

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

FJC  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is FJC [REDACTED] my date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1974. I am 45 years old. My contact details are known to the inquiry.
2. I want to tell you about my foster placement with the FKX-FKZ [REDACTED] family, living mainly at [REDACTED] where I was brought up from being a baby of a few months old until I was eighteen. I was in foster care between 1974 and 1992 and spent the whole time with the FKX-FKZ [REDACTED] family.

**Background**

3. My birth parents were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They did accept responsibility for bringing me into the world and I was born out of wedlock. My mother originated in Donegal and lived [REDACTED] in Edinburgh. My mother was working in a bar when she met [REDACTED]. He was ten years older than my mother. He worked as a painter and decorator. Both of them stayed with their respective mothers. I was always told that the reason I went into care was because my mother had a car accident and went into hospital so she wasn't able to look after me. The real truth is that my parents were never married and my mother couldn't cope as a single mum.

**Life before being put into care**

4. I have no recollection of life before going into care as I was only nine or ten months old when I went into foster care.

**Moving to foster care with the FKX-FKZ family.**

5. My foster parents were called FKX and FKZ but he was known as FKZ. He was a miner and worked locally. I can't recall if my foster mother worked or not. I had to call them mum and dad. The FKX-FKZ had two children of their own. was a year younger than me and was two years younger.
6. In the time that I was there they also had two further children in their foster care. They were a brother and sister called and . They originated from Gilmerton in Edinburgh but their parents were alcoholics and unable to look after them so they were placed in foster care with us. They were both slightly older than me but remained with the FKX-FKZ family until they were older teenagers or young adults. I suspect that we were shown the door when the social services stopped paying for our care.
7. I think that before the FKX-FKZ family moved to I was in two other houses at different addresses which I am unable to remember.

***First memories of foster care at the FKX-FKZ***

8. I was only 9 months old when I went to the FKX-FKZ house. My earliest memory, which set the tone for my entire foster placement, happened when I was about two years old. It illustrates the fear I lived in fear for the next sixteen years. It is still a horrific memory that I still carry round with me.

9. I was with my foster parents and my foster father was holding ██████ who was a small baby, above his head. ██████ was being held upside down and dangled by his ankles. FKZ ██████ was threatening to drop ██████ on his head. FKX ██████ FKX ██████ was crying and screaming "FKZ ██████ don't do it". I was panicking and ran out of the house and into the garden. I ran up the garden to the fence and stood there overwhelmed with fear. I wanted to get away. Although the baby was not injured it did set the tone for the rest of my foster placement.

**The FKX-FKZ foster care, Dalkeith 1974 - 1992**

10. I think that FKX ██████ and FKZ ██████ had fostered a few children before we arrived. I think that they had tried for their own children but FKX ██████ had a few miscarriages. FKX ██████ did give birth to ██████ and ██████ who were a year apart and born after I had arrived there.
11. ██████ and ██████ also stayed with us and were foster children staying until their late teens. ██████ left when he was badly assaulted by FKZ ██████ FKZ ██████ I think that when I was younger there was also a young Down syndrome child that died but I can't recall the details.
12. I was at a couple of other addresses with the FKX-FKZ ██████ but my real memories are of ██████ I think that the foster children were treated differently to the FKX-FKZ ██████ own children. They showed a lot more affection and favouritism to their own children.
13. The house at ██████ was in a row of classically designed council houses. It had three bedrooms upstairs and one bedroom downstairs. There was a kitchen, a large sitting room and a hall with a large storage cupboard. The bedrooms upstairs were two doubles and a single and the bedroom downstairs was a double. I spent most of my early teens in the bedroom upstairs sharing with ██████ the FKX-FKZ ██████ daughter. ██████ I spent my teenage years in the bedroom downstairs.

