

Wednesday, 11 May 2022

1

2 (10.00 am)

3 LADY SMITH: Good morning and welcome.

4 Today we turn from regulation to Local Authority  
5 provision. As I understand it, as Ms Innes indicated  
6 yesterday afternoon, I think Glasgow is up first. Is  
7 that right?

8 MS INNES: Yes, my Lady. Susanne Millar, Chief Officer of  
9 Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership is here.

10 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

11 Ms Susanne Millar (sworn)

12 LADY SMITH: Thank you for coming along today to give  
13 evidence in relation to Glasgow's provision of foster  
14 care services. You have the hard copy in front of you,  
15 you'll also see documents coming up on the screen so  
16 feel free to use either or neither.

17 Are you all right if I address you as Susanne or  
18 would you prefer Ms Millar? Either would work for me.

19 A. Susanne would be great, thank you, my Lady.

20 LADY SMITH: Susanne, do let me know if you have any  
21 questions or if you want a break at any time. I usually  
22 take a break around 11.30 in the morning anyway, to give  
23 everybody a breather, but if you need a break before  
24 then, just say.

25 Otherwise, if you're ready, I'll hand over to

1 Ms Innes and she'll take it from there. Is that all  
2 right?

3 A. Thank you, my Lady, yes.

4 LADY SMITH: Ms Innes.

5 Questions from Ms Innes

6 MS INNES: Thank you.

7 Susanne, you've provided the Inquiry with a CV which  
8 outlines some of your qualifications and your career.  
9 I understand that you are currently Chief Officer with  
10 Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, is that  
11 right?

12 A. I am, yes.

13 Q. You started working as a social worker in Strathclyde in  
14 1992, I think?

15 A. I did, yes.

16 Q. From there you moved into strategic planning in 2001?

17 A. Yes, that's right.

18 Q. Was that again in relation to social work?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. When you worked as a social worker between 1992 and  
21 2001, was that in the area of children and families?

22 A. It was, yes.

23 Q. Did that include fostering or was it a more generic case  
24 load?

25 A. It was a generic case load and more it was an area team

1 case load, so I had children in foster placements, but  
2 I wasn't in the fostering team.

3 Q. Then, as I said, you moved into strategic planning in  
4 2001 and from there you were appointed head of children  
5 and families in 2006?

6 A. Yes, I was. Sorry.

7 Q. Initially it was just children and families but then  
8 I think some other areas were added to your area of  
9 responsibility, such as homelessness and asylum seekers,  
10 I think, as well?

11 A. Yes, that's right.

12 Q. Then, in 2012, you became assistant director of social  
13 work and at that time you were also appointed Deputy  
14 CSWO, so Chief Social Work Officer. We understand that  
15 Chief Social Work Officer is a statutory role, but can  
16 you perhaps explain a little bit about what that is and  
17 what it involves?

18 A. Yes. So the Chief Social Work Officer role is set out  
19 in statute in terms of specific responsibilities that  
20 are statutory in relation to children and families in  
21 foster care, in relation to children and families in  
22 secure care, in relation to children impacted by  
23 adoption and decisions that are taken by the Chief  
24 Social Work Officer. More recently there are additional  
25 responsibilities in terms of adult support and

1 protection.

2 Each Local Authority is required to appoint a Chief  
3 Social Work Officer. The role of deputy is also  
4 required by statute, because you have to have somebody  
5 in the country at any one time with those  
6 responsibilities in order that decisions can be made.

7 Q. Okay. So initially you were appointed as Deputy Chief  
8 Social Work Officer and then I think from 2015 you moved  
9 to the Health and Social Care Partnership. Can you just  
10 explain a little bit about what that is?

11 A. Yes. And apologies, I won't get quite the sequencing  
12 right. It's the Joint Bodies Public Working Act -- all  
13 of those words, possibly not in that sequence -- which  
14 established the integration of community health and  
15 social work services, mandated the integration of adult  
16 and older people's services and gave permission in  
17 statute for children's services to be part of that.

18 Glasgow City and Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health  
19 Board agreed that they would delegate all community  
20 health and social work services to the Health and Social  
21 Care Partnership, via the integrated joint board, which  
22 again is a 106 public body in statute.

23 So it has responsibility for all of the community  
24 health and social work services and they're formally  
25 delegated through an integration scheme, which is set in

1 Parliament.

2 Q. Okay. And Glasgow have decided to do that, is it  
3 something that everybody had to do or is it something  
4 that different Local Authorities have taken different  
5 approaches to?

6 A. There are certainly different approaches across  
7 Scotland. We were mandated in relation to older  
8 people's services. It was primarily in response to  
9 issues round about older people's services and delays in  
10 hospital and the flow from community to hospital, but  
11 they also mandated some adult services and then  
12 permissions around children and family social work  
13 services, homelessness, addiction and criminal justice,  
14 and Glasgow took the decision to use all of the  
15 permissions in the legislation and go for the full  
16 delegation.

17 There are only two, Health and Social Care  
18 Partnerships in Scotland, ourselves and Inverclyde, that  
19 have that full set of powers, but there are a number  
20 that have children and families, but some Local  
21 Authorities have retained children and families within  
22 their Local Authority structure rather than delegate  
23 them.

24 Q. Thank you, that's helpful.

25 You moved to the Health and Social Care Partnership

1 in 2015 and you became initially Chief Officer for  
2 strategy planning and commissioning, and at that point  
3 I think you were appointed Chief Social Work Officer as  
4 well?

5 A. Mm-hmm.

6 Q. You've remained with the Partnership obviously since  
7 then. In 2017 I think your role changed to Chief  
8 Officer for strategy and operations.

9 A. (Witness nodded)

10 Q. Then, from May 2019, you're now the Chief Officer of the  
11 Partnership.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Does that mean that you have oversight of the whole  
14 body?

15 A. Yes. So I'm the person -- I'm the responsible officer  
16 for all of the services that have been delegated through  
17 the integration scheme to the Health and Social Care  
18 Partnership.

19 Q. Okay. Is somebody else now undertaking the role of  
20 Chief Social Work Officer or is that still you?

21 A. Yes, no, somebody -- there was a decision made in  
22 Glasgow and some other Local Authorities, but again not  
23 across Scotland, that to hold the position of Chief  
24 Officer, you couldn't hold that at the same time as  
25 Chief Social Work Officer because there was a potential

1 conflict of interest. So we made the decision in  
2 Glasgow City, as a number of Health and Social Care  
3 Partnerships did, to have the Chief Social Work Officer  
4 separate.

5 Some Local Authorities that retained children and  
6 family services actually hold the Chief Social Work  
7 Officer still within Local Authority and not in  
8 partnership.

9 So in the city, it's -- Chief Social Work Officer is  
10 held within the partnership and is somebody who is  
11 a direct report to myself, so it has to be somebody  
12 senior, so it's a direct report to myself, but retaining  
13 those statutory responsibilities and that line of  
14 accountability to the Local Authority Chief Executive.

15 Q. Okay. When you say you're retaining that line of  
16 authority, you yourself are accountable to the Chief  
17 Executive of the Local Authority. Is that correct?

18 A. I'm accountable to both the Chief Executive of the Local  
19 Authority and the Chief Executive of the Greater Glasgow  
20 and Clyde Health Board.

21 Q. That's because of the integration?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay, and because you have oversight of health services  
24 as well as Social Services?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay.

2 We understand that you have been involved in the  
3 Glasgow City team that have been involved in responding  
4 to the Inquiry's requests for information and assistance  
5 I think since the outset; is that correct?

6 A. Yes. I've chaired the group that has taken  
7 responsibility for all of our submissions to the Inquiry  
8 and reflections from the Inquiry from the outset, and  
9 I've retained that position as chair.

10 Q. Can you tell us who is on that team or group?

11 A. Yes. So initially I set it up as Chief Social Work  
12 Officer, so we have retained the Chief Social Work  
13 Officer being part of that group all the way through,  
14 when that changed from myself to the other person.

15 We have Dr Irene O'Brien from our archives.

16 We have our representative from our legal services.

17 At different points we've had the head of children's  
18 services, or the person who has operational  
19 responsibility at a senior level for children's  
20 services, and again that person's changed slightly over  
21 the period of the group meeting.

22 And we have representation from our child protection  
23 team, particularly the officer who has responsibility  
24 for the investigation of historical abuse  
25 investigations.



1           And we have a business support, who is a senior  
2           person who has got responsibility in relation to  
3           record-keeping for us within the partnership.

4   Q.   Okay. Thinking specifically of this case study, so the  
5           foster care case study, the Inquiry sent a notice under  
6           section 21, which in house certainly we call an A-D  
7           response, so it's in parts A-D. I think your response  
8           is in hard copy in the folder in front of you, and it  
9           will also come up on the screen when we go to it.

10           I'd like to understand a little bit more about how  
11           that response was put together. If you can perhaps  
12           explain how you went about responding to the questions  
13           broadly about the history of regulation of fostering in  
14           the council and its predecessors, how did you deal with  
15           that?

16   A.   Part of the reason for establishing that group was to  
17           take a collective approach to the submission of our  
18           section 21 requests in foster care, but also the other  
19           section 21 requests that we've had from the Inquiry  
20           team.

21           So specifically in this one, it's a formal meeting  
22           so we considered what the section 21 request is, in this  
23           instance the foster care, and we agree within that group  
24           who takes lead responsibility for the specific parts of  
25           it. So, for example, in terms of the historical

1 information, we have a great asset frankly in  
2 Dr Irene O'Brien and her position as city archivist. So  
3 in general terms, Dr O'Brien took responsibility for the  
4 historical element in terms of the looking through our  
5 archives and making responses in relation to that. And  
6 then it was the head of service and the Chief Social  
7 Work Officer who had responsibility for the elements  
8 that were about questions about practice now.

