

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

[REDACTED] BCT [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is [REDACTED] BCT [REDACTED] although my maiden name is [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born at [REDACTED] Paisley. That's what it says on my birth certificate. I stayed there with my parents, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] My mother's maiden name was [REDACTED]
3. Until recently I thought I was from a family of six or seven. I now know that I actually had nine siblings. Two of these were babies who died very young. [REDACTED] was the youngest then me. There was only fifteen months between me and [REDACTED]. The rest of my siblings in order of age were, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who was the oldest.
4. When I was about three I have a memory of the police coming to my house and breaking down the door. Me and my sister, [REDACTED] were there on our own. At that time my mother and father had split up. My mother was living with another person, a Mr [REDACTED]
5. After this happened [REDACTED] and me were put into care. I can only assume it was because of neglect after being found in the house by the police. We had been in care before for a short time. We were then allowed home again. I'm not sure what the

exact circumstances were when we were put into care the first time. I think that the first home we were in was Blairvardach.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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70. We were picked up in a car. This was driven by a social worker called Miss Rogers. She drove us from the foster home to Aberlour Children's Home in Keith. Miss Rogers never said anything on the journey about why we were leaving.
71. Again from the records that I have recovered I now know that we were moved to Aberlour on [REDACTED] 1972.

Aberlour Children's Home, Keith, Aberdeenshire

First day

72. I remember arriving at Aberlour. It was a big house at the end of a street. It was very modern. The house was built on the edge of a hill. The living room, dining room, kitchen and utility room were all on the ground floor. There was also a spare room and bathroom on the same floor.
73. We were introduced to the house parents, Ethel and Robert Smith. They were a married couple who stayed at the home. We would call them Auntie Ethel and Uncle Bob. There was also an assistant, Anne Grant, who we would call Auntie Anne. She lived in the home as well.
74. They were all very nice. We were given a nice warm reception. Miss Rogers left and we were shown around the home. We met the other children. There was only about ten children in the home. The oldest was about fourteen.
75. I don't know if Ethel and Bob knew what had went on in the foster home. All they said was that they thought our foster parents were too old now. We were always called by our name. After having never been called by your name for so long this took a bit of getting used to.
76. I had a lot of trust issues with authority after being in foster care. Even though Ethel and Bob were really good, myself and [REDACTED] didn't know what was going to

happen. We didn't know if we were going to be beaten. After a while we realised that things were going to be okay and started to relax.

Bedrooms

77. The bedrooms were all upstairs with a bathroom at either end of a long corridor. [REDACTED] and me were given our own room. The other four girls had their own bedroom next door to ours. The boys were on the same floor but at the other end of the corridor. The house parents also had their own room on the same floor.

Routine at Aberlour

78. In the mornings we would either get up when our alarm went off or Auntie Ethel would make sure we were up. We would then get ourselves ready for school before going for breakfast. I think it was more family orientated. It was a really nice place.
79. Ethel and Bob encouraged us to do different things that we hadn't been allowed to do before. It took a while to realise we were allowed to do certain things without asking permission. With our foster parents sometimes it would have taken weeks to build up the courage to ask permission to do something we wanted.
80. There were still ground rules you had to stick to. Ethel and Bob would still want to know where you were going.
81. We used to get thrupence pocket money. I can't remember if this was every week or every month. We were allowed to spend half of this but had to save the other half. This was good as it taught you the value of money. If you wanted to buy something you had to save for it.

Mealtimes

82. Mealtimes were great. The food was really good. Auntie Ethel would do all the cooking. She would also show us how to cook. If Ethel was out then Auntie Anne would do the cooking. You could get yourselves something from the kitchen whenever you wanted within reason. You wouldn't be allowed sweets if it was too near teatime.

School

83. [REDACTED] and myself both went to Keith Grammar School. We would walk to and from school. There was the usual abuse at school. We would be called "hommies". The other pupils knew we were from Aberlour. It was the only children's home in the area.
84. [REDACTED] was identified as a very good swimmer by the school. As a result Ethel and Bob allowed her to join the swimming club.
85. I left school when I was about fifteen or sixteen. I managed to pass three O grades.

Hygiene

86. There were no restrictions on bath or showers. You could have one whenever you wanted.

Chores

87. There was a lady called Mrs Gordon who used to come in and do the cleaning. We would help out with the dishes and make our own beds. Auntie Ethel used to say to me that you would never know I had slept in my bed. I always had to make sure it was pristine. I never did any housework other than when I did Mrs Gordon's job whilst she was on holiday. I was paid for doing this.

Bed wetting

88. There was a brother and sister, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were twins. They were only small, maybe two or three years old. They used to wet their beds. They weren't punished for doing this. There was just a lot of love and attention. We all used to mother them because they were so young. I think they had suffered really bad abuse before they were in care. Both of them had cigarette burns on their arms and legs.