14. FKZ [REDACTED] was a miner. He was a heavy drinker and was a very violent man. There were lots of incidents of domestic abuse when he assaulted his wife FKX [REDACTED]. I used to call my foster parents mum and dad although I was also in touch with my birth parents every Sunday. It used to upset FKX-FKZ [REDACTED] if I mentioned my birth parents in their hearing.
15. FKX-FKZ [REDACTED] wanted to create a sense of family to include the foster children. They didn't like that I spent most Sundays with my birth parents. FKX [REDACTED] used to call me FJC [REDACTED] although I had been named plain FJC [REDACTED] by my birth parents. We would sometimes visit FKX [REDACTED] parents who lived in nearby Gorebridge. They were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. If they visited I would have to go upstairs so they couldn't see the bruises we had got from FKZ [REDACTED] hitting us. Visits were also cancelled if FKX [REDACTED] had sustained visible bruises from assaults by FKZ [REDACTED]. This happened regularly.

*Routine*

16. Monday mornings were one of the worst days. FKX [REDACTED] would stay in bed nursing her hangover from all the drinking the night before. [REDACTED] who I called my big sister got us up in the morning and out to school. I loved school and although the FKX-FKZ [REDACTED] didn't encourage it I found it as my escape. It was where I met my role models in life amongst my teachers.
17. FKX [REDACTED] would encourage her own children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to take the day off and they were quite happy to do this as they didn't enjoy school. I also recall as an eight or nine year old being sent down to the local bookies which was a mile away. I would have to stand outside the shop until I could get someone to place a bet with the note and the money that FKX [REDACTED] had given me. I was always very anxious standing outside the bookies having to approach strangers and receiving their disapproving reaction to the request in the note.

18. ██████████ would also send me with a note to the van that came round the estate selling groceries. The note would be asking for goods and requesting to pay later. I can also recall other instances of being sent to ██████████ friends or neighbours houses asking to borrow money. These experiences were degrading and humiliating for me.
19. There were other occasions when I would be sent round to a neighbour who worked in the bookies. I would have to ring their doorbell and ask her to place a bet when she went in to work. Her husband worked night shift and slept most of the day and I would wake him up. He was always furious with me but the consequences of not getting the bet placed were worse for me as I would have been scolded by ██████████. These experiences had such an impact on my own personality making me anxious.
20. I was always wearing hand me down clothes which had a label with the name ██████████ on them. I never knew who this person was but I had to wear their old clothes. ██████████ would always make her daughter ██████████ look very feminine with ribbons in her long blonde hair whereas my hair was always kept functionally short.
21. ██████████ or our neighbour Mrs ██████████ would cut my hair. ██████████ would send us round to Mrs ██████████ where we would have to ask for a cut. It was again really embarrassing, uncomfortable and awkward and you felt very apologetic for your presence there as there was no pre-arranged appointment. It was imposing on the neighbour's goodwill. This was often the way that ██████████ made us feel. It was not the same for ██████████ or ██████████.
22. There was another occasion when I was in primary seven aged twelve when ██████████ got a young trainee hairdresser to give me a "short back and sides haircut". That caused me to be ridiculed amongst my school friends. I remember looking in the mirror and being very upset. I couldn't bear to be seen. I went in late to school and I remember a lovely teacher called Mrs Irvine who told me that she liked my haircut. She was trying to make me feel better. ██████████ found my obvious upset funny and questioned what all the fuss was about. ██████████ enjoyed keeping me down.

23. I just wore what I was given. The only new clothes I got was when I went shopping at Christmas time with my birth parents. I often had to steal underwear from [REDACTED] drawers or take it from the radiator where it was drying. I would be shouted at for doing this, I had a developed chest as a young girl but they wouldn't give me a bra. There was no care or nurture shown by [REDACTED] FKX
24. From the age of twelve I had small jobs like paper rounds and was able to purchase my own sanitary products and underwear. I am sure that the [REDACTED] FKX-FKZ were being given enough money for our care but it was never reflected in the care of any of the foster children.

*Washing and bathing.*

25. There was no privacy for washing and bathing. When we were younger [REDACTED] and I would all be put into the bath at the same time. I can also remember when I was about nine being bathed in the kitchen sink. It was very embarrassing as it was possible for anyone to see in the window. When I went into High School we got an electric shower and were able to bathe on our own. There was no lock on the door so I would organise getting showered when there was no one there.

