

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ESE

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is ESE I have always been known by that name. My date of birth is 1954. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mother's name is and my father's name is I was born at home at Glasgow and lived there with my parents and siblings. I have three older brothers called EEZ and EEZ is known as EEZ was the oldest, but he has now passed away. My younger siblings are EEY and I do have another sister called but she was born while I was in care and I didn't find out about her until I was returned to my mother's care in 1966.
3. My father initially worked when I was a child. He was a welder to trade, but started losing his eyesight as a result of the job. When he came out of work, he collected scrap metal to bring some money into the house. My mother didn't work. She looked after the children. Life at home wasn't easy and it wasn't very nice. I remember times when my siblings and I would cry due to hunger. I really don't know how we managed, but we did.
4. My family moved to Glasgow just before I started primary school. My brothers EEZ and I all went to Nicholson Street Primary School in the Gorbals. I don't think my brother was at the same school. He might have already started

high school. Whether we actually went to school would depend on my mum getting us up in the morning and whether there was anything to eat in the house. If there was nothing to eat, we didn't go to school. Back then, there were truant officers. I remember my mum used to make us stay quiet, when the truant officer came to the door, so she could pretend no one was home. There was one occasion when [REDACTED] accidentally answered the door to the truant officer and said "My mummy says she's not in".

5. My siblings and I went into care in the early 1960s. I think it was 1961 and I would have been six or seven at the time. A social worker called Mr Meldrum turned up at the house one day and took us all into care. All seven of us were taken to the Social Work offices at John Street, Glasgow and then we were separated. Me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were taken by taxi to Mugdock Bank Children's Home. I had no idea where my other siblings were going.

Mugdock Bank Children's Home, Milngavie

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

6.



Gryffe Children's Home, Bridge of Weir

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Foster Care with [EFA-EFB] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] **Tiree**

14. We were placed in foster care with [EFA-EFB] [REDACTED] [EFB] [REDACTED] was known as [EFB] [REDACTED]. I think they were both in their early fifties. [EFB] [REDACTED] and [EFA] [REDACTED] were very rugged. [EFB] [REDACTED] was a bit bald on top and always wore a flat cap. [EFA] [REDACTED] had curly grey hair.

15. They had a son of their own called [REDACTED]. He was a year or so older than [REDACTED] and was probably about fourteen. He wasn't a very nice boy. [REDACTED] could be very cruel. I remember while we lived there, he learned how to manipulate the radio and speak

through it to make it sound like a radio broadcast. He would use this to make up stories about my family and pretend to have spoken to my mum and say through the radio that she didn't care about us or want us back.

16. The EFA-EFB lived in a big white house, on a working farm, in a part of Tiree called [REDACTED]. The house had three bedrooms upstairs. EFB and EFA had one room. [REDACTED] had a room of his own. My brothers and I shared a bedroom above the kitchen. It had three single beds in it. I remember the stairs up to the bedroom were very steep. [REDACTED] saved me from falling down them a few times because I used to sleep walk. I think this developed when I was in Tiree as a result of being punished for wetting the bed and I was unconsciously getting out of bed to try to reach the toilet in the night.
17. On the ground floor, there was a living room and a big kitchen with a range in it. The range provided the heating for the house as well as a couple of coal fires. There was no inside toilet. The toilet was out the back door, through the yard, in a brick built room. Once you used the toilet, you had to empty the bucket into the cesspit, clean it and put it back. There was no hot water while we were living with the EFA-EFB. My brother EEZ remembers them getting hot water in just before we left to go home.
18. The EFA-EFB had lived all their lives on Tiree and some of EFB's siblings lived nearby. One of EFB's brothers, [REDACTED] owned [REDACTED] and EFB's sister, [REDACTED] owned a big [REDACTED] house just along the road. It felt like the whole island was related to one another and we were the odd ones out. The islanders all looked after each other, but not outsiders. That's what we felt like. If you even tried to get involved in a conversation with anyone, you were told to shut up and be quiet.
19. We called EFB 'uncle' and we called EFA 'auntie'. EFB was a [REDACTED]. The ships [REDACTED] would come into Tiree and EFB would meet them at the pier [REDACTED]. EFB would then go backwards and forwards with the tractor and trailer to bring [REDACTED] back to the farm. EFA didn't work. She looked after the house and the children.

