

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FBV

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FBV My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I am the second oldest child of a family of ten. My brothers and sisters are FBS born in 1947, 1950, FCZ 1952, FDB 1953, 1955, 1957, 1958 and 1959. Both and are now deceased. was given away as a baby to the family.
3. My mother's name was but was always known as. My father was in the army for many years, but after that he was mainly unemployed.
4. We stayed in Stirling until I was about five or six years old. We then moved around a lot in different houses in Dundee. The last house I was in was at.
5. While we moved around I attended nine different schools. They were. We would be isolated in the classes and given algebra or something. We would tell the teachers we didn't know what we were doing and their response was not to worry as we would only be there for a couple of months. When we were at school we were often treated like gypsies by the other pupils. This was because we were always moving around.

6. Before mum left I remember I broke [REDACTED]'s thumb. When dad found out he hit me with his belt. He had me strip naked and I was running around trying to get away without success. Other times when my uncles visited we were made to stand and hold our stomachs tight. My dad and uncles would then punch us in the stomachs and laugh and smoke cigarettes as we all choked from the blows. After any of us were beaten by my dad, mum would cuddle us to try and make us feel better. There was no joy in our life in the house.
7. I know my dad was also abusing my older sister [REDACTED] I saw the things he was doing to her. The rest of the family talk about some of the things he used to do to her.
8. My mother left the family when I was around nine years old. When she left I think that was when the social work department got involved with us.

Foster care – [REDACTED]

9. Before we were placed with the [REDACTED] family for foster care, we were moved into the children's shelter at Crichton Place. That was a big building like an old hospital with lots of beds. When I went there I think there were only six of who were placed there.
10. I don't remember much about the shelter. What I can remember is that we were fed there. That was so much different from my life at home because I only remember being constantly hungry.
11. We were not at the shelter for long, maybe a couple of weeks. The teacher at the school we were at just told us we were going to live in Fife. We were moved from Dundee, by the school teacher, to [REDACTED] when school finished that day.
12. The woman who fostered us there was Mrs [REDACTED] I don't know her first name. She was about sixty years old then. She always wore an apron, like an old woman. She had three children all aged between twenty and thirty. They were [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The address was [REDACTED]

13. The first day we arrived I saw it was a big house and it was near the sea front. At the back of the house there was an extension to the house there and a small room in the extension. All six of us were kept in that small room. There was no paper on the walls and no carpets or anything on the floor. There were no toys or anything.

Routine at BGC [REDACTED]

14. The six of us also had to sleep in one bed. Some of the kids had problems with bed wetting. Later, because I was up early, a bunk bed was put into the room, which meant no one else was woken when I got up. Mrs BGC [REDACTED] put a tub in the back living room and all six of us had to use that for a wash once a week.
15. We weren't allowed anywhere else in the house except the living room. That was where we were allowed to watch television. It was only after tea that we were allowed to watch it, but we had to watch it from under the table. We would then be sent to bed about seven or eight o'clock.
16. The bed in the small room had no blankets to keep us warm. We had to cover ourselves with our coats. There was a big orange rubber sheet on the bed to help protect it from the bed wetting. Mrs BGC [REDACTED] would take it off the bed each morning and hang it out to dry and put it back on at night. When I got the bunk bed I always woke up with a dry bed so I knew it was not me that was having the problem.
17. I did some chores while I was there. I cleaned and set up the fireplace in the main living room, prior to it being lit. FCZ [REDACTED] did the polishing of the bannisters and the staircase. All of us had to collect wood from the beach, usually on a Saturday. We would put it into piles and then carry it back to the house and chop it ready for the fire. Sometimes if there was not enough wood we would have to steal some coal from the neighbours.

18. I remember I was given a second hand bike to help me and it was around that time I had an accident. I was riding it one day down to the shops and I hit a wall. I was taken to the hospital in Dundee and sent home afterwards. For a short time I was allowed to sleep in one of the beds upstairs. I got out of the bed to go downstairs for something to eat and shortly after I collapsed. I ended up in hospital in Aberdeen to have a clot removed from my brain. I was lucky because there was a guy in the area from America at the time and he did the operation. I stayed in hospital after that for two or three weeks. Apart from this one time I am not aware of any other time I needed any medical attention.
19. Mrs **BGC** had lodgers and they stayed in the rooms upstairs. There was an older guy there and we would all sit on the floor and he used to tell us stories. He also took us to the beach and would show us how to beach comb for pennies.