*Chores*

26. There were lots of chores to be done in the house. I was cooking, ironing, washing and doing all the dusting and Hoovering. It was usually done between [REDACTED] and me. On a Saturday morning you would be woken up early to do the chores and if you didn't do them quickly enough or properly [REDACTED] FKX would give you a smack with her open hand. It was very much her domain. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were not required to do chores.
27. I also did a paper round at the local newsagents. You had to buy the papers from the newsagent and then you had to collect the money from the customers. I did this every morning seven days a week. I would start at five thirty in the morning and then

have to run home to get ready for school. I also did it in the evening. I was allowed to keep the money and used it to buy practical personal items that the **FKX-FKZ** would not provide for me. The customers would often not pay their bill and I had to still pay for the newspapers. There were little earnings to be made and did not reflect the effort. The **FKX-FKZ** were well aware of this set-up and didn't help resolve the exploitation by the newsagent.

### *Visits*

28. There were only occasional visits from the social workers. What got to me was that there should have been a duty of care to look after me. I felt that I was seen as a problem that had been addressed by discarding me into the poor care system like I was rubbish.
29. The visits were style managed by **FKZ**. On no occasion was **FKX** present at these meetings. They always came by appointment and I would have to sit beside **FKZ** while the social worker asked questions and he made sure I gave the right answers. I couldn't tell them what was happening and the abuse I was suffering nor did they make any effort to enquire with me and what was happening.

### *Schooling*

30. I attended **██████████** Primary School and Newbattle High School. When I was at school I was known as **FJC**. When I turned sixteen I changed my name to **FJC**. I must have had bruises on my body from the times I was hit by the **FKX-FKZ**. I think that the teachers should have picked up the fact that we were being abused at home. I don't think that the school was aware that I was in care. I suspect that the **FKX-FKZ** had not told them the truth when I registered for education.
31. I was never encouraged by the **FKX-FKZ** to perform academically. They never assisted me with homework. At school I had role models who were positive and I could look up to. I think that the **FKX-FKZ** resented this.

32. There were a lot of new houses built in Mayfield and as a result there were more children attending my school. Because these children came from a more privileged background they were keen to do well at school. The school streamed you on your ability and I always did well at school. It meant that I spent more time with the more privileged children from the new houses. It also meant that I never shared with them the fact that I was in foster care because I was too ashamed.
33. In later life I met my old biology teacher at a parent's night for my own children. He was a very good teacher and very enthusiastic. He remembered me from school and when I asked him if he knew that I was in care he said that he didn't have any idea.
34. I remember being very embarrassed at school when it came time to choose an outdoor activity. I had chosen camping and hill walking. Your parents were supposed to pay for this activity but the [FKX-FKZ] didn't pay. [FKX] told me that they didn't have the money. I recall that instead of going on the camping trip I went to class instead. I got such a row from the school when I didn't go on the trip but I don't think that the school staff had caught on to the real reason why.
35. I was the only person at school in 6<sup>th</sup> year who was not made a prefect. I was always the odd one out as if I had horns on my head. I just couldn't understand. I kept thinking I am here despite what has happened to me, why am I being ignored. I did manage to obtain the qualifications to go to university and I recall when the results came through I was delighted. I phoned [FKX] at her work but she didn't seem interested, there was no reaction from her, it was like non-news.
36. There was an initiative being run by Edinburgh University which was a summer school for new students who came from a deprived background. It was to prepare people for university life. I enrolled on this course despite the fact that I had already obtained the necessary grades for the course I had applied for. The course helped me prepare for the transition to university life.



*Food*

37. You were not allowed to help yourself to food. FKX knew exactly what food was in the house and you would be in big trouble for taking it without permission. I don't know if FKX birth children were allowed to help themselves. Whilst proper meals were made, access to food was strictly controlled.