Routine at the EFA-EFB

Day to Day Routine/Chores

20. As soon as we arrived at the EFA-EFB we were put straight to work on the farm. Each day, we had a number of chores to do. We would get up at six in the morning to clean out the byres and pens. We would then walk up to the field to bring the cattle in, dry them off, wash their udders, and milk them by hand. We had to put the milk into galvanised steel buckets and leave it until the next morning. Then, you would scrape the cream off the top and once a week we would churn into butter by hand. After we had milked the cows, we took them back out to the field.
21. We then had breakfast and went to school. After school, we had to collect the cows and milk them and take them back out to the field again. We had to see to the cows at the weekends too, but there were more chores at the weekends. We had to build haystacks for the winter months and pick vegetables from the fields. I remember using a sickle to chop the roots and leaves off the vegetables and a scythe to cut the hay for the cows.
22. We also had to help EFB with . We would fill at the back of the house and weigh them for him. and I did the brunt of the work on the farm. EEZ had to do his share, but not as much heavy labour as and I. We didn't receive any pocket money for the work we did.
23. We ate lunch at school and EFA made our main meal in the evening. We went to bed very early, most nights it was still light outside. We had a bath once a week on a Sunday. The EFA-EFB had a tin bath in front of the range. Everyone would get into the bath one after the other. The water wasn't changed for each person. I found it embarrassing having a bath in front of everyone else. We used carbolic soap and we were given a face cloth to wash and a towel to dry ourselves.

Mealtimes/Food

24. We ate our meals with the family. If you were given something you didn't like, you just had to eat it. There was no choice. You weren't allowed to leave the table until you had finished. At the time, I couldn't stand liver and it made me feel physically sick. They would give me liver and onions quite a lot and they would sit and watch me until I ate it all. Sometimes I managed to stick it in my pocket and feed it to the dog later on. I'm sure if EEZ didn't like something, he would be given something else. He was always treated a little more reasonably because of his epilepsy. There were a few occasions where we were sent to bed without dinner as a punishment for something.

Clothing

25. I don't remember taking any personal possessions to Tiree. When we arrived all we had were the clothes on our backs. I think we mainly wore short trousers and wellies. EFA would knit a lot and she knitted socks and jumpers for us, so we got a winter jumper.
26. I remember that someone used to come to the EFA-EFB house once a year to measure us. It was a different person every year. We would then be given new coats, jackets, jumpers and trousers. We would get a sou'wester coat and hat. I'm sure that the person who visited came from the mainland. It may have been someone from the Social Work Department, but I can't be sure. We couldn't have spoken to them about how we were being treated by the EFA-EFB as we were never left alone with anyone without EFA, EFB or both of them being there. We would have been severely punished if we said anything we shouldn't have.

Schooling

27. We went to Primary School which only had one teacher, called Jeanie, and two classes. There were just under thirty kids at the school. Most of the kids could speak Gaelic. My brothers and I couldn't, so we had to learn to speak and write in Gaelic. My

brothers and I weren't very well treated by the other kids, but coming from Glasgow, we could look after ourselves and give as good as we got.

28. We always seemed to get the blame for things because we weren't local kids. If the teacher told **EFA** and **EFB** that we had misbehaved, we would be punished at home. The teacher wasn't someone we could talk to, about the way we were treated by **EFA** and **EFB**, because she was friends with them.

Religious instruction

29. **EFA** and **EFB** weren't particularly religious, but I did go to Sunday school which was held in a building behind our primary school. It looked a little bit like a church. It was an escape for me. It was a day away from punishment and work on the farm. **EEZ** wasn't allowed to go in case he took an epileptic fit and **EEZ** had to stay back to work on the farm. I can't remember our Sunday school teacher's name. It wasn't our normal primary school teacher, Jeanie. The Sunday school teacher wasn't as bad as Jeanie.