Food

20. In the morning I got up and went through to the kitchen. There was an old fold down unit we had to stand at to eat our food. I would have some breakfast, probably corn flakes or toast and then out the door for work. I had a job delivering rolls so I was always up first, usually about five o'clock.
21. I would sit in the back of an old Morris Minor, driven by the bakers wife and I would jump out the back and deliver the rolls. I did this seven days a week and was paid twelve and six for this. Mrs **BGC** would take this money saying I would get pocket money but I never did. Sometimes, but not often, she would give me half a crown and I would go to the cinema. I would have been about eleven or twelve about this time.
22. Mrs **BGC** would have all the crusts from the leftovers from toast gathered and have us throw them out for the seagulls at the beach. Sometimes we would steal some of the crusts for ourselves and one time my sister **FCZ** got caught. Mrs **BGC** put some soap powder on a stale scone and made her eat it. The food that she did give us was never any good.

Clothes

23. When we were still at the children's shelter we were taken out by the staff and got new clothes and shoes. When we stayed at the BGC the only new clothes we had was the ones she kept for wearing when we went to church. We went to church twice on each Sunday. We had never been to the church when we stayed at home. Mrs BGC was a very religious woman.

Schooling

24. When we first went to the BGC we still went to our primary school in Dundee. We took the bus to the school and we were given small plastic tokens from the council for the fare. Later at the BGC we were sent to Primary and later the secondary school. I think we had lunch at school each day. When I was at the school I enjoyed technical drawing.
25. In there was a park that we could go to play during the school holidays. I think most of the kids from the school played there.

Visits/inspections

26. During our stay at the BGC I think there might have been visits from the social work department. The only thing I remember about the visit was we were taken to the beach for a while. We might have had our photos taken. I have been told by my sister FDA that the house was tidied up and the social work were shown a nice clean house. They left after that and they never spoke to us about our time there.

Birthdays/Christmas

27. At Christmas I was given a box with a train set in it. In the morning I was allowed to play with the train set and played with it on the tracks. Later in the day it was put back into the box and placed under FCC's bed. I was never allowed to see it again. I think that and a jigsaw I was given came from donations that had been given for charity.

28. There was never any decorations in the house. Sometimes we were allowed out to be with some other kids from an orphanage. While we were with them there was a present under the tree for us.
29. I don't remember much about our birthdays with the exception that we would be given half a crown from Mrs **BGC** I am not sure where she got the money.

Trips

30. During the summer holidays we went berry picking. Any money we were paid as pickers Mrs **BGC** would take it from us. She would also make us bring some of the berries back to the house so she could make her jam. There was never anytime the **BGC** would take us for holiday.

Abuse at **BGC** – [REDACTED]

31. I can recall one incident when I answered back to Mrs **BGC** Her son **FCC** who was an ex commando, picked me up by the neck and took me to his room. He then held a pillow on my head and I was struggling for breath. I was kicking and screaming and then I just gave up. Only then did he stop. Mrs **BGC** was standing watching this from the door to his room. I think I was about twelve or thirteen when this happened.
32. I don't recall much discipline from Mrs **BGC** herself. The only thing she may have done was given me a slap if I had done anything wrong. There was nothing outrageous that I remember.
33. **FCC** and his sister **FJP** were the ones who were really nasty to us. **LAR** was the nice one. I think at some time he was in the Navy. He would talk to us a lot but I am not sure he knew what his brother and sister were like. Sometimes **FCC** would be away from the house he was away training as a commando.

Leaving foster care

34. There were times when some of the family were moved out of the BGC but we never knew where they went or what happened to them. One day they were with us and the next they were gone.
35. I ran away from the BGC and I think I might have ended up being sent to a borstal for a short time. I was later placed in foster care for about a month with another two lads who were about fifteen or sixteen. That was just outside Dundee. I think I was about thirteen. The foster carers wanted to keep me but I did not want to stay there. Although I had my own room it was a tip, like the rest of the house. The other two boys were always fighting with each other.

36. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

37.

38.

39.

40.

41.

42.

43.

44.

45. I ran away while I stayed at the BGC but I was always returned to her by the police. After I had been at Duncan Place shelter for a while I ran away. There was no reason to run away but when I did it turned out to be a good choice. I went to see the head of the children's department at the social work at Crichton Street. She asked me what I

wanted to do with my life and I told her I wanted to join the Navy. She made arrangements for me to be sent to the sea cadet school at Liverpool. This was just before my fifteenth birthday.

Life after being in care

46. When I arrived at the sea school there were about forty or fifty kids similar to me. We stopped there for the one night and then we got a bus to Anglesey the next day. I really liked my time at the sea school. We went into a store hall and were issued with all the kit we needed. The sport was great and I did running and playing football. The dormitories had about twenty cadets in each one. I got on really well with the other cadets. We slept in dormitories with about twenty of us in each in double bunks. The officers were strict but I found it okay.
47. At the sea school we all had the same uniform. I was there for about fifteen months. When I was about sixteen we had a visit from some Admirals and we are asked to choose whether it was the Royal Navy or Merchant Navy that we wanted to join. I chose the Merchant Navy. I was sent home with my gear until a ship was ready then it was back to Liverpool docks and boarded after showing my papers.
48. Sometimes when I was on leave from the cadets I would go back to Stirling and visit my gran. I was given return bus fares from the school to go home. I think they must have contacted my gran beforehand to make sure she would take me in. I never saw any of the rest of the family including my siblings while I was there.
49. I must have found out from my gran about my mum staying in [REDACTED] and on one of my leave periods I went to visit her. I stayed in town for a while, got a job, a flat and a motor bike. It was then that I met my wife [REDACTED] and we married in 1973. We have two daughters and three grandchildren. My brother ^{FDB} was also staying in [REDACTED] ^{FDA} and ^{FCZ} were in [REDACTED] I see them a lot.

50. While I was in the Merchant Navy I went to different countries from Madeira to the west coast of Africa to Italy. The first time I was away I was at sea for about three months. I was a deck boy and stayed with the Merchant Navy until around 1971/1972. I then worked on a fishing boat until 1973. After my time I joined the ferries operated by British Rail. After a season on the ferries I worked on roads and pipelines. I worked there during the summer. During the winter I had to sign on the dole. Later I managed to get permanent work on the pipelines. I retired when I turned sixty.
51. On one of my leave periods I went to visit my mum in [REDACTED] I stayed in town for a while, got a job, a flat and a motor bike. It was then that I met my wife [REDACTED] and we married in 1973. We have two daughters and three grandchildren. My brother [REDACTED] was also staying in [REDACTED]. FDA and FCZ were in [REDACTED] I see them a lot.

Impact

52. Duncan Place was alright. The BGC was really bad but still better than my life with my father. I have tried to block out most of the foster care out of my mind. I don't want to dwell on my time there. I have not felt the need to have any support or counselling for my time in care.
53. I haven't been able to maintain relationships with my siblings. I see some of them now and again, they are separated throughout the UK. I get on alright with some and not so well with the others.
54. I saw my dad on one of my return trips to Scotland, but that was the only occasion. He recognised me but there was no conversation or anything. My mum had a relationship with my family and she saw her grandchildren. When she was aware she was terminally ill she went back to Scotland to die.
55. As a result of what happened in my childhood I could never chastise my children as they grew. I left that to my wife [REDACTED]

Records

56. I have never been interested in getting any of my records. I know that my sisters have applied and got some records.

Other Information

57. I think there should be more checking of the children in care and their welfare. I hope the children today are not being treated like we were at the BGC Hopefully with people coming forward to the Inquiry it can be of help to the children currently in care.

58. When a group of children from the same family are separated in care there should be more information made available as to where they were last known to reside or moved to, so they can attempt to contact them if they wish. There was no thought given to allowing us to re-unite as we left care.

59. 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 statement are true.

Signed..... FBV

Dated..... 16 - 10 - 18