*Religion.*

38. The FKX-FKZ themselves did not practice any religion but I became involved with the local Gospel Hall along with many of the other children in the estate. I would go there because they gave you a sweetie when you went to a service. I really enjoyed it because the people were very nice and made me feel that I belonged. Kenneth Bell was the name of the person that encouraged the local children to attend. He would take us all there in his big estate car. I remember there would be a lot of us jammed in the car.
39. The FKX-FKZ started to become uncomfortable with me attending the Gospel Hall. One day Kenneth Bell called at the house to have a word with FKZ and after that meeting I was never allowed to go back to the Gospel Hall. I don't know what was said at that meeting. I think that I was in primary seven at this time.

*Medical*

40. There was one occasion when I received an injury or a bite to my knee which I persevered with for some time and still carry the scar. FKZ decided he knew what was best and instead of going to the doctor he was going to treat it. He came back from his work at the mines with a poultice which he applied to the injury. He heated the poultice on the stove till it was boiling hot and then FKX held me down while FKZ painted it on to me. It was absolute agony. This treatment was repeated many times and I believe it unnecessarily prolonged the infection and pain I suffered. It also left me with avoidable permanent scarring.

41. [FKZ] then decided that there was a root of poison in the wound so they again held me down and squeezed the injury until a solid piece of poison about the size of a two pence piece came out of the wound. It was again absolute agony. I was in primary six at the time.
42. I can't recall going to the doctors and I should have because I was suffering very badly with cold sores that should have been treated. The [FKX-FKZ] would treat you by dabbing on whisky and perfume. The doctor's surgery was a long walk away and we didn't have transport, so we never went because it was too much bother to the [FKX-FKZ]

*Trips/holidays*

43. I do recall going to a miner's rally in Durham during the miner's strike. We were hosted by another miner's family and we had a great time as they were very kind. I don't recall going on any other family holiday apart from one trip to Great Yarmouth when I was quite young. I think that when I was older the [FKX-FKZ] went on holiday on their own but that was more because I didn't want to go with them.
44. I think that I did go to Butlins in Ayr for one holiday that was arranged through the [redacted] Miners Club. It was like a lottery draw and my cousin [redacted] and I had our names pulled out the hat. It was not surprising as [FKZ] was on the committee and we were family.

*Leisure time*

45. All the children round about where I lived played together on the street. I was aware of several other families who had foster children and lived locally. I do recall the [redacted] who were also foster parents. I remember one of the foster children ended up being adopted and went to live in the colony houses [redacted] in Edinburgh. One day I was passing by the colony houses and it was pointed out to

me as the place this foster child had gone. I remember wishing that it could have been me.

*Birthdays/Christmas*

46. Birthdays were not celebrated with parties or anything like that. I don't recall much about birthdays. At Christmas we did get presents. You got things like an umbrella and a pair of socks. The presents were mainly functional stuff. On one occasion my birth parents gave me a present of a red tricycle but it was taken off me by the [FKX-FKZ] and sold. All [FKX] relatives came to our house at Christmas and they would just sit about talking, there was little or no interaction with the children.

*Pocket money*

47. There was no pocket money handed out to me. If I wanted to get some money I had to work on some small jobs in my own time. I used this money to buy essentials that the [FKX-FKZ] would not provide for me.

*Running away*

48. I only ran away on one occasion. I was in first or second year at high school. I don't know what the lead up to this was but it culminated in [FKZ] grabbing me by the hair and banging my head repeatedly off the door. I believe that I broke my nose and still have a piece of bone jutting out.
49. I ran out of the house and went to the Combined School in Mayfield where I knew my friends would be. I told them what had happened. Not long after [FKZ] came looking for me. He now had a car and was driving round the streets. He asked my friends if they had seen me but they covered up for me. He told my friends to tell me to get home or else. I felt hopeless as I had nowhere to go and no money. It was cold and dark and I had no choice.

50. I went home expecting to get a real punishment but I think on reflection they were just relieved that I had come home. They sat me down and although they gave me a row, that was all that happened. I had a badly bruised nose and two black eyes from my head being banged off the door.