9 And then collectively we brought that together as  
10 a draft and then had a number of meetings looking at the  
11 draft and agreeing the final version, and some debates,  
12 which we might come onto, depending on your questions,  
13 in terms of how we might answer some of the questions.  
14 So we did take time considering the questions and how  
15 best we might answer them. And then ultimately signed  
16 off by myself with a recommendation to the chief  
17 executive for her signature and sign-off.

18 Q. You mentioned that Dr O'Brien was able to help with the  
19 archive, which we understand she deals with. Does that  
20 take us up to the end of the Strathclyde period or does  
21 that take us into the time of Glasgow City Council post  
22 1996?

23 A. It takes us into some of the Glasgow City Council  
24 element, not all of it, but -- and it certainly covers  
25 the earlier part and Strathclyde Regional Council, in

1 fact before Strathclyde Regional Council as well.

2 Q. In terms of the types of documents that were consulted  
3 by the team, are you able to outline what those were?

4 A. In terms of what came from Dr O'Brien or in general?

5 Q. In general.

6 A. So it -- we -- we would consider the questions -- the  
7 way we approached it was we would consider the questions  
8 and what evidence we might want to look at and we would  
9 bring that -- whoever was leading on that particular  
10 part of the response would bring that to our regular  
11 meetings for discussion. Irene in particular in the  
12 early stages brought a lot of information in terms of  
13 what she had found, and we asked the head of service to  
14 go back and look at some of the procedures and protocols  
15 and evidence base around some of the other questions.

16 We also -- I also took an opportunity for discussion  
17 with some recently retired senior children and families  
18 workers, who had worked in social work in the city for  
19 40 years plus at that time, so part of my consideration  
20 in terms of the section 21 response in foster care was  
21 to take some real-life experience of what that period  
22 was like to work as a social worker, because obviously  
23 it wasn't something that I had direct experience of.

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. And that was particularly useful actually, so we'd asked

1           them to come in and talk to the group about what they  
2           remembered in relation to foster care and children in  
3           foster care.

4    Q.   Okay.  We'll come a little later to look at how you  
5           approached the Part D response in terms of the material  
6           that you looked at.

7           Did you carry out any case file audit or sampling of  
8           children's records and foster carer records?

9    A.   No, not for the specific purposes of the response to the  
10          section 21 inquiry.

11   Q.   Right, we'll come back to that element a little bit  
12          later, but if we can start by looking at your Part A  
13          response, please, so the A-D response is at  
14          GLA-000001742 and if we can look, please, at page 2.

15          In the first question you're asked to note the  
16          predecessors, and I think very broadly, it was Glasgow  
17          Corporation between 1930 and 1975, and then there was  
18          Strathclyde, and am I right in thinking that Glasgow  
19          City Council would take responsibility for the  
20          geographical area of Strathclyde that it now covers?

21   A.   Sorry, could you repeat that?  I'm not quite sure what  
22          the question is.

23   Q.   Strathclyde obviously is more than Glasgow City Council,  
24          but in terms of taking responsibility as a successor of  
25          Strathclyde, does Glasgow City Council take

1 responsibility for the geographical area of Strathclyde  
2 that now falls within the City Council boundaries? It  
3 doesn't take responsibility for the whole of  
4 Strathclyde?

5 A. No, no, sorry, I just didn't quite understand the  
6 question. Yes, so Glasgow City, it's a Local Authority  
7 boundary of Glasgow City that we take responsibility  
8 for, yes. Apologies.

9 Q. That's fine.

10 So those are your predecessors. If we go on  
11 a little bit in the A-D response, at the end of page 3,  
12 we see a question:

13 "How has the involvement of the Local Authority and  
14 the provision of foster care changed/developed over  
15 time?"

16 You start obviously there by looking at Glasgow  
17 Corporation. You go on into the next page highlighting  
18 various documents over that period. Would I be right in  
19 thinking that that's material that was put together by  
20 Dr O'Brien?

21 A. Yes, that's right.

22 Q. If we can look on a little to page 5, to the period  
23 there headed -- this is the Strathclyde Region period,  
24 1975 to 1995. You refer there to a report by the  
25 Director of Social Work in 1975 setting out priorities

1 for achieving a good fostering service. I wonder if we  
2 can have a look at that document, please. It's at  
3 GLA-000001837. I think we see here that this is  
4 a report by the Director of Social Work for Strathclyde  
5 Regional Council social work committee headed, "Foster  
6 care policy", and the context is set in an introduction:

7 "Earlier this year the social work committee asked  
8 that a concise policy document on foster care be  
9 submitted to a later meeting. This paper provides  
10 a basic summary of policy, and it is intended that  
11 a further report will be submitted early next year  
12 outlining proposals for future developments."

13 Below that we see that it's said at that stage:

14 "The general aim of fostering is to provide care for  
15 children in a family setting where this is seen to be  
16 the most appropriate form of substitute care."

17 That was the aim as stated in 1975. Has that  
18 changed to any extent in your view since then? Or is  
19 that a fair summary of the aim of provision?

20 A. I think we would have a more detailed description in  
21 terms of the -- what provision of care means, because  
22 I think we are now much more focused on it's not just  
23 the provision of alternative care for children, it's  
24 actually focused specifically on optimising their  
25 welfare and development and ensuring that we can achieve

1 the best outcomes for them. So it's -- the stated aim  
2 would be something that would have a bit more detail in  
3 relation to it. Obviously it's to keep children safe,  
4 but that's not the only function in terms of the  
5 provision of care; it's actually to work with children  
6 and provide them with an environment where they can  
7 realise their life ambitions.

8 LADY SMITH: Susanne, it seems to be a given that it's care  
9 in a family setting, that's what foster care is --

10 A. Mm.

11 LADY SMITH: -- but are you saying, from what you've just  
12 explained, that the Local Authority has to be satisfied  
13 that the children are going to be better placed in the  
14 foster placement than if they remained with their own  
15 family?

16 A. Absolutely, my Lady, and that's particularly -- in terms  
17 of the more recent work we've done in the last ten years  
18 about making sure that we can reassure ourselves of that  
19 and make sure that we can reassure ourselves that we've  
20 given the best support possible to birth families before  
21 we make those kinds of decisions.

22 LADY SMITH: Because the first option in every case must be  
23 looking at supporting the birth family, mustn't it?

24 A. Yes, absolutely.

25 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

1 MS INNES: If we look down the page a little there, we see:

2 "Priorities for achieving a good fostering service."

3 The first priority is said to:

4 "Stem wastage rate of foster parents -- by providing  
5 adequate support services."

6 Below that we see a heading, "Supervision", and  
7 there's reference there to the number of children in  
8 foster homes at that time:

9 "A number of these children are in foster homes  
10 outwith our own region and for some of these children  
11 and their foster parents, distance may present problems  
12 with regard to supervision. Unless there is  
13 a longstanding relationship with a particular social  
14 worker, it may be appropriate for many of these foster  
15 homes to be supervised locally with arrangements made  
16 through this department's staff to ensure the child's  
17 continued links with his home area."

18 That seems to be talking about children who are  
19 placed outwith the local area and issues in relation to  
20 supervision that arise from that. Is that something  
21 that has changed over time in your view?

22 A. Yes, it has. We have much fewer children that are  
23 placed outwith the City Council boundary, and if they  
24 are, it tends to be in very close proximity.

25 Also, the numbers are significantly different.



1 Today we have 537 children in foster care which we  
2 provide and 199 in foster care which we commission from  
3 the independent sector. So in terms of the placements  
4 that we are looking for, it's a much smaller number, and  
5 we have concentrated recruitment of foster carers  
6 specifically around about being local to Glasgow.

7 LADY SMITH: Can you just give me the number for current  
8 children in foster care again?

9 A. Sure. 537 in our provided foster care, my Lady, and 199  
10 in foster care placements that we've commissioned.

11 LADY SMITH: So that's 736 in total?

12 A. Yes.

13 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

14 MS INNES: Just in terms of the responsibility for  
15 supervision, if there were circumstances in which  
16 a child was placed outwith Glasgow City Council itself,  
17 would that child be supervised by a Glasgow City Council  
18 social worker or by somebody else in the area in which  
19 they're living?

20 A. So the child would be supervised by a Glasgow City  
21 Council Local Authority social worker and the foster  
22 carers would be supervised by the Families for Children  
23 team. So there's supervision of the foster carer and  
24 supervision for the children.

25 Q. That would both be from Glasgow City Council?

1 A. Yes. There are some sets of circumstances if a child's  
2 been in a long-term placement and they reach 18 or 21  
3 and it's the ordinary residence issue then. If they are  
4 outwith the city and they are looking to permanently  
5 reside in another Local Authority, we may at that stage  
6 get involved in a discussion with that Local Authority.  
7 Typically those placements would be eight to ten years  
8 long and they are settling, they are long-term futures,  
9 and those other Local Authorities if there's  
10 a requirement for ongoing social work support, we might  
11 and do get engaged in discussions with that Local  
12 Authority, but in terms of supervision of placements and  
13 of children, that remains ourselves.

14 Q. We've heard a little about what happens at 18 and  
15 an adult placement service we understand has to be  
16 registered separately, even if the child is remaining  
17 with the same carers. I assume that Glasgow have  
18 registered as a separate provider under the adult  
19 placement provisions?

