

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

JCW

Support person present: No.

1. My name is JCW. My maiden name was JCW. My date of birth is 1939. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

EXPERIENCES OF FOSTERING

Background

2. My husband's name was JDJ, however he is now deceased. We have children together.
3. After I left school I was employed as a weaver at [REDACTED]. After that I worked at the [REDACTED] in Buckie and then at a shop called the [REDACTED].

Life before sharing home with foster children

4. My mother was ESU and my father [REDACTED]. They are both now deceased. I had an older brother [REDACTED] and a younger brother [REDACTED], who are also now deceased.
5. We lived at [REDACTED] Keith, which was a house comprising of a kitchen, living room, three bedrooms, a bathroom and a garden outside.
6. My memories before sharing my home with foster children is that life was pretty normal, if basic, in rural 1950s Banffshire.

Parent(s) becoming foster carers

7. My parents started to foster children in the 1950s. I found out when my mother told me she was fostering a boy and I felt okay about it.
8. I don't really know the reason my parents wanted to foster, but I think my mother wanted to help a boy.
9. I don't remember anything about the process of my parents becoming foster carers, I wasn't involved in it. I also don't know if they got any training, or written instructions, or what support they got from the authorities. Similarly, I don't know if they had their own social worker or if they got any financial support to help look after children.

Foster carer arrangements at your home

10. I don't know if my parents got to choose the foster care arrangement they undertook.
11. They only fostered one child, who was a boy called FEP [REDACTED]. At the time they fostered there were five other people living in the household, who were my mother and father, my older brother [REDACTED], my younger brother [REDACTED] and myself.
12. I don't know if I was related to FEP [REDACTED] nor if I knew him before he came to live with us.

Placement preparation

13. I can't remember how much notice my parents got that FEP [REDACTED] was coming to live with us, it was over sixty years ago. I don't know how long it was before FEP [REDACTED] arrived that I found out he was coming and I didn't know anything about his background.

14. There were no preparations made to help me adjust to the new living arrangements that I can remember, however as far as I do remember everyone settled into the new arrangements quickly and fine.

Daily routine and sleeping arrangements

15. Our home was clean, tidy and well-maintained. We all led normal lives, getting up in the morning and either going to work or school, coming home and helping out around the house, having evening meal and then going to bed in the evening.
16. I don't think any of the children in our home wet the bed, although I can't remember.

Washing and bathing

17. Everyone in the house had full access to the one bathroom in the house. The bathroom door had a lock and all the children had privacy.

Clothes and shoes

18. Everyone was clothed adequately. I presume my mum provided the clothes. I can't remember if FEP had his own clothes, but back in those days everyone either shared clothes or wore hand-me-downs. FEP would, however, have been smaller than the other members of the family.

Mealtimes

19. Mealtimes were normal and the food was good. My mother prepared and cooked the meals and we enjoyed her cooking. Everyone in the household ate together and we all ate the same food.

Leisure time

20. As happened at that time, children spent their free time playing outside with balls. FEP also had access to toys, books and the radio. In those days we didn't do such things as going on shopping outings or to the cinema. I don't know if FEP went to any club or other organisation.
21. I don't know if FEP had his own personal possessions, I can't remember. I also can't remember if he got pocket money or treats.

Trips and holidays

22. There were no day trips or holidays at that time.

Schooling

23. I was a bairn myself and can only say that FEP did go to school. I do not know if he went to the same school as me, or if he changed school when he came to live with my family. I don't know where homework was done, nor what help he might have got with homework.
24. Everyone went to church.
25. I don't know if FEP got help learning for adult life as I had left home by that time.

Healthcare

26. There was only one doctor, who looked after anyone who was ill. FEP did not have to go to hospital.

Christmas and Birthdays

27. We had a normal Christmas, which back then was a family dinner and was a time when everyone was together.

Discipline

28. Discipline was normal for the time. I got belted at school.

Contact with family

29. I don't know if FEP kept in touch with his parents, other siblings or other relatives. I can't remember any contact, but I don't know for sure.

Visitors

30. I don't know if any officials visited our home. I can't remember as it was over sixty years ago.

Moving placement

31. FEP did not move placement while I lived at home. He was still there when I left to get married.

Relationship with foster children

32. I had a good relationship with FEP. We kept in touch and indeed I supported him with my late husband throughout his life. My husband got him a job on the oil rigs.
33. About three years ago, when I was eighty, FEP contacted me in an aggressive and threatening manner saying he had said something saying that I had hit him and that he was going to the police. He bothered me on and off for a good while after that.