*Potential adoption during foster care.*

51. There was a period that I was in foster care when I believed I was going to be adopted. I still had birth parents but my foster parents were trying to adopt me. It was very strangely managed. The social worker took me out for a pizza in Edinburgh and asked me questions. They also took me to a book shop on George IV Bridge in Edinburgh. The social worker purchased a notebook in the shop and they used it to record a number of the meetings I had to build up a history of my life. I don't recall any of the social worker's names. I don't know what happened but my adoption did not go ahead. I can't recall when this was.

*Birth parents*

52. I would meet with them every Sunday and ██████████ would pick me up in the car. My birth mother was not welcome at the ██████████ FKX-FKZ I called my birth parents mum and dad but as I got older the ██████████ FKX-FKZ insisted that I call them ██████████ and ██████████ I knew never to call my birth parents mum and dad in from of the ██████████ FKX-FKZ I always had to be home by seven thirty in the evening because part of the routine for the ██████████ FKX-FKZ was to go every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday night to the ██████████ Miners Club where they would get drunk.

██████████ and ██████████ leaving

53. I was about seven or eight when ██████████ and ██████████ left closely after each other. There was an incident when ██████████ and I squabbled and I ended up crying in order to ██████████ into trouble. ██████████ had hit me and so ██████████ FKZ beat him

up. He ran off and took up with his girlfriend [REDACTED] who is now his wife. He never came back to the [REDACTED]. I think that he was in his later teens.

54. [REDACTED] was used as a servant by the [REDACTED] and she would have to do all the housework. [REDACTED] became more independent when she got on a Youth Opportunities Programme. There was a small gap between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] leaving. [REDACTED] just packed a bag and left. I do remember going to visit her with my cousin [REDACTED]. After she had left I kept in touch. I always referred to [REDACTED] as my big sister.

**Abuse at the [REDACTED] foster care placement.**

55. You could tell that there was going to be domestic abuse as you could sense it in the air. It usually involved [REDACTED] being drunk. There were many instances of violence involving [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had no boundaries and would punish you and humiliate you at the same time. He wanted to exercise his control over you.
56. I recall one incident when I was in Primary four or five when [REDACTED] came home drunk. He was wearing a pair of steel capped boots. He kicked a glass coffee table and it smashed everywhere. He then went for [REDACTED] and I tried to go to her to protect her. She shouted for me to go and I knew that it wasn't going to end well. I ran out of the room and left [REDACTED] to deal with him.
57. [REDACTED] had her own reasons for staying in the marriage. She kept us on board to justify his behaviour to us. We were strictly told not to speak of what was happening with the locals or our school friends.
58. I was regularly beaten by both [REDACTED] but mostly by him. He would beat us for no apparent reason. I never once saw either of them raise their hands to beat [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] who were their own children. [REDACTED] would often use [REDACTED] as a threat to us. He beat me up badly just before I ran away for the only time.

59. On one occasion when I would be nine or ten years old I had come home from school at lunch time. I washed and dried the lunch dishes and accidentally smashed a cup. **FKZ** beat me badly and I had to compose myself and return back to school.
60. If you sat in his chair in the sitting room and he caught you he would hit you across the back of your head. I think that when I was a bit younger than five or six he would smack you with his hand. I recall him coming in drunk sometimes and taking the tray that his meal was served on and him throwing it up in the air. **FKZ** was served his dinner whilst sitting in the chair in the sitting room. He would put the fear of death into us and we would have to clean up the food and hope that he didn't lash out at you. On other occasions **FKZ** would pull down my trousers and pants and smack me on my bare backside with his hand, a slipper or sometimes a belt.
61. I remember an incident on Christmas day when I think that I had an argument with **██████████** and **FKZ** reacted by grabbing hold of me by the neck and throttling me while pushing me up the bedroom wall. I was completely off the floor. He was choking me and I couldn't breathe. I would be in primary school but I am not sure how old I was. I was sent on an errand to **██████████** house who was **FKX** sister. She lived nearby in **██████████**. I told her what had happened and she consoled me and then sent me back up the road to the **FKX-FKZ**. No one spoke about it.
62. There was an incident when I didn't finish a meal that I was eating. They put the meal into a bowl and put my hands behind my back. They made me kneel down like a dog and eat my meal out of the bowl. I can't remember if it was **FKX** or **FKZ** but it was very humiliating. I am not sure how old I was but I guess I would be about eight.
63. When I reached puberty I remember that **FKX** gave me a hand me down swim suit which was far too small from me. It was inappropriate and was for a much younger child. It failed to cover my body. I tried to tell her this but she wouldn't listen. It was see through when I went into the swimming baths. While **FKX** was spectating she repeatedly said that there was nothing wrong with the swim suit and

