day. I haven't touched amphetamine for years. I was on 75 mg of Quetiapine and 100 mg at night. My psychiatrist prescribed them. That was my last psychiatrist. The one I have now, Dr Davidson, is an amazing man. He diagnosed my PTSD from childhood trauma, just before lockdown. They could never diagnose what was wrong with me until after the court case. Psychiatrists were saying they couldn't diagnose me. I understood what they were saying, because I was going through so much with the courts. They had to have that out the way. I saw a psychotherapist in 2019.
48. I saw Dr Davidson on 10th July, 2021, because I'd been away for a week to a caravan in Stonehaven. It's the first time I'd been away in three years, and when I came back my house had been broken into and they took everything. I went to see him and told him I couldn't cope with it. I was lost. [REDACTED] wasn't there. Dr Davidson put me back up to 5 mg of diazepam, but just for the short term.

Reporting of Abuse

49. Firstly in 2002 [REDACTED] was taken to court in Perth, but it was further back than that when I reported everything to the police. The first case taken up was with [REDACTED], but I told the police about everyone.
50. I remember the police officer's name, Pauline Robertson. I felt she listened. [REDACTED] was found guilty. I can't remember what he was sentenced to, it's like a blur. My son [REDACTED] was born in 1998, and God forbid me for saying this, I made his father feel like a paedophile. I wouldn't let him touch him, bath him, change him, anything. I wouldn't let anyone near my son. [REDACTED] said, "Edna, you have to sort this out or you're going to lose it".
51. That's when I went to the police to report everything. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

In 2004 my mother and father were taken to court in Aberdeen. My mother died a week before she was due in court and I felt like I had killed her. I was all over the place. My father went to court and pled guilty. He said he did it for the sake of doing it, but I know he pled guilty because I'd told the social work about the incest [REDACTED]. He told [REDACTED] that he was forced to plead guilty, but I know he wasn't.

52. I needed to get Alexander Graham to court because they all ruined my life and he was such a massive abuser. I wanted to be believed and I never gave up. Pauline Robertson came back and said we couldn't charge him as there was no grounds. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I fought and fought and fought for him to be taken to court. When my son was taken from me and I was staying in Fraserburgh I had a social worker. She was an amazing lady, who believed me. I can't remember her name. I told her the officer's name and out of the blue she got hold of the Pauline Robertson who, as a result, got in touch with me and came to see me at the social work department. She told me she was sorry that there wasn't enough grounds to charge him and that paperwork had went missing.
53. They put me on to the C.I.D. department who deal with children who have been abused. Two ladies spoke to me and I gave them another statement. I gave the exact same statement as I had before because it's embedded. They told me they were going to see Graham and later they told me they had charged him and were taking him to court.
54. In 2017 he went to Aberdeen High Court. He faked a heart attack the first day. I remember seeing him outside and he looked exactly the same way, dressed the same way. [REDACTED] I sat in the witness room at the High Court and I wondered what was going to happen, would I be believed. I'd never been there. The barrister spoke with me before it.
55. They asked me if I wanted a screen in place to give my evidence but I said I didn't. When I gave my evidence I looked straight at him. I was talking to him because he knew. The defence lawyer asked me if it was about money and I said, "How can it be

about money? I went through so much, and my son did. Nothing could ever buy that”.

56. [REDACTED]. There were eight charges, six of which were full sexual offences. I couldn't go to court every day, [REDACTED] did, but I went for the verdict. I'll never forget that day. When he was found guilty I just screamed and cried, it was like demons being released from my brain. His brother had been sitting downstairs from the court. He stared at me and shouted, "You Bastard". Graham went to the High court in Glasgow. I didn't go. I had been believed. They never knew the extent of what I had been through. I'd felt neglected, alone. [REDACTED]. He got ten years in prison. Eight for me and two years to run consecutively.
57. After the trial I tried to phone Jeremy Kyle, I tried to do everything, just to let everyone know these people did this to me. I told my son everything when he was sixteen. I am blessed by him. He listened to everything.
58. It's a release, but not too much because I know he's getting out. Pauline Robertson had let me down. She said paperwork had went missing. I don't know what, but I presumed it was social work reports. Even the Procurator Fiscal said paperwork had gone missing and they said they would give me an explanation after whatever happens at the court, but I never got one. I didn't need paperwork, I needed to be believed.
59. After Graham got the ten years I took a huge overdose, I just wanted to die. I had done what I wanted to do but I still felt so small, that I wasn't a worthy person. I was unconscious in the doctor's office for nineteen hours. I just wanted to be believed. I tried to do it twice. The second time my son saved me. He kicked my bedroom door down and said, "Mum, don't do this anymore".

Records

60. After the court case I asked Aberdeen council if there were social work records and I was told there wasn't. They told me that if there was some they could be at the police station or they could be at the Procurator Fiscal's office. I kept asking again and again, then I was told there was some that they had found in a back cupboard in a box. During lockdown I received a very thick file of records that took me two and a half weeks to read. I was told over the phone not to read them alone as I would be shocked. It broke me away from my so called family and showed me that my life is my son [REDACTED]. It showed that I was always on my own, that I was left out, singled out. I never knew what a Christmas card or a birthday card was. The records stated my family had singled me out. The whole thing was mind blowing. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later, but I'd told the children's panel and they said it was all in my head. This is all in my records. I remember my mum walking in and out, blazing drunk and calling me for everything.

61. I am angry that the social services failed me when I was younger. I've written to them and had an acknowledgement e-mail, but I've heard nothing back.

Lessons to be Learned

62. Social work need to listen to children, to hear them. They need to know and to dig. It's not about protection of a child, it's about a child being heard. I was never taught about being abused but I was. Because a social worker goes to college or university they think they understand what a child feels like that goes through abuse, but no-one will ever understand unless you have been through it yourself. And maybe if social workers have gone through it they would know better, because nobody can be trained to understand what abuse feels like.

Hopes for the Inquiry

63. In some sense I hope that the law changes a bit. There's too much on the internet. Kids can say they've been hit by their mum or dad for no reason. I'm not saying to hit children, but it's too easy for them now. However, they are used as bait for everything, whether that's sexual, drugs, money, everything. Parents don't have a say anymore, but the children also need to be heard.

Other information

64. I have had fantastic support throughout the process from Future Pathways, my supporter and the staff from the Inquiry. They have listened and believed me and I really appreciate their help and support during this time. It is comforting that everyone has been so approachable.
65. 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.....

11/11/2021