Religion

89. The first few years I was at Aberlour I still went to the chapel every week. The priest was an alcoholic and this made me think they were all the same. I also went to girl guides in Keith. The guides were run by two nuns. One was good the other one was really bad. That's when I decided that I had enough and stopped going to chapel.

Running away

90. When I first arrived at Aberlour I ran away a couple of times. Ethel would reassure me that Aberlour was my home now. I still thought I would be going back to Inverness. After a while I settled down and became part of what was a family unit.
91. There was no punishment for running away. It was completely different. You would be scolded but there was never any smacking.

Christmas/Birthdays

92. Everyone was always made a fuss of on their birthday. Some of the children would get visitors. My sister and me never had any visitors on our birthday. You would always be given a cake.
93. Christmases were also always celebrated. You would be made a fuss of by the house parents. We were given lots of presents on Christmas Day. It was like a normal family Christmas.

Social work visits

94. I think Miss Rodgers visited us at Aberlour. We would have meetings with her on our own.

Trips/holidays

95. We would go on trips to Portobello in Edinburgh and also St Andrew's. We stayed in the student flats when we went to St Andrew's.

Other information

96. Whilst we were at Aberlour my foster mother and father died within a year of each other. My father died first. We were then told that our foster mother was in hospital at Inverness.
97. For some strange reason I had a sense of loyalty. [REDACTED] and myself went to visit her in hospital. At first my foster mother didn't recognise us. Then when we were leaving she took my hand and said sorry. She went on to say we weren't evil and we weren't bad. I said to her that it was okay. It was maybe because she was such a staunch catholic she was trying to atone for what happened. I think this in some way helped me heal. A few days later we were told our foster mother had died.
98. You were allowed to stay at Aberlour until you were eighteen if you paid digs. I managed to get a job at a supermarket so I stayed on at the home. Everything was just the same. I still stayed in the same room with [REDACTED]
99. I was actually married for the first time before I was eighteen. We moved into a flat above the supermarket.

Life after being in care

100. I stayed in Keith for a few years. [REDACTED] also left Aberlour and moved into her own flat and started working.
101. My first daughter was born when I was twenty. I then discovered that my husband was cheating and I moved out into a friend's house.
102. After getting a divorce I later married for a second time. I had another daughter. My second husband also cheated on me. I began to think that it was me. I eventually divorced again. I would rather have been on my own than be cheated on.
103. I have had numerous jobs. Most of these were with customer service in the retail industry.

Impact

104. I am very protective of my daughters. A lot of what I have been through has given me strength to deal with things. Despite this there have been a few times where I felt suicidal. I would never tell anyone about this. I would keep it to myself.
105. My time in care has made sure that I am never judgemental or horrible towards other people. I will always fight for fairness on other peoples behalf.

Reporting of Abuse

106. I had never told anyone about the abuse until I met my second husband. I told him everything. When he cheated on me it hit me really hard. This was because it had taken years to build up the trust to tell someone what had happened to me.
107. I have never reported the abuse to the police.

Records

108. In 1991 I contacted Renfrewshire Council about our records from when we were in foster care. I received a letter from Eric McKenzie who was the adoption counselling co-ordinator. I phoned him and he told me that he was the person that had originally arranged for us to go into foster care. He also said that he had visited us when we were in foster care. I told him that he had sent us from the frying pan into the fire. At that point the phone went dead.
109. The council eventually contacted me about our records. I was initially informed that our records from the Aberlour care trust had been destroyed in a fire. However I have now received some records from our time at Aberlour. Within the records there are copies of letters from my mother to Miss Richmond. These are dated September 1972. My mother has asked for us to be moved although there is no reason for this in the letters.
110. There are a lot of letters from my mother to the council asking for money for clothing and things. There is also a letter from Mr McKenzie of Renfrewshire Council to me dated 21 June 1996. This provides information made by Miss Richmond. The letter says that Miss Richmond had visited our foster parents after we left to go to Aberlour. Miss Richmond stated that our foster parents had said they missed us but had to come to the decision to let us go as they could not cope due to ill health.
111. This information left me feeling angry given what we had been through with our foster parents.

Lessons to be Learned

112. I think that there were thousands of children taken out of a bad situation and put into a worse place. If this can be documented then hopefully it will ensure things like that will not happen again. It needs to be recorded why things like that happened.

113. Children need to have a voice and be listened to. There should have been better checks on foster carers. If a child is in care they should be monitored by different people. When they are being assessed it certainly should not be in the presence of the carer.

Counselling

114. I have been to see a counsellor once, when I was in my twenties. She told me that from the way I was speaking I had dealt with it all. In a way maybe I had.

115. 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.

BCT

Signed.....

Dated..... 13 - 06 - 2018.....