

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FGK

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is FGK My date of birth is 1943. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

EXPERIENCES AS A FOSTER CARER

Background

2. I was born in Edinburgh. I joined the army as a teenager but left after about five months and thereafter I spent my adult life working as a greenkeeper at a number of golf clubs
I married my wife FGL in 1969 or 70 or something like that and we had two sons who are who is 43 or 44 and who is 40 or 41 and was born after we moved to England.
3. We also have an adopted son called who we call who is 43 or 44 though has a mental age of about ten after being brain damaged as a result of assaults from his birth mother. We adopted him after fostering him for a number of years and it was after we moved to England. My wife and I are now separated. After I retired I worked for a number of years as the head gardener in a nearby hospital.

Becoming a Foster Carer

4. My wife and I were foster parents from about 1970 when our son was about one year old. The golf course we lived on was out on its own and we didn't have any

neighbours and we thought that fostering children would give him some company. Without friends [REDACTED] tended to be on his own and wasn't speaking much and we thought the presence of other children would help him, hence one of the reasons we went for fostering.

5. It took us about three years to become foster parents. We were visited on numerous occasions to ensure that both us and the house were suitable for fostering. I assume we would have filled out an application form and it was social workers we dealt with but I don't recall which office we dealt with. We then fostered for four or five years, maybe longer.
6. My wife dealt most with the social workers. The social workers seemed to change regularly and we rarely saw the same one more than twice.

Training

7. Although my wife and I were interviewed we didn't require to have any qualifications but our backgrounds were looked into and I assume we had to supply references. I have a memory of seeking a reference from a doctor or somebody of that ilk. We were given no formal training to become foster parents.
8. We were given no guidance on how to discipline the children we fostered nor how to deal with difficult children who had perhaps been neglected or abused. I would say that the way we were taken on as foster parents was quite appropriate and I felt the checks carried out were necessary.
9. While we did not receive any written guidance I imagine there would have been some verbal guidance though I expect that it would have been given to my wife as I was out working constantly. The social workers did help us if we ran in to problems. For instance there was one child's grandmother who was causing problems and was trying to get her daughter to be more involved with her child but this was disruptive to our house. We spoke to the social workers and they sorted it out.

10. I never thought of being a foster parent as a job or as us being employed to do it. I just felt that we were looking after the children who we saw as part of our family for the short time that they were with us. I thought our own experience of being parents helped prepare us for looking after foster children. I suppose being a foster parent was both a profession and a vocation. It was something we enjoyed doing and we both found it a positive experience.

Foster Care Arrangements

11. When we first started fostering we were hoping to look after children that were of age with our son [REDACTED] but we were also asked to look after numerous babies, sometimes just overnight. I don't recall a specific social worker being allocated to us. Having said that I always felt the support they gave us was quite adequate as far as I was concerned.

Financial Support

12. I think we were given some financial support but my wife dealt with that sort of thing. I don't recall any other material support but we seemed to get by adequately and the kids never went short.

Your Foster Home Household

13. Our house was the above the clubhouse [REDACTED] Golf Club and you entered via the rear of the clubhouse. The house would normally have been used by the [REDACTED] but he wanted to stay in his own house so it was offered to us as it was lying empty and they were worried about break-ins.
14. The house was all on one level and had three bedrooms, a kitchen, a living room and a bathroom. It had a great big long lobby with all the windows looking out onto the golf course and it was a nice big house. It was only myself, FGL [REDACTED] and our son [REDACTED] who were there prior to us fostering children.

Children Fostered

15. I don't recall exactly how many children we fostered but I would say between six and eight long-term for between several months and two to three years and numerous other children for short periods, sometimes only overnight. Three of the children we fostered long-term were three sisters called FGO, and who we had for maybe two or three years.
16. Another child I recall well was called who was about seven or eight and who made quite an impression on me. It was hard for us when he was returned to his parents. He had been traumatized when he arrived after seeing his dad stab his mother but he came to trust us and he did not want to go back to his parents but social workers insisted he had to.
17. That was hard to see and I felt so sorry that he had gone back to his parents but his dad was now out of prison and his mum was out of hospital. I think it would have been better for the parents to visit him a few times while he stayed with us. I think the most children we had at any one time was five.