20 A. Yes, we have.

21 Q. But you mentioned there was an issue with ordinary  
22 residence. Can you explain a little bit about that,  
23 please?

24 A. It tends to come -- when young people get to the age of  
25 25, so when our continuing care responsibilities would

1 be coming to a close and if they require ongoing social  
2 work support and they're in another Local Authority,  
3 then we would be engaged with that Local Authority in  
4 terms of how that support -- what that support might  
5 look like in their adulthood.

6 We have currently got -- of that 537, 73 of the  
7 young people that are in our fostering services are over  
8 18.

9 Q. Okay. If we can look on to the second page of this  
10 document and under a heading, "Provision of factual  
11 information for foster parents", it's said there:

12 "Foster parents gain security in having clear  
13 information regarding their entitlements to allowances,  
14 equipment, et cetera. A handbook for foster parents  
15 giving local information would be a useful guide and it  
16 is suggested that a draft copy be prepared for  
17 consideration."

18 We'll come in a moment to, I think, a handbook that  
19 was prepared following this, but perhaps again if you  
20 can explain how that has changed or developed. Do  
21 foster carers get a handbook and what sort of material  
22 is in it?

23 A. It has changed quite a bit since that particular time  
24 period. We do have a handbook for foster carers, we  
25 also have a foster care agreement that goes out along

1 with the foster care handbook.

2           Essentially it's information around about --  
3 a reminder of some of the work that we would have  
4 undertaken with the foster carers in terms of the  
5 recruitment and assessment process. It gives them -- it  
6 restates the purpose of the supervising social worker  
7 within the children Families for Children team, what to  
8 expect in terms of visits to the foster care household,  
9 what we expect of them in terms of commitment to core  
10 training. Our provision of training beyond the core  
11 training for foster carers. The expectation that there  
12 would be in the visits an unannounced visit. The  
13 expectation that there would be a joint visit on  
14 a regular basis between the child's social worker and  
15 the supervising social worker for the foster carers. It  
16 gives information in relation to safe care and what our  
17 expectations are in terms of safe care. It gives  
18 information about the response to complaints, concerns  
19 and allegations and what the process might be and what  
20 foster carers could expect from that.

21           And the foster care agreement is a condensed version  
22 of our expectations of foster carers and our commitment  
23 to them, and that's actually something that we ask them  
24 to sign and return.

25 Q. We understand that a foster care agreement was mandated

1 by regulations.

2 A. (Witness nodded)

3 Q. And the terms of it or the things that should be covered  
4 are set out in the regulations. Does the Glasgow foster  
5 care agreement go beyond that or is it just whatever is  
6 in the regulations?

7 A. Ours goes beyond that, particularly around about the  
8 support to foster carers in terms of our expectations in  
9 relation to the core training and the availability of  
10 training beyond core.

11 So we have four main courses, training courses, that  
12 we expect them to complete within their first year of  
13 registration, and we're very explicit about that and  
14 then what we have after that. And we have a learning  
15 and development team specifically for foster care, so  
16 that section -- it's covered in some of the statutory  
17 guidance, but it does go beyond in terms of what our  
18 expectations are.

19 That's probably the main area that might look a bit  
20 different.

21 LADY SMITH: If a new foster carer fails to attend any of  
22 the four main courses you've just referred to, what  
23 happens?

24 A. So we -- the regulations set out that the Foster Care  
25 Review has to take place within the first year of

1 registration, so that's an issue that would be  
2 considered as part of the Foster Care Review. Sometimes  
3 there might be mitigating circumstances, not least the  
4 last couple of years in terms of our ability to -- so we  
5 don't have a hard and fast: if you don't do that, you're  
6 de-registered at your first Foster Carer Review, but it  
7 has to be considered at that first Foster Care Review in  
8 terms of the reasons for not attending the core  
9 training, what impact that's had on their ability to  
10 provide care. We may and we have de-registered foster  
11 carers who haven't committed to the training that we  
12 provide.

13 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

14 MS INNES: You mentioned there that there are four core  
15 courses, can you recall what those are?

16 A. I'll do my best.

17 There's resilience building.

18 There's understanding challenging behaviour.

19 There's life story work.

20 And I have forgotten the fourth one, my apologies.

21 It will come back to me when you ask me another  
22 question.

23 Q. It's okay. So there is obviously pre-approval training,  
24 then there's these four course that is have to be  
25 completed within the first year, and then beyond that do

1       you have ongoing what might be called continuous  
2       professional development or something like that?

3    A.   Yes.  We have a range of -- it's very like a continuous  
4       development approach and we also use other agencies.  So  
5       one of the courses, for example, that's really popular  
6       with foster carers is the sexual health courses that we  
7       run in conjunction with our sexual health service in  
8       Sandyford.  Sexual health and relationships and  
9       particularly for foster carers who have been maybe  
10      caring for young people for a long time and they've hit  
11      adolescence, and some of the challenges are quite  
12      different from what they are used to.

13             In general terms, look at what's available for the  
14      wider group of parents in terms of us as a Health and  
15      Social Care Partnership or our education services or  
16      beyond our own in terms of our health services.  We've  
17      done some specific work around about working with young  
18      people who are unaccompanied, because some of our foster  
19      children are unaccompanied asylum seekers, so there's  
20      some specifics.  We've done some -- offered training on  
21      diversity, particularly round about LGBT issues because  
22      that's quite current for our young people.

23             So it's a suite of training offers that does change  
24      and is refreshed quite a bit.  Some of that from what we  
25      hear from foster carers in terms of some of the

1 challenges that they have in relation to caring for our  
2 young people and some of it looking at that wider  
3 population about the challenges in parenting in the 21st  
4 century.

5 Q. You mentioned that you have a learning and development  
6 team --

7 A. Mm-hmm.

8 Q. -- but you also use courses perhaps that are provided by  
9 other organisations?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is that the way in which training is delivered?

12 A. Yes. So the learning and development team, there's two  
13 full-time officers in the learning and development team  
14 and they have responsibility for maintaining the core  
15 set of training and making sure all of our foster carers  
16 go through that.

17 We have a set of additional training and it's their  
18 job to link with other training agencies and across the  
19 third and statutory sector in terms of what's current  
20 and also through our evaluation from service users,  
21 feedback from Foster Care Reviews about those current  
22 issues, so then they would have the task of identifying  
23 training needs and then identifying courses that would  
24 meet those training needs and that's refreshed on  
25 an annual basis.



1 Q. You mentioned a moment ago that on occasion you have had  
2 to de-register carers who have not been engaging with  
3 training. Is that a problem that has lessened over time  
4 or not? Is it an ongoing issue?

5 A. In my time it's got less over time, I think there's much  
6 more of a recognition that the training's seen -- it's  
7 very well evaluated and it's seen to be a real support  
8 on our fostering website. We've particularly put on  
9 videos of testimonies from foster carers and it's really  
10 interesting, some of those foster carers with  
11 professional backgrounds, who are quite honest about  
12 they thought they didn't need training and then they  
13 experienced the training and it was quite a different --  
14 and how valuable it was and not what they expected.

15 So we've put those testimonies up on the fostering  
16 website to make sure that the voice of the foster  
17 care -- because that was our other experience, hearing  
18 from other foster carers about how valuable the training  
19 is has meant that we've had a much better uptake of it  
20 than we previously had. It's seen as standard, it's  
21 something that we talk about as soon as we have initial  
22 inquiries about that need for ongoing training and  
23 development.

24 Q. I was going to ask about that, whether it's essentially  
25 an expectation that is set as soon as somebody

1           essentially makes an application to become a foster  
2           carer?

3   A.   Yes.

4   LADY SMITH:  If a foster carer in your area needs cover for  
5           childcare to enable them to get to training, are you  
6           able to assist with that?

7   A.   Yes, we are, my Lady.  One of the advantages of the last  
8           two years is sometimes the availability of virtual  
9           training has actually meant that we now have more  
10          options available to us in terms of the numbers of  
11          people that we can train.

12   LADY SMITH:  Thank you.

13   MS INNES:  Just continuing with this theme, we have heard  
14          evidence about the Standard for Foster Care that was  
15          produced by the SSSC in 2017.  Is that a tool that you  
16          use at all in Glasgow City Council or not?

17   A.   Yes, it is, and we specifically looked at the standard  
18          in terms of the refresh of our fostering procedures,  
19          which were refreshed in 2020 and are actually due for  
20          a refresh at the end of this year, because we try to do  
21          that every two years, and partly that's because --  
22          making sure that anything that's come out nationally or  
23          any learning is then reflected in our procedures'  
24          rewrite.  So we did take specific cognisance of the work  
25          in terms of the national standard and it's reflected --

1       it's actually named in our current procedures as  
2       something that we would adhere to.

3   Q.   Okay. Right, if we can just look at another thing in  
4       this document, please, on page 3 there's a heading,  
5       "Limitations", and it says there:

6               "The most serious limitation to achieving  
7       an improved foster care service is the inadequacy of  
8       social work staff resources."

9               Then it goes on to talk about the various areas of  
10       work, saying that those:

11               " ... require a considerable investment of  
12       knowledge, skill and time."

13               In terms of social work staff resources, has that  
14       been an ongoing issue or has that improved over time?

15   A.   It has significantly -- sorry, I've just realised:  
16       communication was the fourth training course.

17               It has improved quite significantly, certainly  
18       within the city, in the last 10 to 15 years.

19       Particularly but not exclusively in children and family  
20       services, we've made successful representation to our  
21       elected members within the City Council and the social  
22       work resource has been significantly improved in terms  
23       of children and family social workers.

