

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Elsbeth CROMAR

Support person present: No.

1. My name is Elspeth Ann Margaret Cromar. I have also been known by the surnames Munro, Ross and Mennie. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Experiences as a foster carer

Becoming a Foster Carer

2. I became a foster carer because I loved children. I was a foster carer from 1988 until 2000. I went through various checks before becoming a foster carer.

Training

3. I did not receive any training before or during my time as a foster carer. I did get ongoing visits from social workers for children that I was looking after.

Foster Care Arrangements

4. I did not view myself as either employed or self-employed. I did not see being a foster carer as a job as I was caring for children who needed it. I looked after emergency, long-term and short-term children as required and as space allowed me to.

Financial Support

5. I was provided with money to help me provide care for the children who were put into my care. All the money I received was used on the children in my care, to help with extra costs for food, clothes, toys and holidays.

Your Foster Home Household

6. Originally, I fostered [REDACTED]. After [REDACTED], I fostered alone with the support of my eldest daughter. I had sons at home at the time of the fostering. I resided in Dunblane, Edinburgh and [REDACTED], West Lothian during my time as a foster carer. When we moved to Edinburgh, we built an extension onto the house which was funded with help from social work. That enabled me to take children who had been with me previously.

Children Fostered

7. I fostered more than ten children. Their ages varied from babies to the age of eight at the time of their arrival at my home. I fostered long-term and short-term through Glasgow Social Work with a couple of emergency care placements.

Placement Preparation

8. I could get children with very little notice in the case of emergencies. Social worker or key workers dealt with the move.

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

9. I got all the children up, washed and dressed. They were given breakfast then school, lunch, dinner and bedtime at appropriate times. After school, children would be outside playing or playing in the house.

Washing and Bathing

10. The bathroom was as per a normal household. There was no difference in facilities for my own children and the foster children. Everybody was treated in the same manner.

Clothes and Shoes

11. I provided clothes for the children and I did the laundry. All of the children had their own clothes although some may have been handed down.

Mealtimes

12. All meals were home-cooked with the exception of the odd takeaway or meal out. All the children ate the same meal, unless they disliked the meal and then something else would be provided.

Leisure Time

13. Books, toys and games were available to all the children. They were able to watch TV. They also attended the cinema on occasion. All of the children had their own possessions as well as shared possessions. They attended Sunday School until they decided that they did not wish to attend.

Trips and Holidays

14. We went on holidays to Spain, Portugal, Alton Towers and North Wales. I went on these holidays with my foster children as well as my own children.

Schooling

15. All of the children attended nursery or school, as was appropriate for their age. I attended parents evenings and school shows etc. Homework was completed at home.

Healthcare

16. All children were registered with doctors and dentists. Treatment was provided as required.

Christmas and Birthdays

17. All of the children were treated the same at birthdays, Christmas and holiday time. We opened presents, had meals, treats and parties, all as the child wished.

Discipline

18. All children were disciplined in the same manner. I would discuss the issue or behaviour with the child, explain how they should behave and send them to their room. On a very odd occasion, I would give them a smack on the bottom.

Relationship with Foster Children

19. All foster children were treated as my own, by myself and the extended family. All children were treated equally and I was always there for them. We laughed and cried together at times.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

20. Any contact with foster children's biological family was organised by social work. I was never involved in any contact arrangements. Not all of the arrangements made were what the child wanted so I provided support and encouragement for them to deal with the contact.

Siblings

21. I looked after a long-term family of three siblings. On other occasions I had families of two siblings.

Visitors

22. Social workers visited at various times, both scheduled and surprise visits. I cannot remember specific times or details of these visits as it is over twenty years since I ceased fostering.

Review of Care/placement

23. There were reviews of child care placements carried out and I would have participated in these. However, details of these are now vague due to the length of time that has passed since I fostered.

Records

24. As far as I'm aware, records were kept by Glasgow Social Work. I have no opinion on record-keeping as I am not aware of how things are managed now.

Moving Placement

25. Social workers would notify me of any change of placement. They would tell me what was going to happen and I would be present when the child was informed. I would then support the child until the move took place.

Leaving the Care System

26. I was not involved with any child who left the care system.

Complaints

27. I have no comment to make about the complaints procedure as I have been away from fostering for too long.

Convictions

28. I stopped being a foster carer when the last remaining foster child in my care died. I was convicted of child abuse in July 2021.

Abuse

Awareness of abuse

29. I am not aware of any abuse that took place or was carried out during my time as a foster carer.

Reporting of Abuse

30. If the foster children in my care had any concerns or worries, they could speak to my eldest daughter, their social workers or their teachers.

Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no Criminal Conviction

31. I have never been the subject of any allegations of abuse for which there has been no criminal conviction.

Reporting to Police/Criminal Proceedings

32. Abuse of foster children in my care has been reported to the police but I don't know the information about that. I have been subject to criminal proceedings. It was a horrendous experience.

Prior Statements

33. I have not given any other statements about my time as a foster carer, except to the police and my solicitors in the course of the criminal proceedings against me.

Helping the Inquiry

34. I have no opinion to offer on lessons that can be learned to protect children in foster care now or in the future.
35. 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... *18th Aug 2022*