Placement Preparation

18. Once or twice we did meet the children before fostering them but, as often as not, they would just be dropped off to us after a social worker phoned us. On one occasion we were asked to take a wee boy from Orkney as his sister was staying with us and this made it so much easier for their mother to visit them. I have no idea how the children were matched with us and I assumed it was just a case of they were put with people who were able to take them.
19. Whether the information we were given was adequate or not I couldn't say but we just worked with what we had and the children always seemed to settle in with us very quickly. They seemed to take it in their stride. Whether or not things could be improved as to how the children were or are allocated to foster parents I couldn't say.

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

20. My wife dealt with the daily routine for the children as I would be off to work early. When I got a break at 9:30 am the kids would be off to school. I tended not to see much of them during the day but would see them at tea time and before they went to bed. The children called us Uncle **FGK** and Auntie **FGL**.
21. My wife and I had a bedroom but I don't recall what the sleeping arrangements were for the kids we fostered though we always seemed to have plenty of space and I think we bought bunkbeds for them. If we were looking after a baby they would sleep in a cot in our room. I have no recollection of bed wetting being a problem with any of the children and I think if it had been a problem then **FGL** would have mentioned it to me. None of the children did chores about the house.

Washing and Bathing

22. The children could have a bath whenever they wanted but when they were younger my wife would bath them and wash their hair. I took nothing to do with the bathing of the children.

Clothes and Shoes

23. My wife brought clothes for the children. We weren't exactly well-off and with so many kids we couldn't always afford new clothes but my wife would get hold of good quality second hand clothes. It was my wife who did all the washing of the clothes and ironed them. Each child had their own clothes and they didn't need to share.

Mealtimes

24. My wife was a very good cook and I don't recall any of the children having a problem with food and my recollection is that they always cleared their plates. The kids would normally have eaten by the time I got in from work. On a Saturday my brother would

come over. He wanted to be a chef and he would let the kids help him make loads of cakes and the table would be filled with them.

Leisure Time

25. The kids had plenty of toys in the house though never had anything when they first arrived. Sometimes we would take them down to the promenade [REDACTED] and we tried to take them out every night unless it was raining. The kids also went out and played in the nearby rugby and football pitches. I don't recall there being any books or comics but I'm sure such things would have been in the house.
26. We did have a TV but the children tended not to be interested in it. We did go to the cinema but not often and the kids weren't old enough to join clubs though FGL [REDACTED] sometimes took the girls to dance classes in the evenings. I don't know if the children got pocket money but I do recall that if they wanted something then we would buy it for them, like sweets and ice-cream [REDACTED].

Trips and Holidays

27. We took the kids to places like Alton Towers and Dunbar. We never did any overnight stays anywhere simply because we couldn't afford it but they seemed to enjoy the days out.

Schooling

28. At first we had a terrible time trying to get some of the kids into the school in [REDACTED] It was a quite updated school and FGL [REDACTED] had a right dust-up with the headmaster as he thought they shouldn't come to his school as he thought they were below the accepted standard and weren't good enough for his school. My wife wouldn't accept this and after an argument with the headmaster he allowed them entry.
29. It's possible that the children's education was affected by being fostered but that was because they were going from pillar to post at times and having to start again in

different places. My wife went to the parent's meetings and would help the children with their homework.

Healthcare

30. The kids were registered with our local doctor and FGL dealt with that side of things though I think the children were fairly healthy. There was an occasion where one of the children had to get a Barium Meal for a chest problem but that quickly cleared up. I don't know if they were given regular health checks and we weren't required to keep medical records concerning them and while I don't recall if they ever went to a dentist they certainly had access to one.

Christmas and Birthdays

31. In those days in Scotland you didn't necessarily get Christmas Day off and I was always working on Christmas Day but, from where I worked on the grounds, I would see the children opening the presents that FGL and I had bought for them and would go up at my break times to see them. We also bought them presents for their birthdays though we didn't tend to take them out the way parents would these days.