24               An example of that would be our current team in what  
25       we call Families for Children, which is our own

1 fostering service. We have a service manager who is  
2 a senior manager, five team leaders, 28 qualified social  
3 workers, two social care workers and then the learning  
4 and development team and the recruitment officer, who  
5 are separate to that, and we have a separate adoption  
6 team. So that resource with 432 fostering households  
7 gives the social workers specifically for foster carers  
8 a case load of about 15 foster carers, which is  
9 significantly different from the description that led to  
10 this report.

11 Similarly in our area team social work resource, all  
12 of our looked-after and accommodated children have  
13 an allocated social worker, with clear expectations  
14 about when they would visit.

15 So I recognise that description of the time, but  
16 it's quite different now in terms of resources.

17 Q. Okay. I wonder if we can look at the handbook that is  
18 mentioned as being something that was going to be  
19 drafted, I think, so it's at GLA-000001833. If we go on  
20 to the second page, first of all in terms of the size of  
21 this document, in the scan it's 12 pages long and we see  
22 the contents page there. In comparative terms to the  
23 handbook that foster carers would now be given, how does  
24 it compare?

25 A. It looks quite different, some of the areas that it

1 covers is the same.

2 One of the things that we did in the early 2000s  
3 was -- alongside looking at the professional practice  
4 within the Families for Children team, I was really  
5 conscious that that front facing in terms of recruitment  
6 and communication was something that we needed a bit of  
7 support with, so actually the communication and  
8 marketing person ... we recruited somebody with  
9 a communication and marketing background, because we had  
10 social workers writing foster care handbooks and other  
11 things.

12 So it covers broadly the same areas, I think, in  
13 a bit more depth, but it has been written and presented  
14 by somebody who has qualifications in communication and  
15 marketing, so it looks like different. And I think it's  
16 much more manageable for foster carers to assimilate.

17 Q. Is it a physical book or is it an online resource now?

18 A. It's both. And again that was in response to foster  
19 carers. A number of -- so because of the range of  
20 foster carers that we have, like the idea of a physical  
21 copy that they can return to at different points,  
22 particularly if they're experiencing challenge in the  
23 placement, but a number of our younger foster carers use  
24 it digitally like that, so we have both, and we have  
25 a fostering website.

1 Q. If we can just look at some of the material in this,  
2 please, and if we can go on -- well, if we look at  
3 page 6. Just bear with me a moment.

4 There's a headline there, "Coping with  
5 difficulties", and it says:

6 "All children at some time go through difficult  
7 periods with behaviour."

8 There's reference to different behaviours that might  
9 be seen, it says:

10 "The best way to respond to such difficulties is to  
11 try to understand and to be patient."

12 Below that it says:

13 "Bed-wetting and other toilet problems are usually  
14 symptoms of anxiety and it is best to deal with them in  
15 a matter of fact 'can't be helped' way. If bed-wetting  
16 continually, check if the child has an infection.

17 "Don't worry too much about these behavioural  
18 difficulties while the child is settling in. However,  
19 if you find that a difficulty continues to cause you  
20 worry or that there are too many to handle, get in touch  
21 with the child's social worker."

22 This is back in May 1976 this was published. Do you  
23 cover the same sort of ground in your resources now or  
24 are these issues addressed in a different way?

25 A. They're addressed in a different way. How we would --

1           how we would articulate those is a trauma-informed  
2           approach to the support for foster carers and for  
3           children and a trauma-informed approach recognises the  
4           impact that children's experience would have on how they  
5           are and that some of -- some of the behaviours that  
6           foster carers might see, but the trauma-informed  
7           approach supports carers to understand that in the  
8           context of their background, and that's what in some of  
9           that core training, so particularly the life story work  
10          is about working with children in terms of them  
11          understanding their own history and their own life and  
12          then the impact that that's had, and communication is  
13          the other element of that.

14                 Again, it's something that from the outset we talk  
15          about, so from the first enquiry we talk to prospective  
16          foster carers about the children that we are supporting  
17          and what the issues might be and how they might manifest  
18          themselves, and then it's a significant element of the  
19          assessment process in terms of reassuring ourselves and  
20          them that they understand some of that and feel  
21          supported in terms of dealing with it before they're  
22          registered and then continuing with that support.

23                 I wouldn't recognise some of that terminology as  
24          being helpful in terms of how you would characterise the  
25          children.

1 LADY SMITH: I suppose it's not just that. The advice  
2 essentially is: be patient and don't worry, this is  
3 normal.

4 A. Yes.

5 LADY SMITH: But it doesn't give the parent any tools with  
6 which to help.

7 A. And I think, my Lady, that's what's quite different,  
8 because what we do with the understanding challenging  
9 behaviour and a trauma-informed approach is to give them  
10 a background in terms of -- and it's not presented in  
11 this term, this kind of theoretical framework within  
12 which they can maybe understand that and better respond  
13 to it. So it does look significantly different from  
14 that. And it's recognised as an ongoing need in terms  
15 of support to foster carers, because children are very  
16 different and children from the same background, from  
17 the same family, birth family, can present  
18 differentially.

19 MS INNES: If we can go on to the next page, please, page 7,  
20 there's a heading there, "What about bad behaviour?"

21 It begins:

22 "All children are sometimes naughty. They'll test  
23 out just how far they can go and this is something every  
24 parent has to deal with. To help the child, it is  
25 important that there are consistent boundaries of



1           behaviour and a degree of discipline."

2           It then says:

3           "For foster parents it isn't easy to deal with bad  
4           behaviour. Sometimes you will be asking: am I expecting  
5           too much too soon? Are my standards too high? Or  
6           should I punish? There are some things it is best to  
7           overlook quietly."

8           Then in the next paragraph it says:

9           "Corporal punishment should not be given."

10          Again this is in 1976, so this seems to be advice  
11          that was being given at that time to foster parents by  
12          Strathclyde.

13         A. Mm-hmm.

14         Q. We understand of course that the law has changed since  
15          then.

16         A. Mm-hmm.

17         Q. Do you still cover issues of corporal punishment in your  
18          foster care agreement, do you know, or in the handbook?

19         A. Yes, it's explicit, very explicit.

20         Q. Then it says after that:

21                 "But privileges can be withheld and this is very  
22                 often more effective. A child should never be locked in  
23                 a room as a punishment or refused food at meal times.

24                 It is not a good idea to threaten a child, especially if  
25                 you know you cannot or will not carry out the threat.

1 Never, for instance, say to a foster child if he is bad  
2 'I will send you away or I'll put you back in a home'.  
3 This will only upset the child more and make his problem  
4 more difficult to solve."

5 Just in terms of these other suggested approaches to  
6 behaviour, has that changed over time?

7 A. Yes, almost unrecognisable in terms of how we now  
8 support foster carers and children. That's the core  
9 training course around about challenging behaviour that  
10 we expect -- it does support foster carers again in that  
11 trauma-informed way to think about what the reasons  
12 might be. To think about their own behaviour and to  
13 think about how their own behaviour and presentation  
14 then impacts on a child in that context of understanding  
15 their own background. So it's unrecognisable from that  
16 description.

17 Q. Presumably it would still be the case that a child  
18 should never be locked in a room or refused food or  
19 threatened?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. But in terms of withholding privileges, is that  
22 something that's changed over time in terms of advice  
23 given?

24 A. Yes. I mean fundamentally, there's -- I'm expressing  
25 an opinion now, but the use of the word "privileges"

1       implicitly suggests that children who were in our care  
2       should be thankful for some of the privileges, would be  
3       things like pocket money, would be things like going to  
4       a club, would be -- you know, seeing friends. Those are  
5       not privileges, those are experiencing a normal  
6       childhood. So even the use of the word "privileges",  
7       I think, gives us a bit of an insight into that wider --  
8       into the value base and the assumptions that are being  
9       made behind that. So even that, that's not a word that  
10      we would use to describe the support that you would give  
11      to a young person in your own family as a foster carer.

12             Again, it's shifted unrecognisably. We would be  
13      encouraging and supporting foster carers to have the  
14      same conversations that you would be having with your  
15      own children in terms of their own -- for example, are  
16      you able to keep yourself safe and/or have you --  
17      football training been getting into bother with people  
18      or not managing some of those relationships, do we need  
19      to have a think about how you manage that better, would  
20      we come with you? So it's those kinds of conversations  
21      that we are supporting with foster carers.

22   LADY SMITH:   Susanne, I was just looking at the third  
23      paragraph on the left-hand column, which is interesting,  
24      towards the end:

25             "Focus on one aspect that troubles you most and work

1 on that. When the child's trying his best, be sure to  
2 give a little praise."

3 As I read that, I thought oh, we're seeing some good  
4 advice coming up, which is build on what's working and  
5 praise the child for what's working well, but we're only  
6 getting advice that the child gets a little praise,  
7 which seems mean in the circumstances. But perhaps  
8 that's what the tone was then. Almost a fear of letting  
9 go too much and not keeping a tight enough rein on the  
10 child?

11 A. Yes, I think, my Lady, it's similar to the use of the  
12 word "privileges", in that it does tell you a lot about  
13 what the value base and the assumptions were around that  
14 time in terms of what -- and also the use of the word  
15 "bad behaviour". For a long time in parenting in  
16 general that's not terminology that you would recognise.  
17 Young people might get involved in doing things that  
18 weren't in their best interests. You don't ever call it  
19 "bad behaviour". It might not have been a great thing  
20 to do, it's the act, it's the behaviour, it's not  
21 yourself, is the act.