34. I was contacted by the police who interviewed me and said that if FEP kept on bothering me I was to get in touch with them and I have not heard from him since.
35. FEP was treated just the same as me and my siblings by everyone in the household.

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Specific allegations that have been made to the Inquiry

36. I am aware that FEP has given a statement to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. I have been provided with a copy of that statement.
37. FEP came to stay with us and was obviously a very mixed up boy. I kept up with him until he married his third wife, then the contact stopped. He was an angry young boy, probably because of whatever happened in his early life. I don't know what that was.
38. I can't remember if he was ever given a sanction or punishment, but my mum was his carer. I never sanctioned or punished him.
39. Within his statement FEP says "JCW was the most abusive bitch I've met in my life [...] I think Mrs ESU was supportive of me, although she sat back and watched her daughter beat me".
40. Further on in his statement, FEP says "The abuse from JCW started more or less from the first day I moved in until I was sixteen or seventeen. That's when she got married and moved to a house with her husband in Buckie. She then sometimes got her husband JDJ to thrash me out in the back garden if I spoke back to them".
41. He then says "One Sunday JCW and her husband were at the house because they would come and visit on a Sunday, as people did. If I was cheeky or even if I spoke back she would say "JDJ give him a thrashing", and he would take me out to the back garden and thrash me, kick me and punch me".

42. FEP also alleges "Every night, any night, for whatever unknown reason she would batter the muck out of me. She would hit me with pokers, shovels and sticks. Many a night she would break a brush over my back, throw me under the table, throw lumps of coal at me, kick me, pull my hair, throw me against walls. Anything you could think of she would do to me. For years".
43. He continues to say "The beatings would always happen in the kitchen. The first thing JCW would say when she came back from work was, "How was he today, what's his report saying?". She'd look at the report and that was me. There was an old fashioned fire place in the house, with ovens at the side. There was a poker next to the fire. Mrs ESU stood next to her daughter when she beat me, watching her. She said or did nothing to stop her".
44. He also says "An older daughter, [REDACTED], who was married and worked in the same factory as JCW, pulled her off me many a time. If it wasn't for [REDACTED] I wouldn't be here today. JCW would shout and swear, "I'll fucking kill you, I'll fucking kill you", and she would have [...] One Sunday JCW and her husband visited and she said, "How are you?", and I said "Nothing to do with you", so she said, "JDJ belt him", but luckily [REDACTED] and her husband, who was also called [REDACTED], were there the same day and told him to leave me alone and [REDACTED] had a word with JCW. This was when I was sixteen, so it still went on then. Twice she asked her husband JDJ to assault me. He did it once. The second time [REDACTED] stopped him".
45. FEP carries on "It was for anything at all. All I would have to do was speak back and she'd go for me with whatever was handiest, poker, shovel, even lumps of wood. Anything at all. "I'll fucking kill him", was frequently said. If it wasn't for [REDACTED] she would have. The abuse was on a daily basis".
46. He says "JCW was the main abuser in my life. Physically and mentally [...] She hit me with a fireside poker, not in the face, but on the chest, arms and legs [...] She abused me on a daily basis. For anything, sometimes for no reason. If she had a bad day at work she would say, "FEP get the poker". Mrs ESU sometimes gave

JCW a belt to beat me with. She always did it in the kitchen and she never hit me in the face. Back, legs, arms, anywhere but the face”.

47. FEP says “My bedroom became like a prison cell. I was scared to leave it. My relationship with JCW was always one of fear. There was no kindness shown by her at all [...] A lot of kids at school called me “The bastard boy”. I would talk back, get in trouble at school and get a bad report and then JCW would thrash me”.
48. Further on in his statement FEP says “Throughout my life [...] I’ve run to JCW for help. I always went to JCW for advice. All the time. I was told [...] that this is what abused kids do. I’d always ask her permission, because I was scared of her. I spoke to her in the street and asked her why she used to beat me all the time and she said, “Beat you, I could have killed you FEP many a time”. I said, “Yes JCW that’s very true”. So [...] I asked her on Facebook, “Do you remember when you beat me?”, and she said, “I never touched you”.”
49. What FEP says in his statement is untrue and I can’t understand why he would say such things. It is not possible that the passage of time has affected my recollection about what FEP alleges.
50. I can’t explain why FEP has said these things, but I know there was a time when he started being aggressive towards me.
51. I accept that treating a child in the way FEP describes wouldn’t be right, but it is untrue to my knowledge.

Other information

52. 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.....[REDACTED].....

Dated.....*12/8/22*.....