Healthcare

30. I don't remember getting immunisations or regular check-ups while living with the **EFA-EFB**. If we needed medical attention for a specific reason, the doctor would come to the house. I remember the doctor visiting me when I had shingles. I think he was from the mainland. I had to put camomile lotion on my skin and when it dried, my skin became very itchy. **EFA** had an idea to make me stop scratching. She poured iodine on my sores. I had open blisters and I remember it burning. I cried for hours. I had shingles more than once and this was **EFA** remedy each time. Coincidentally, I later found out that the doctor who visited me in Tiree was the brother of my doctor at home in Glasgow.

Bed wetting

31. I was still wetting the bed when I lived in Tiree with the **EFA-EFB**. I remember being so scared of being punished, that if I thought I was going to wet the bed, I just wouldn't

go to bed. I would sleep on a sheet on the floor with a blanket over me. I would rather pee on the floor than in the bed.

32. If I did wet the bed, I was taken out into the open yard where they had a bath and a pump to bring the water up from underground. The EFA-EFB would fill the bath with freezing cold water, put the wet sheets in and make me get in too. I had to tramp the sheets and then sit down to wash myself. They even did this in the middle of winter.

Leisure time

33. On the very few occasions we weren't working on the farm, we got to play cricket or something similar. It was never particularly enjoyable because would play with us and he would try to hit us with the ball. On one occasion, he hit EEZ on the hand with a cricket ball and EEZ lost two of his finger nails. There wasn't a lot of leisure time and I don't remember being taken on any trips or holidays with the EFA-EFB. There was one occasion I went with EFB to the Gallowgate in Glasgow, but that was to deliver retired cattle to slaughter.

Birthdays and Christmas

34. EEZ and I were never treated like part of the family. We were treated very differently to their son, He got birthday and Christmas presents. I remember him getting an electric Hornby train set one year. We didn't get birthday or Christmas presents. We didn't have any toys or books. I don't even remember our birthdays ever being celebrated. We were there to work. We were free labour to them and nothing more.

Visitors/Family contact

35. The only outside visitor I remember was the person who came to measure us for new clothes and the doctor. I don't remember a social worker ever coming to see us in Tiree and we had no contact at all with our parents or siblings. We didn't even receive letters or phone calls from home.

36. We didn't know where our siblings were living until my brother [REDACTED] turned up at the same secondary school as [REDACTED]. It turned out that [REDACTED] EEEY [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had also been placed with a foster family, the EMMY-EVI [REDACTED] in a different part of Tiree. All that time, they had been a twenty minute walk away from us and we had no idea. We only came to learn of their whereabouts by accident. After we found out that our siblings were living in Tiree, things didn't change. We were not allowed to visit them.

Abuse at The EFA-EFB [REDACTED]

37. My brother's and I were regularly beaten by the EFA-EFB [REDACTED] Particularly by EFB [REDACTED] We were even punished for things we didn't do as their son, [REDACTED] would make up stories to get us in trouble. If he did something wrong, he would blame us. If EFB [REDACTED] thought we had done something wrong we would be told to go into the byre and we knew what was coming next. He would take his belt off, lean us over the wall and give us four to six swift ones. He would hit us on the backside, over our clothes, or on our legs. We were usually wearing short trousers so our legs were particularly vulnerable. I remember getting the belt for trying to run away once.
38. EFB [REDACTED] used to fight tooth and nail with his son, [REDACTED] They would get into disagreements regularly and I saw them get into a physical fight a couple of times. EFB [REDACTED] would punch [REDACTED] hard. You could hear the punches. [REDACTED] would give as good as he got. I believe [REDACTED] went on to train as a teacher and became a headmaster at a school in [REDACTED]
39. On one occasion, EFA [REDACTED] accused EEZ [REDACTED] of stealing a box of matches from her. The three of us denied it, but she didn't believe us and said she wanted the truth. She put a poker in the fire to heat. When she took it out it was red hot and she told us that if we were telling the truth it wouldn't burn us when we grabbed it. She held out the poker and I almost grabbed it. Luckily, [REDACTED] pulled my arm away and shouted at her. She swung the red hot poker at him, but missed. Later that night she found the matches she accused EEZ [REDACTED] of stealing.