Discipline

32. We never did have a discipline issue with the children as 99.9% of the time the children were good and did what they were told. On an odd occasion I would maybe give one of them a row but that was rare. All I would have to say is "I believe you've been naughty" and they would say "Sorry Uncle FGK".
33. We were never given any advice on how to discipline the children but neither FGL or me ever had to physically discipline the children and I can't think of any sort of behaviour by the children that would ever have made that necessary. As such there would have been nothing to keep note of with regards to records on discipline.

Relationship with Foster Children

34. I tended to be a bit aloof with the children because I was always working but FGL showed them lots of love and they always knew they could come to me to talk about anything and knew that I would always help and protect them. The foster children always got on well with our son and loved because he was so much younger.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

35. The mother would often say that she would come and take the girls out but as often as not she failed to appear. We would have them all dressed and they would sit and watch the buses come and go every half hour from the window but after three buses had left we would have to say to the girls that she wasn't coming. She would phone to say she was coming but wouldn't phone to say she wasn't.
36. The girls were always disappointed when she failed to appear. On the odd occasion she did come I would sometimes take their mother home late in the evening. She was actually a pleasant woman to speak to and when we moved to England and the children moved back with their mother we thought everything would be good for them.
37. I don't know if the social workers encouraged us to keep the children in contact with their parents but I would assume they did as that would make sense.

Visitors

38. The social workers changed constantly and I think it was whoever was on duty that would come to the house. They would speak to us and the kids and normally came after tea as the kids would be back from school by that time. They often spoke to the children on their own which we were happy about. Certainly we had no fears of the social workers talking to the children on their own.

Review of Care/placement

39. There were reviews on the children once a year where the social workers would complete a form about how each child was doing. I had no input with that and FGL dealt with such things. Similarly, if there were any hearings about any of the children it was FGL that would attend.

Records

40. We didn't keep any records as far as I'm aware and I have no recollection of anybody saying that we should.

Leaving the Care System

41. One year I was offered the job of head groundsman in England and we decided to move there. The house we were given in England wasn't suitable for us to continue fostering other than fostering who we later adopted. This meant that we would no longer be able to look after the foster children and we spoke to social workers. The social workers said that FGO and could move back in with their mother.
42. Two other children, a brother and sister from Orkney, also returned to their mother. Social workers were involved in all of these moves. There seemed to be no preparation for the children leaving though their mothers did visit the children prior to them leaving us and at no time would the children have felt unwanted. They all seemed happy to be going back to their mothers.
43. After we moved down to England we went to Knaresborough one time and sought out the girls to see how they were. However, a neighbour said that they were now in care and we found out that they had been put into a Dr Barnardo's Home in Harrogate. We decided that since we had already come that far we may as well go the extra distance to see them.

44. When we went there FGO and came running out to see us. They told us how miserable they were there and asked if we were there to take them home. By this time FGO had already finished school and had written to us asking if she could come for holiday. We had to leave the girls at Dr Barnardo's and just wished we could have taken them away with us. It was so sad the way things had worked out for them.

Complaints

45. I never came across anything that concerned making a complaint about how the social workers dealt with us or the children. The social workers always seemed to be undermanned and run off their feet and I feel that, in general, if the kids were happy the social workers just left us to our own devices. I always felt that the children we looked after were happy in our care and both my wife and I enjoyed looking after them.

Convictions

Convictions

46. I have never been convicted of any offence concerning the abuse of a child.

Allegations of Abuse

Awareness of Abuse

47. I am not aware of any child that was fostered by myself and my wife FGL being the subject of any abuse whatsoever.

Reporting of Abuse

48. If any of the foster children in our care felt that anything was wrong they could have spoken to any of the social workers, or to us or to the children of people who visited us regularly. They could also speak to their mothers if and when they visited. We never heard of anything that suggested any of the children had any complaints about staying with us.

Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no Criminal Conviction

49. If a child was ever to make a complaint to us I think we would have taken it to the social workers ourselves but that never happened. We did speak to the social workers about one boy who was causing problems and running away which was causing trouble in the house and, after the police brought him back to our door, it became too much for us. We contacted the social workers who came and took him away.

Reporting to Police/Criminal Proceedings

50. I have never had a complaint made against me in relation to fostering children.

Prior Statements

51. The police contacted me a few months ago and I gave a statement to them in Cheadle Heath Police Office in Stockport. However, my solicitor was present and he told me to say "No Comment" to all the questions put to me. I didn't like doing that as I wanted to answer their questions and put over my side of the story but I felt I had to follow my lawyer's advice. That was the only statement I have ever given to the police.
52. I have to say that I was very surprised by the allegations that were being made against me and FGL and, of all the children we fostered, the [REDACTED] were the last ones we thought would have made such allegations. They always seemed to enjoy their

time with us and FGL and I doted on them. I have no idea what has happened to any police report about FGL and I and I don't know whether they believed us or not.

Specific Allegations Against you that have been made to the Inquiry

53. I am aware that FGO has provided a statement to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, within which she makes a number of allegations against both my ex-wife FGL and I. I have been provided with a copy of the statement and note that FGO states: *FGL was a really horrible person. She showed us no affection whatsoever. She had the most terrible temper and used to scream at us all the time ... The slightest thing would set her off and she'd go completely insane and beat us. She would put us over her knee, pull our knickers down and hammer us with her hands ... FGK did it as well. It was literally any excuse and they would have us over their knee ... My sister is convinced that FGK got a sexual pleasure out of it'*
54. I can say that FGO was never sanctioned or punished by me and I never abused her. The girls were never spanked and it beggars belief that she suggests that I may have got some sort of sexual pleasure out of such a thing. It simply didn't happen and the girls were never physically chastised. I wonder if the allegations could be some ploy to get something out of us. I just don't know.
55. FGO adds: *"We were basically unpaid slaves. FGL was always finding chores for us to do when we came home from school and would make us sweep up and clean the floors. We had to do whatever she decided we had to do, basically all the household chores. One of the worst things she would do was make us go shopping and we would get hammered if we didn't get something or we got something wrong."*
56. That is also untrue. I would like to add to simply just saying that it's not true but I can't. I just can't believe that she is saying something like that. The girls didn't do chores and if they went to the shops to do shopping it would always have been with my wife. It

would have been too dangerous to send the girls out to the shops on their own. The shops were too far away and the roads were too busy.

57. FGO also says in her statement *'I ran away ... when I got back, FGL pulled my knickers down and slapped the hell out of me. I remember her shouting things like, 'how dare you cause all this trouble' and 'no wonder I don't like you'. One of the boys, the one I mentioned earlier, did run away but none of the girls ever did.*
58. In another part of her statement FGO says: *'I remember I was so hungry one night and I sneaked into the kitchen and took a slice of bread and put vinegar on it to make it taste of something. FGL caught me and slapped me so hard on the face that I literally went flying across the kitchen. She shouted and bawled at me, calling me a thieving, little bitch and screeching how dare I steal food from them'*
59. None of what is being alleged is true and FGO statement comes across like a novel and I just wonder if this is because we were unable to take the girls out of Dr Barnardo's all those years ago. I can say that the passage of time has not affected my memory and I would have remembered any of this if it had happened but it simply didn't. It's all lies. Maybe after all these years she has taken some sort of revenge for something that was out-with our control.
60. Of the three girls I would have said that FGO was a schemer and was the boss of the other two sisters and they followed what she said. She was older than the other two and you could see she would be thinking if you spoke to her. I fully accept that, if what FGO has said was true, then it would constitute abuse but it simply isn't true and none of it happened.

Helping the Inquiry

61. I think most foster parents went down the same route that FGL and I did and I'm sure they all have had good days and bad days. As long as social workers keep in regular contact with foster parents and the children then things should be fine.

Other information

62. 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.

FGK

Signed.....

Dated... 18th MARCH 2022