prompted me to explain what the problem was. I was very embarrassed and couldn't say so I was made to wear the swimsuit for school swimming lessons. She took great pleasure on humiliating me.

#### **Reporting of abuse.**

64. The **FKX-FKZ** warned us not to speak or tell anyone about what was happening at home. I recall on one occasion I confided in a friend and she told her mother and then it spread round until it got back to **FKX** and I was punished for that. You learned to keep your mouth shut. You were not able to tell the social worker as all the interviews were conducted in the presence of **FKZ**. I have never reported the abuse to the police.

#### **Leaving foster care at the **FKX-FKZ****

65. I turned eighteen and following an argument with **FKX** **FKZ** **FKZ** told my birth father that I was no longer welcome in their house. Whilst they went out to the Miner's Club they told me to pack a bag and leave. They were no longer receiving money for me being there which I believed was a factor. However the social work department had already mapped out my future as being with the **FKX-FKZ** family and I would no longer be their responsibility. At eighteen years of age I found myself pushed out into the world without any care.
66. **FKZ** called me a "walking abortion". At first I didn't know where to go as I felt that I couldn't go to my birth parents as apart from Sunday visits with them I didn't know anything about them. I was hoping to go to Edinburgh University in October and would be staying in the Halls of Residence at Pollock Halls. My big sister **FKZ** agreed to put me up until then.
67. I started a Masters of Art degree in History and Sociology at Edinburgh University. At first I spent a year at the Pollock Halls of Residence in Edinburgh. Out with term

times I was able to stay with [REDACTED]. The only contact I had with social work was when I went to their headquarters in Victoria Street in Edinburgh and tried to get my records. They knew what my situation was but I was now eighteen and no longer their responsibility. During the time I studied for my degree I was basically homeless and spent a lot of the time "sofa surfing". I had part time jobs and along with my student grant I managed to make ends meet.

68. I met my partner at this time and I spent a lot of time staying with him and his parents in West Lothian. He was also a student in Edinburgh. I think that I expected my birth parents to step in at this time but they never did. I had the impression from what they had told me that they blamed the local authority for me being placed in foster care. I was hoping that they would take on the role of parents but it didn't happen. My relationship with them became more fractious. I did also spend some time staying with my birth father in Bonnyrigg. I have no contact with them now.

#### **Life after foster care.**

69. When I was twenty one I fell pregnant and had to drop out of university in my fourth year. I had my son and when he was old enough I managed to complete my degree. I also managed to do a post graduate degree. I secured a housing association flat at this time.
70. It was early 2000 and with a young son to care for identified two choices. I could either go into teaching or into the world of IT. I elected to go into IT.
71. I lived on and off with my partner over the years. He was a constant in my life and we had four children together. It wasn't an ideal set up because my partner liked to exercise a control over me which I resented, however it was safety for me because he came from a proper family who behaved as normal families do.



72. I managed to get a graduate related job in IT. My children focussed my attention to provide a life I didn't have. My partner who was in the financial industry lost his job and I became the main earner in the family. With increased confidence from my career I managed to assume greater financial independence. Five years ago I made the decision to leave my partner.
73. My relationship with my partner was not good. There was violence by my partner towards me. I was living in a house in Livingston and on a number of occasions the police were called by the neighbours. On one occasion at the time of zero tolerance to domestic abuse my partner was charged with causing fear and alarm. He was the subject of an interim interdict and couldn't come to the house.
74. Before there was a court case it was ruled that there was not enough evidence to proceed against my partner. My partner tried to turn this against me saying that I had made it all up and he was innocent. It also meant that he was entitled to return to the house. He convinced his family that it was me that had the issues. Fortunately through a friend I was offered a house to rent in Clackmannanshire where I live today.