Leaving The EFA-EFB

40. EEZ and I left the EFA-EFB in 1966. I would be coming up for twelve. No one spoke to us about leaving and we only found out when a social worker turned up to escort us back on the plane to Glasgow. I can't remember the social worker's name, but she was a bit of a battle-axe. My other four siblings, EEY and who had been living with another family on Tiree, were also on the plane.
41. I later found out that very shortly after we left the EFA-EFB they fostered another two children. They clearly knew in advance that we were leaving and had made arrangements to replace us. They had been fostering for many years and this was a way to save them from having to employ anyone else to work on the farm.
42. My brother EEZ later on showed me a copy of a front page of a that had a picture of the EFA-EFB with foster children. The article described how good the EFA-EFB were in taking in so many foster children to live with them. The picture showed both EFA and EFB at the dinner table with the children they were currently fostering.

Life after being in care

43. After leaving Tiree, all seven of us were returned to my parent's care. My mum and dad had moved address, but were still living in Glasgow. I hadn't seen them, or had any contact with them, since I went into care in 1961. I found out that they had another daughter called So I had another sister that I didn't know about and had never met. I also found out that my mum spent six months in prison for child neglect while my siblings and I were in foster care.
44. Life at home with my parents was tough. There were ten of us in a tiny house. It was just one small room and a kitchen. We all slept on mattresses on the floor. There weren't enough blankets to go around so we used coats and jackets as blankets at

night. It was horrendous and there was no social work involvement at all after we came back from Tiree. It was also strange being back with my other siblings who I hadn't seen in a number of years. I vaguely remembered [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] My sisters were very young when we were taken into care, so I didn't really remember them or know them.

45. My father died in 1966, not long after we came back from Tiree. It was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at the time and it was said to have been a drowning accident. That wasn't quite true. The [REDACTED] it because my mum was widowed with eight children. He actually died while poaching with my grandfather. The river bank gave way and my dad drowned, my grandfather survived.
46. After leaving Tiree, I went back to primary school in Glasgow. I went to Dalmarnock Primary in Bridgeton. I was way behind all of the other kids because all we focused on in Tiree was learning Gaelic. They hadn't taught us arithmetic or science or anything like that. I started secondary school when I was thirteen and left school at fourteen.
47. I got a job as an apprentice carpet fitter and after that, I went from job to job. I ended up in the Army for nine years. I got married at eighteen and my wife was sixteen years old. In fact, we married on her sixteenth birthday. We had three children and were married nearly thirty years before we separated and divorced in 2011. I remarried two years later and have a step-son from that marriage.
48. I went on to work in hotel management in various hotels in Glasgow. It was a job I enjoyed and I was good at it. I later worked in events security and I did that until I stopped working approximately seven years ago due to ill health. My health went downhill very rapidly and I found it very difficult because I had always been very active.

Impact

49. I vowed never to treat anyone the way that I was treated while in care. Ultimately, I think everything I went through made me determined to be a better person. I was able

to tolerate more, which was useful especially when my kids were young. They didn't get disciplined in the way that I did. I've never spoken to them about my childhood.

50. I've remained close to my siblings, but we didn't really talk about what we all went through in Tiree. I could speak to [REDACTED] and EEZ about our experiences. I'm sure [REDACTED] EEY [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] spoke to each other about their experiences, but we didn't share them with each other. All I know is that they had a bad experience too.

51. EEZ went back to Tiree to see the house we lived in with the EFA-EFB I've never wanted to go back as, even in my adult life, certain things would be triggers for me and take me back to my time there. I believe my brother, EEZ has obtained some of his records, but I've never wanted to see mine.

Lessons to be Learned

52. I think the care system needs to be more open and transparent. If children are being placed in foster care, there needs to be someone experienced put in charge of the oversight of their care and who is an adult for them to talk to. That needs to be coupled with regular checks on children, perhaps by someone who has been in the care system themselves, as they will know exactly what to look for to tell if a child is being mistreated.

Other Information

53. 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. ESE [REDACTED]

Dated 22/4/22