22 There's quite a lot in terms of some of the language  
23 there that tells you about I think the general  
24 assumptions round about children and parenting, but also  
25 the specific assumptions round about children in foster

1 care.

2 LADY SMITH: What you're really talking about is the child  
3 behaving in a way that you as an adult find difficult to  
4 handle?

5 A. Yes.

6 LADY SMITH: So the starting point is helping you to address  
7 the difficulty you're having --

8 A. Yes.

9 LADY SMITH: -- which should then help the child.

10 A. Yes.

11 MS INNES: If we stay with this page and look across to the  
12 right-hand side, we see a heading, "The child's family",  
13 and here we see it says:

14 "Children don't forget their own homes, even if they  
15 don't talk about them. For this reason, foster parents  
16 are encouraged to talk kindly with foster children about  
17 their home and family. Keeping in touch with the family  
18 is important to foster children, especially if they are  
19 likely to go home again."

20 Then there's talk about visits perhaps being  
21 difficult and then it goes on from there. Again, has  
22 the way in which contact with the child's birth family  
23 and siblings, so parents and siblings, changed over  
24 time?

25 A. Yes, again almost unrecognisable. So we're really clear

1       about the importance of the child's history with their  
2       birth family. Even if through the legal system, through  
3       the hearing or courts, it's clear that -- even if you're  
4       in a permanent foster care placement and it's clear that  
5       a rehabilitation with the family is not possible, we're  
6       really clear with foster carers about the importance of  
7       a child understanding their own history and their own  
8       background and about the impact that that has, and we  
9       actively, particularly through the life story work,  
10      support foster carers along with the social workers, so  
11      the social workers for the child will also be involved  
12      in that work with the child, but generally we encourage  
13      and support foster carers to be part of that. (a) it  
14      helps them understand the child, but also when the  
15      child's in a foster care placement, that placement's  
16      part of their life story, so our expectation is that not  
17      only would foster carers be engaged in that work with  
18      children about understanding their own history and their  
19      own family, but be part of their life story and  
20      therefore be engaged in that piece of work.

21           Specifically round about children where we are ...  
22      there is a consideration of rehabilitation, we expect  
23      foster carers to be engaged in actively supporting  
24      contact. We actively promote contact with siblings,  
25      even if a return to birth family is not something that's

1 being actively pursued, so again we expect foster  
2 parents to be engaged -- because it's really important  
3 for children that that primary adult in their life is  
4 seen as supportive of that contact. So that's  
5 something -- that contact with siblings is something  
6 I think we've learned over the years, because that's  
7 changed in terms of our understanding of it as a social  
8 work profession, where we are now is not underestimating  
9 the importance of that and taking every and all effort  
10 to support that.

11 Again, it's something we talk to foster carers about  
12 from the beginning, so there's an expectation in  
13 relation to working with children in terms of their  
14 birth families, specifically siblings.

15 If rehabilitation is being pursued, quite often  
16 contact will take place in the foster carer's home and  
17 again that's because -- and my experience, and our  
18 experience, if that's a safe place for the child, it's  
19 really important that they see that new primary care  
20 giver being supportive of their birth family and it's  
21 really important that they see that kind of positive  
22 response and positive interaction with those two parts  
23 of their history, and we know that to be important to  
24 children and young people, so contact will sometimes be  
25 in foster carer's own homes. So, again, it's changed

1 quite a bit.

2 Q. This is obviously 1976. I was thinking about your own  
3 time as a social worker, so starting in 1992. Has this  
4 issue of contact and the importance of maintaining  
5 relationships with siblings, has that changed more  
6 recently?

7 A. I think it has. And I think in general the importance  
8 of birth families to children and young people, our  
9 understanding of it has significantly improved.

10 Specifically in Glasgow, we've done a lot of work  
11 following the EV judgement, which was where there was  
12 a judgement about a child had been returned to their  
13 family on the basis that the social work services hadn't  
14 properly explored all of the options in terms of birth  
15 family. We spent a lot of time in terms of reflection  
16 on that, so we now have services for family group  
17 decision-making, we have services that do family trees  
18 where we have successfully identified -- it's just over  
19 2,500 family members who are not known to social work  
20 services who could offer support to a young person  
21 either in care or on the brink of coming into care and  
22 sometimes prevent that admission to care.

23 And it's on the basis of our own evidence that  
24 a significant number of young people who are in our care  
25 for a long period of time ultimately return or attempt



1 to return to their own families and their own  
2 communities. And often that not being a positive  
3 experience and/or something either the family or the  
4 child's equipped to deal with.

5 So we've shifted a significant amount of resource --  
6 I said that earlier on -- from working with children who  
7 are already in our care to supporting families and  
8 recognising ... the judgement recognised that parenting  
9 is undertaken by humans, who by definition are fallible,  
10 so parenting is not an exact science and at points will  
11 be barely adequate was actually the finding, and it's  
12 not the state's -- the state should not by definition  
13 intervene to remove children in all of those sets of  
14 circumstances.

15 So a significant I think reflection for us about (a)  
16 the importance of birth families and about the support  
17 to rehabilitate children with their own families and/or  
18 the definition of birth families to be widened and  
19 include people we hadn't previously been in contact  
20 with.

21 So we've currently got 1,300 young people in kinship  
22 care placements, and that's our biggest group of  
23 children that we look after is in kinship placements.

24 So all of that -- our view of birth families and how  
25 to support children there has shifted really quite

1 significantly in my time.

2 Q. When you say kinship placements, is that in a formal  
3 kinship placement that has been authorised in some way?

4 A. (Witness nodded)

5 Q. It's a child who is in the care of the Local Authority  
6 but it placed with a formal kinship carer?

7 A. Yes, so 1,300, I think it's 1,335, I can't recall the  
8 exact number, those 1,300 children have been placed by  
9 us and the kinship carers also have a kinship care  
10 agreement, have been assessed and are being supported  
11 financially in service terms by social work services.

12 LADY SMITH: So if we add that figure to the figure you gave  
13 us earlier, that's over 2,000 children in a form of  
14 fostering, if I can use that general term --

15 A. Yes.

16 LADY SMITH: -- for which the council's responsible?

17 A. Yes.

18 MS INNES: If we can look over to the next page in this  
19 document to page 8, there's a page here about foster  
20 parent's responsibilities, it says:

21 "Fostering is a shared caring between the social  
22 work department, the foster parents and the child.  
23 Foster parents, however, have some key  
24 responsibilities."

25 Those are described as:

1            "To care for the child, to watch over health and  
2 well-being, to bring up a foster child in his own  
3 religion, to let the social work department know of any  
4 serious incident affecting the child."

5            Then on the other side of the page:

6            "To permit any person authorised by the Strathclyde  
7 social work department to see the child and to notify  
8 the social work department of any change of address  
9 before the actual move."

10           In terms of setting out the foster parent's  
11 responsibilities, I assume from what you've already said  
12 that that has also changed over time?

13 A. Yes, it has. It would relate back to my answer to your  
14 question about did that description and the report, has  
15 that changed, it was to provide care, and my answer  
16 about it's actually significantly more than care. So  
17 watching over health and well-being would be -- our  
18 expectation of foster carers and a foster care placement  
19 is that it actively promotes the physical and mental  
20 health and well-being of the children in care and  
21 actively promotes supporting those children to achieve  
22 the best that they can.

23           So it's connected to that answer about providing  
24 care, our expectation of foster care has changed quite  
25 significantly and that would be reflected in what we

1 would see as a foster carer responsibility.

2 Q. It's not just about putting a roof over somebody's head,  
3 feeding them a meal, taking them to the doctor if  
4 they're ill and taking them to the dentist?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Right, we can leave that document now, please, and if we  
7 can go back to your response, if we can move on, please,  
8 to page 6. We've seen some documents from 1976 that  
9 were produced by Strathclyde and then there's reference  
10 to an officer and member report leading to a new  
11 strategy the, "'Home or away': residential childcare for  
12 the 1980s". Are you able to explain a little bit about  
13 this strategy?

14 A. In terms of its purpose?

15 Q. Yes?

16 A. It had its genesis, as I understand, in some of the  
17 wider national inquiries in relation to residential care  
18 and the issues particularly in relation to safeguarding  
19 in terms of residential care. It was a recognition by  
20 the authority at that time that we hadn't -- we didn't  
21 have a strategy that articulated the purpose and  
22 function of residential care or considered particularly  
23 the rights and the voice of the children.

24 So some of what you see in the "Home or away"  
25 document directly relates to some of the enquiries that

1 had taken place or had been produced at that point in  
2 time in terms of the voice of the child, the  
3 safeguarding, the need for external scrutiny of  
4 residential care. So that was some of what prompted the  
5 department at the time to articulate in the Home or  
6 away.

7 Q. When it says "residential care" there, does it mean  
8 institutional care --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- as opposed to foster care?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. If we move down to the bottom of the page there, you  
13 refer to a report by the director of social work in  
14 1995. Just at the end of the Strathclyde period.  
15 I wonder if we could just have a look at that document,  
16 please. It's GLA-000001824.

17 We see here that Strathclyde Regional Council report  
18 to the social work committee by the director of social  
19 work. In the introduction it says:

20 "The report outlines the general areas that will be  
21 covered in a presentation to members of the subcommittee  
22 on fostering services within Strathclyde ... the  
23 presentation will focus on the number and needs of  
24 Strathclyde's foster carers, the children in the care  
25 and the department's work in recruiting, supporting,

1 retaining carers and the concerns of foster carers."