### **Impact**

75. I think that a person's identity is based on social construct and the context in which you find yourself. Depending on who is round about you and influencing you and if there is no one championing you there is no help or support. Luck would play a part in whether you succeeded. I was given so many mixed messages. You are made to feel unworthy and you do not fit in. It was part luck and part hard work and determination that helped me succeed.
76. I feel like a bit of an imposter sitting here today as I am aware that a lot of other people in foster care will have suffered a great deal more than me in later life,

battling addiction and mental health problems. My children tell me that I am very stoic and can deal with all the hard things in their lives as they arise.

77. When I was a teenager I used to self-abuse by hitting myself [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I have also put myself in dangerous situations by drinking too much alcohol using it as a coping mechanism. Underlying these behaviours is an enormous sense of a lack of worth.
78. I suffer from anxiety and panic attacks but I am very good at putting on a public persona. I have learned through my foster care how to hide things by being able to act normally. I find that being self-deprecating is a method I use all the time to appear normal. I recall at university I was mingling with all the other students on my course who came from privileged families. I was able to use my public persona to mix with them despite the social gulf between our childhoods.
79. I have always taken part in endurance challenges like running marathons where there is both a mental and physical challenge. You can't give up just because it's tough and you have to find something else inside you. I have felt suicidal and I have also self-harmed. I know that I have to be mentally strong not to pass that on to my own children so they can flourish and thrive.
80. My story opens with that horrific incident involving [REDACTED] as a baby being held up by his ankles but it has a relatively happy ending. I am a functioning productive adult. When my children get older they won't need me anymore and they won't need the financial support I provide so I think I won't be here. Life is painful and futile I have this black dog that I drag about with me. They mould I was given in life can't be changed.
81. I have never been diagnosed with depression although I have sought help when I had an issue with alcohol. My GP told me that I was having a breakdown and that I needed a break from work, which I took. I also received some counselling in my first year at university when I found the transition between my childhood and becoming a student a very hard thing to do.

82. I do find that I have difficulties with friendships as I tend to put up barriers to protect myself. I do have a number of friends that I keep up with but I always resort to keeping them at a distance. I stayed in my relationship with my partner because it was safe. Perception is reality and as long as you have a house and nice cars you always present as being happy, you are viewed as being an achiever, but people do not know what goes on behind closed doors. I never felt in a position to say no as I was always coerced or manipulated by my partner and other people round about me.

### **Records**

83. When I left foster care and would be about eighteen years old I went to the social work offices in Victoria Street in Edinburgh where I asked to see my records. All I left with was a verbal summary of my time in care and practically no information. In more recent times I thought about contacting Edinburgh Social Work Department when the Freedom of Information Act came into force but I do not feel strong enough to do it at this time.

### **Lessons to be learned**

84. Why was I not given to a childless couple who would have cared for me and nurtured me? The [FKX-FKZ] were able to create an image to the social work department of happy families which was not the case. Why did they just abandon me with them and fail to follow up on their placement. Why did they not ask about my experiences? Why did they not do unannounced visits instead of giving warning and conducting the visits in front of [FKZ] Why was there no scrutiny or due diligence

done? Why were the social workers not looking for evidence to corroborate with the school?

- 85. There has to be a consistent approach providing every child in foster care with a trusted person to speak with. People who are brought up in a loving family are praised, nurtured and supported by default. Children in foster care deserve to have the same opportunity to succeed in life. Luck should not be a factor in whether a foster child becomes a well-rounded adult.
- 86. Nowadays, it appears that it is very difficult to be considered for foster parenting. Children in care need a life-long advocate. I would consider becoming a mentor because I feel that I can show that you can come out the other side.

**Other information**

- 87. I have never considered legal action and have not contacted a lawyer to take legal advice. I just wish someone from social work would sit down with me and explain what they did and for what reasons. They fundamentally failed me.
- 88. 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..... 25.11.19 .....