2 Again if we scroll down, I think we see some further  
3 numbers in relation to how many foster carers there were  
4 at the time.

5 It says in -- if we can just go up a little bit --  
6 the first paragraph that we can see there:

7 "Finding the right kind of care to match the needs  
8 of vulnerable children and young people has always been  
9 a key priority for the department. In recent years  
10 a decline in the number of approved foster carers has  
11 been a major concern. In 1990 there were over 700  
12 foster carers in Strathclyde. In 1994 Strathclyde has  
13 over 650 ... the number of long-term foster carers has  
14 fallen by 60. A significant number of additional foster  
15 carers have to be recruited to meet the needs of the  
16 region's children and young people in care."?

17 LADY SMITH: Do you know what was being regarded as  
18 long-term foster care in 1995?

19 A. So that pre-dated -- we've now got the National Care  
20 Standards, we have definitions, so that would pre-date  
21 that. I'm not sure it would have been specific.

22 Generally -- so I would have been a social work at  
23 that particular point in time, my understanding of it  
24 would be "long-term" would be where you've been back to  
25 a hearing and it's named that placement as a long-term

1 placement for the child. So it would be anything from  
2 two years plus.

3 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

4 MS INNES: It then goes on to say:

5 "Despite the reduced numbers of children and young  
6 people in the care of the Local Authority, it is  
7 a matter of importance to the council to maintain  
8 an appropriate range of placements that can provide high  
9 quality care in both residential and family-based  
10 settings."

11 Has that remained a matter of importance to the  
12 Local Authority?

13 A. Yes, absolutely. So as well as the work that we've done  
14 in terms of Families for Children and our improvement --  
15 and about Families for Children services, we had an  
16 improvement plan in terms of our residential services  
17 which we provide, we have 19 residential care units  
18 which we're responsible for in the city, all of them in  
19 the city, so we have both of those things working at the  
20 same time.

21 Q. Then it highlights certain groups of children and young  
22 people who were in residential, so institutional care,  
23 need family-based care and there are listed some target  
24 groups. So some younger children, usually in sibling  
25 groups, who are placed in residential care because other

1 options are not available.

2 A. Mm-hmm.

3 Q. So that seems to have been an issue at that time.

4 A. Mm-hmm.

5 Q. Then young people leaving care need a strong base for  
6 support that could be provided by family-based care.

7 A. Mm-hmm.

8 Q. I'm assuming that's referring to aftercare --

9 A. Mm-hmm.

10 Q. -- as it became known.

11 Then there's also reference to children:

12 "Between 100 and 150 children are referred to the  
13 regional resource exchange needing long-term family  
14 care."

15 Do you know what that's talking about?

16 A. Yes, at that point in the region as a social worker,  
17 I can't remember -- each of the districts within  
18 Strathclyde regional social work department had --  
19 apologies, I can't quite -- it was the district resource  
20 allocation meeting, or something along those lines. So  
21 when you were looking for long-term care, you had to  
22 make the case as a social worker to that -- so there was  
23 one in each district that then reported in to the  
24 regional headquarters and you had to get agreement and  
25 approval through those processes, having presented your



1 case.

2 Q. Okay. Below that we see that it mentions:

3 "About 25 per cent of the children placed with  
4 short-term foster carers spend more than two years in  
5 such placements waiting for long-term placements."

6 So that seems to be suggesting that children are  
7 waiting -- that the short-term placement must be shorter  
8 than two years, I suppose we can take from that.

9 A. Mm-hmm.

10 Q. Can you recall that being an issue at the time at the  
11 outset of your career?

12 A. Yes, what I can recall is that the attempts by the  
13 department to have resources that were available in  
14 terms of the different needs of children in short-term  
15 placements, emergency placements, long-term placements  
16 were inhibited by the number of carers that we had, by  
17 their ability to support children through that system.

18 So I do remember that being -- I do recognise those  
19 issues.

20 In terms of children perhaps being stuck and not  
21 necessarily in placements that were best meeting their  
22 needs or that were designed to best meet their needs.

23 LADY SMITH: That takes us back to the statistics given  
24 earlier about the number of foster carers and the type  
25 of foster carers, far more foster carers taking

1 short-term placements than there were foster carers able  
2 to take long-term ones.

3 A. Mm-hmm. I think, my Lady, it's also the availability  
4 overall. So I can't quite recall, I think it said 700,  
5 did it? So our numbers of foster carer households are  
6 432, looking after -- however many children, I have to  
7 remember when I said it earlier, so it's quite  
8 significantly different in terms of that ratio of  
9 available placements and the number of children that  
10 would be in placements.

11 So it's not that different -- so Glasgow City is not  
12 that different from the number of placements available  
13 that Strathclyde was at the time, but our numbers of  
14 children are significantly different. So I suppose  
15 that's an articulation of the improvements about the  
16 availability of placements and placements being able to  
17 meet children's needs and also our ability to meet the  
18 standard about no more than three children in placement,  
19 unless they are siblings.

20 So that does tell you how -- it does tell you how  
21 under pressure that service -- that system would have  
22 been at the time, if you compare it to the numbers that  
23 we have today. If that makes sense.

24 MS INNES: I think if we scroll up just a little bit,  
25 please, we'll see the numbers again. So just there,

1 just over 1,000 children placed with foster carers and  
2 in 1994, 650 foster carers. Plus these other points  
3 that were mentioned about other children that were  
4 needing care as well.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. I think it was saying at that stage that Strathclyde  
7 needed to attract about 250 new foster carers at that  
8 point.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. If we go on to the next page, please, there's discussion  
11 there about recruitment and publicity. Again in the  
12 second paragraph there we see:

13 "The key to successful fostering services is the  
14 level of support that can be provided ... three  
15 essential elements to the department's support --  
16 professional help, training and group support, and  
17 adequate financial rewards for the demanding tasks  
18 involved in fostering."

19 Just looking at these elements in terms of the  
20 support that the department gives to foster carers, are  
21 those still the three essential elements, would you say?

22 A. I think I would actually put children at the centre is  
23 the first thing there. I recognise the rest of them,  
24 absolutely.

25 So the professional help, we would articulate that

1 now as that supervision in the role of the supervising  
2 social worker to support the foster carer. So it's  
3 a competency based approach, both to recruitment but  
4 also to supervision.

5 So whilst I would recognise that, it's not how  
6 I would articulate it now and I think a successful  
7 fostering service is one that quite clearly is focused  
8 on children's welfare as being paramount.

9 Q. If we look a little bit down this page, please, we can  
10 see a paragraph now, the second paragraph from the  
11 bottom of the screen:

12 "The department's publicity and recruitment material  
13 for fostering has been revamped and will be introduced  
14 in March of this year."

15 Then there's reference to that material.

16 How has recruitment of foster carers changed over  
17 the time of your work with the Council?

18 A. So I refer back to the -- I think I mentioned that  
19 earlier. So in 2006 when I came into the head of  
20 children's services post, one of my reflections was we  
21 had social workers writing the publicity and the  
22 recruitment campaigns and materials and actually that's  
23 a -- it's a professional job, it's a communication and  
24 marketing job, it's not a social work job.

25 So at that point and to this day we employ -- we

1 have somebody in the Families for Children team who has  
2 responsibility for our communication and recruitment  
3 material ... for recruitment and ongoing support of  
4 foster carers.

5 So it's something that's -- the term -- what I would  
6 say is it's something that we've professionalised in the  
7 right profession rather than -- because I'm not sure it  
8 is -- communication and marketing is not something that  
9 you learn in your professional social work training.

10 Q. What methods do you use? Do you advertise? Do you --

11 A. Mm.

12 Q. In what media is that?

13 A. So the first thing that was new for us was the approach  
14 in terms of recruitment where at the first piece of work  
15 that the person who came into post did was an analysis  
16 of our current foster care group, looked at all the  
17 evidence base in terms of successful fostering, looked  
18 at the population in Glasgow City and beyond, the  
19 national standards to give us an analysis of where our  
20 foster carers were, what their own socio-economic  
21 profile was. They used the voting terminology, B1 and  
22 B2, so it was very professional, and it demonstrated to  
23 us where our potential gaps were in terms of the  
24 available population we had in the city and neighbouring  
25 authorities against our current profile of foster

1 carers.

2 So, for example, people in registered social  
3 landlord accommodation, people in single-parent  
4 households, some -- a significant under-representation  
5 in some socio-economic groups, and the issue in terms of  
6 diversity was one which we had recognised, but it has  
7 become more of an issue for the city as our population  
8 profile has changed. So we've now -- because of the  
9 asylum dispersal issue in the city, we have  
10 a significant -- when I started in social work, it was  
11 2.6 per cent of the population and now 25 per cent of  
12 the children in our schools in Glasgow come from  
13 a black, minority, ethnic background, which is fabulous,  
14 but that whole issue about diversity is one in  
15 recruitment that has actually become more apparent and  
16 more complex over the last while.

17 So the recruitment and advertising material was then  
18 focused on attracting those other people, you know, and  
19 other socio-economic groups who thought, "A foster  
20 carer, that's not for me".

21 We used a number of campaigns around about memories,  
22 that's one of the ones we used. We managed to get some  
23 celebrity endorsement for some of our campaigns, because  
24 again the marketing professionals were telling us that's  
25 what will land with the population that you're trying

1 to -- so it was very different in terms of the look of  
2 it, the feel of it. Significant use of social media,  
3 significant engagement with the wider media, so that --  
4 television, short films, we did a documentary, and in  
5 the printed media as well.

6 It's something that's refreshed on a regular basis,  
7 so they have responsibility for that website, which is  
8 refreshed on a regular basis. We do an analysis of the  
9 number of hits that we get on the website and then the  
10 conversion -- I can only repeat what I hear rather than  
11 understand it fully, a conversion from the enquiries and  
12 who goes to what page, because again that informs them  
13 for the next --

14 Q. Yes.

15 A. And the campaign is refreshed every year on that basis,  
16 so it's very different from how it looked in the 1990s.

17 Q. The next paragraph there talks about retention of foster  
18 carers. It's saying there:

19 "The evidence suggests that the loss of carers is  
20 still a major problem area."

21 Has that continued to be an issue since the 1990s or  
22 not?

23 A. It's stabilised quite a bit and in general terms the  
24 retention issue is about the age of the carers. And  
25 even at that, working really closely with carers in

1 their journey as carers -- a number of them when they  
2 become older move to be supported carers or shared  
3 carers, so they then offer support to a child,  
4 particularly children with disability, who remains with  
5 the birth family but has shared care once a month and/or  
6 somebody beyond the birth family who they can call on in  
7 an emergency or respite situation. So we encourage that  
8 journey for our foster carers if a full-time fostering  
9 becomes something that they can't continue with.

10 So the main reason that foster carers are  
11 de-registered is them coming to the end of their  
12 fostering career.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 LADY SMITH: Do you have a feel for the age at which in  
15 general your foster carers are deciding they can't do it  
16 anymore?

17 A. We have a number of older foster carers --

18 LADY SMITH: What do you mean by older?

19 A. In their 70s. And, again, really interesting feedback  
20 from young people. Some really, really interesting  
21 feedback from young people that often a placement with  
22 an older foster carer allows them to distinguish --  
23 I had a really interesting conversation not that long  
24 ago with a young person who's been in our care for  
25 15 years and had a very difficult experience in terms of



1 the break from her birth family and the set of  
2 circumstances that led to that, and took the decision to  
3 call her foster carers "grandma" and "granda". She's  
4 now a qualified social worker. But that allowed her --  
5 her articulation of that was her calling them "gran" and  
6 "granda" rather than "mum" and "dad" or "Mr" and "Mrs"  
7 allowed her to place them in a good place in her life  
8 story.

9 So it's a really fascinating insight, I think, into  
10 not making assumptions about the age of foster carers  
11 and their ability to continue to offer some really  
12 important support for our young people.

13 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

14 MS INNES: If we can look back to the A-D response, so at  
15 GLA-000001742, and if we can move on, please, to page 8.  
16 If we can just scroll down the page a little to question  
17 (c). So this is asking about funding of foster care, as  
18 in what the foster carers actually receive. Below that,  
19 in the 1975-1996 period, we see:

20 " ... the social work committee ... approved  
21 recommendations of COSLA regarding supervision of  
22 children placed in other regions. It was agreed that  
23 Strathclyde would continue to be responsible for  
24 fostering allowances for children outwith their area,  
25 paying it either directly or on an agency basis per the

1 receiving authority."

2 I think there that is some evidence of  
3 an arrangement I think with the Western Isles, where the  
4 Western Isles were going to undertake some supervision  
5 for Strathclyde and they would receive a payment for  
6 doing that.

7 A. Mm-hmm.

8 Q. From what you've said, that's not something that would  
9 be done now. Is that right?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. You mentioned earlier in your evidence that at  
12 the moment some children are placed with Glasgow City  
13 Council foster carers and some are placed with foster  
14 carers provided by other voluntary organisations. Now  
15 we understand that there's now something called Scotland  
16 Excel, which, correct me if I'm wrong, I think provides  
17 an overall framework through which Local Authorities can  
18 receive care from voluntary organisations.

19 Does Glasgow City Council use that framework or not?

20 A. In actual fact, so again it was one of the first things  
21 I did as the head of children's services in 2006,  
22 because there wasn't proper procurement or contractual  
23 arrangements in terms of those placements, nor was there  
24 in residential care, so actually Glasgow was the first  
25 authority -- so our foster care commissioning

1 procurement exercises pre-dated Scotland Excel by  
2 a number of years, because I was particularly conscious  
3 of having come from an adult world where procurement and  
4 procurement legislation and approaches is commonly used  
5 in adult services, and wasn't to the same extent at that  
6 point in children's services.

7 So actually our Local Authority was the first Local  
8 Authority to go out to tender properly for foster care  
9 services, and that was something that I was particularly  
10 keen that we did.

11 So we used this -- to answer your question, because  
12 of that, so we've got significant experience in terms of  
13 going out to tender for the commissioning of foster care  
14 placements, and have contractual arrangements and  
15 supervision in place.

16 So we have both running the same time, so depending  
17 on the needs of the child and the availability of  
18 placements, we'll use the Scotland Excel framework, but  
19 we've continued to run with our contractual arrangements  
20 in procurement in terms of foster care placements.

21 Q. Are there certain agencies that are in the Glasgow City  
22 Council framework?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. For example, is Barnado's one of those agencies, do you  
25 know?

1 A. I'd need to check that. They were in the past. Whether  
2 or not they currently are, I'm not entirely sure.

3 Q. Okay. So there would be certain agencies that would be  
4 within your own procurement system?

5 A. Mm-hmm.

6 Q. But am I right in understanding you to be saying that if  
7 you couldn't find a suitable resource within that or  
8 within your own resource, you would then use the  
9 Scotland Excel framework --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- to give a wider choice of providers, perhaps?

12 A. Yes. And we did work with Scotland Excel in terms of  
13 informing the process from our own experience, because  
14 it was an iterative process having not been attempted  
15 before in Scotland. So it was something that we learned  
16 from in terms of that procurement exercise and we did  
17 work with Scotland Excel to assist in their work.

18 MS INNES: My Lady, I wonder if that would be an appropriate  
19 time for our break?

20 LADY SMITH: If it would work for you, Susanne, we'll take  
21 a short break now and I'll sit again about 11.45.

22 A. Thank you.

23 (11.28 am)

24 (A short break)

25 (11.45 am)

1 LADY SMITH: Are you ready for us to carry on, Susanne?

2 A. Yes, I am. Thank you, my Lady.

3 LADY SMITH: Ms Innes, when you're ready.

4 MS INNES: Thank you, my Lady.

5 If we can go back to the A-D response, so  
6 GLA-000001742, and at page 18 at the bottom of the page.  
7 Here you're being asked about numbers. At the end of  
8 the page there:

9 "(a) How many children did the Local Authority  
10 accommodate at a time in foster care and in how many  
11 placements?"

12 It says:

13 "This information is limited. As far as the current  
14 senior management team of Glasgow City Council are aware  
15 there are no further records available or the  
16 whereabouts of any records are unknown to answer the  
17 said question further."

18 If we go on to the next page, 19, there's a list of  
19 periods for which you have figures available. So  
20 Glasgow, up to 1968, areas forming Strathclyde,  
21 Strathclyde divisions, Strathclyde region up to 1996.

22 Do you not have any figures for the Glasgow City  
23 Council period, so 1996 to date or up to 2014, which  
24 this is concerned with?

25 A. Yes, we do have information in relation to that.

1 Q. Okay. I think just so that you can see, can we just  
2 scroll down a bit, please. There's nothing there in  
3 that answer that tells us that you have material post  
4 1996 --

5 A. Ah.

6 Q. -- and I think it would be helpful to us to have that  
7 material if it's available to you.

8 A. Yes, of course. Apologies. I think that must mean that  
9 we've misunderstood what the question was, but I'm happy  
10 to look at that along with the team back in the Council  
11 and provide any information.

12 Q. Thank you. If we can move on, please, to page 26, this  
13 is again in relation to numbers and responsibilities,  
14 and here under (a) there's reference to an appendix up  
15 to 1967 and the answer says:

16 "Glasgow City Council and the predecessor  
17 authorities employed variable numbers of staff to work  
18 in residential care services for the number of the  
19 establishments they ran at any one time."

20 Is that referring to institutional care rather than  
21 foster care?

22 A. Yes. My apologies, that's an error, yes.

23 Q. It talks about available figures 1930 to 1967. There's  
24 then further questions that follow on from that at (b):

25 "How many people were employed ... who had some

1 responsibility for foster care services for children?"

2 And numbers varied. You say that there are  
3 available numbers 1930 to 1967. Again, I was wondering  
4 if you had any more information from 1967 onwards that  
5 you would be able to share with us. Obviously we  
6 understand that staff numbers vary, but it's helpful to  
7 get the sort of information that you've given us this  
8 morning about -- you know, the structure of the team and  
9 such like and how it's changed over time.

10 A. Mm-hmm.

11 Q. I wonder if that's something that you'd be able to  
12 discuss with the team?

13 A. Happy to discuss with the team. I'm not sure that we  
14 would have reliable information for periods of that  
15 time, but certainly from 1996 we would have that  
16 information.

17 We might need to seek some clarity on "responsible  
18 for foster care services", because I remember the  
19 discussion within the group in relation to this  
20 question, because some responsibility for foster care  
21 services currently would include me, for example, as  
22 well as those people who have got direct operational  
23 responsibility, like the 1 service manager, 5 team  
24 leaders and 28 qualified social workers. So there was  
25 a bit of a debate back and forward between ourselves,

1 but happy to have that conversation and supply anything  
2 and everything that we have.

3 LADY SMITH: If we could get something, and by all means  
4 caveat it with the warning it's a broad indication and  
5 the precise numbers aren't guaranteed, but enough to  
6 give us a feel, that would be very helpful, thank you.

7 A. Yes. I will do, my Lady.

8 MS INNES: Can we move on to Part C of your response, so  
9 this is at page 40. If we scroll down to the bottom of  
10 the page, this is a section, "Prevention and  
11 identification". As I think you'll recall, it looks at  
12 specific areas of policy and then the Local Authority's  
13 assessment of whether they'd been adhered to in  
14 practice.

15 A. Mm.

16 Q. Again, can you explain how you approached dealing with  
17 this section?

18 A. So there was discussion -- so -- we're aware of the  
19 national policy and guidance. In terms of the  
20 implementation of it -- so what we can evidence is the  
21 work that we've done to look at national policy and  
22 guidance, particularly as it's changed and how we've  
23 reflected some of those changes.

24 I haven't found anything and we didn't find anything  
25 where we hadn't ourselves developed policies that



1 weren't in line with national standards and guidance at  
2 the time and in some instances gone beyond that,  
3 particularly can talk more confidently about that  
4 currently.

5 We read the question as one about whether or not we  
6 could be confident everybody was following the policy  
7 and guidance, which running an organisation of our size,  
8 it would be foolish to say that you thought everybody  
9 was doing exactly as you have asked them to do in policy  
10 and guidance remit, so there was a bit of discussion  
11 within the group about what that question meant.

12 So we can evidence that we have the policies and  
13 procedures and we have undertaken work, particularly as  
14 a senior team, to implement them. We read the question  
15 as could we give a reassurance that everybody that works  
16 for us is on a daily basis following all of those  
17 policies and procedures.

18 Q. So when you came to the practice section --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- you're referring to where we ask: were these adhered  
21 to in practice?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. You're saying that you weren't really able to give  
24 an answer to that because you don't know or --

25 A. So we do audit work and we have Care Inspectorate -- so

1 we have external and internal scrutiny in terms of the  
2 implementation and adherence to national policy and  
3 guidance. I suppose for myself in terms of my  
4 professional responsibility, to make a statement that  
5 would suggest that every day every social worker that we  
6 employ, every social care worker that we employ, is  
7 doing as we ask them, particularly in the terms of this  
8 Inquiry, actually misunderstands the job that we have  
9 and the need to be alert to that not being the case.

10 In terms of our scrutiny of it, so we do have that  
11 in relation to the Care Inspectorate, but we also have  
12 an internal practice audit team who routinely, including  
13 in foster care, will undertake audits in terms of  
14 adherence to policies and framework and professional  
15 practice.

16 Q. Okay. If we can just have a look at some of this  
17 section, if we can move on, please, to page 44, where  
18 here, for example, there's a heading, "The child's  
19 views", so you've been asked -- just to put it in  
20 context, if you go back to 43, sorry:

21 "What did the policies and/or procedures set out in  
22 terms of the following?"

23 One of the headings there is:

24 "The child's views."

25 A. Mm-hmm.

1 Q. If we then go on to page 44 and towards the bottom of  
2 the page, we see:

3 "The child's views."

4 For the 1949 to 1975 period you refer to some  
5 guidelines for social workers and then for 1975 to 1996  
6 you refer to again some specific documents which you've  
7 shared with the Inquiry in relation to children's  
8 rights.

9 Can you just scroll down a little?

10 Again, there's nothing for the period from 1996 to  
11 2014 -- I say 2014 because that's, as you'll know, the  
12 terms of reference for the Inquiry.

13 A. Mm-hmm.

14 Q. Clearly from the evidence that you've given this  
15 morning --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- there have been changes since then.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. There's these guidelines and suchlike, so where have  
20 policies and procedures been set out since the City  
21 Council came into place?

22 A. So in terms of -- practically where they're set out, we  
23 have a policies and procedures section in our Glasgow  
24 City Council website that's social work services, so  
25 there's a range of policies and procedures placed there

1 that are regularly updated, so we have them in the one  
2 place and that's accessed by social workers and there's  
3 a public-facing element to that as well and we have  
4 a business support section who have got responsibility  
5 for oversight of our policies and procedures. For  
6 example, if we have a policy and procedure that's  
7 following national guidance that requires a review after  
8 a certain length of time, we have a business support  
9 team that ensures all of our policies and procedures  
10 themselves are adhering to timeframes in relation to  
11 reviews.

12 So we have all of them on our website. Again more  
13 than happy to take that away and give some more evidence  
14 to the Inquiry in relation to the range of them that  
15 relate specifically to foster care.

16 Q. That would be really helpful, thank you. I think you've  
17 shared with the Inquiry, for example, guidelines from  
18 1976 that are referred to and a book from 1986, but I'm  
19 sure that there must be further policies and procedures  
20 since then.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. I appreciate that not all of those are retained, because  
23 sometimes they're destroyed when new ones come into  
24 place, but it would be really helpful to have  
25 an understanding of how things have developed since,

1 particularly in the Glasgow City Council period.

2 A. Yes, of course. Happy to do that. We do retain them,  
3 but not on the website so I could also look at that in  
4 terms of evidencing to the Inquiry how they have  
5 developed or changed over the years, because that's part  
6 of our audit function is to retain them now so that we  
7 can see the change in policy and procedure.

8 Happy to take that away.

9 Q. If we can move on to page 52, which was one of the  
10 practice questions that we were looking at, talking  
11 about.

12 "Did the Local Authority adhere in practice to its  
13 policy/procedures in relation to the provision of foster  
14 care?"

15 Below we see the same list as we saw a moment ago.

16 You say:

17 "The documentary evidence shows a level of adherence  
18 across its policies and procedures."

19 Can you explain what you mean by that?

20 A. Yes, so that relates to my earlier comment and there was  
21 quite a bit of debate within the group in relation to  
22 that and it's specifically about -- our professional  
23 responsibility to be open to evidence that we're not  
24 adhering to policies and procedures in certain set of  
25 circumstances so you couldn't -- expressing an opinion.

1 You couldn't be certain, as I say, I have responsibility  
2 for 12,000 staff in the Health and Social Care  
3 Partnership. For me to publicly state that everybody  
4 every day is following the policies and procedures that  
5 we have in place I think would underestimate the task  
6 that we have.

7 So that was very specifically part of that  
8 discussion across the group, that to say we were  
9 confident that the Local Authority adhered to practice  
10 in all its own policies and procedures, we couldn't  
11 substantiate that.

12 Q. Okay. If we go on to the next page, please, which at  
13 (b) asks:

14 "How was adherence demonstrated?"

15 The answer there is:

16 "The level of adherence [to] policies and procedures  
17 can be discovered in boarded-out volumes/cards ...  
18 children born series ... and children's case files ..."

19 Up to the 1980s.

20 It must go beyond that as well. Again, can you  
21 explain your answer here, please?

22 A. That answer, I'm pretty certain, came from our archivist  
23 rather than something that was attributed to by the rest  
24 of the group, so again I'm happy to take that away and  
25 look to see what else we could provide to the Inquiry.

1 Q. Okay, thank you. More broadly, perhaps, when you talk  
2 about non-adherence, you'll be aware, I think, that  
3 Professor Abrams gave evidence to the Inquiry last week  
4 and she's produced a report.

5 A. Mm.

6 Q. I don't know whether you've had an opportunity to read  
7 her report or not.

8 A. Yes, I have, yes.

9 Q. I'm not going to ask you in detail about any of the  
10 cases that she mentions today, but she gives examples  
11 from her research of cases from the past where perhaps  
12 we heard evidence about a child being placed with  
13 an unvetted foster parent, for example, which wouldn't  
14 seem to adhere with policy or procedure.

15 A. Mm-hmm.

16 Q. That might be an example of where a policy hasn't been  
17 adhered to in practice.

18 A. Mm-hmm.

19 Q. Is that something -- and what's covered in  
20 Professor Abrams' report, is that something that you  
21 intend to reflect on further within the group?

22 A. We've had quite a bit of discussion in terms of  
23 reflection and we've decided that as well as myself  
24 coming to give evidence, we're going to have somebody  
25 senior particularly listening to the applicants'

1 evidence and at the end of this particular case study  
2 we're going to reflect in terms of all of what's been  
3 said, including the evidence from Abrams and put in the  
4 Biehal report as well, which was really quite  
5 interesting in terms of some of the reflections there.

6 Listen to the applicants and we'll do that directly  
7 and then reflect on what else we need to do in response  
8 to all of that and what learning we need to take from it  
9 and how that learning impacts on today's fostering  
10 service and how we manage and develop it.

11 So that would be our intention to -- unless  
12 obviously if we hear something of real significance that  
13 we require an immediate response to, in which case we  
14 would do that. But in general terms, we're looking to  
15 wait for the end of this case study and then reflect on  
16 all of the evidence.

17 LADY SMITH: From your responses you do give a specific  
18 failure identified, and that was the failure to carry  
19 out the required number of visits at a particular  
20 period.

21 A. Mm.

22 LADY SMITH: In respect of which it's suggested that the  
23 system was under tremendous pressure because the numbers  
24 of children.

25 A. Mm.



1 LADY SMITH: So you identified that. But Lynn Abrams was  
2 also able to identify a child being placed with  
3 an unvetted foster parent.

4 A. Mm-hmm.

5 LADY SMITH: Am I to take from the fact you haven't  
6 specified that in your response that in your trawl and  
7 Dr O'Brien's trawl you didn't find it?

8 A. We didn't in Dr O'Brien's trawl, but, again, having read  
9 the Abrams report, that is something specifically I've  
10 taken back to the team. We're also -- yes, so that's  
11 something we've taken back to the team specifically, but  
12 it wasn't something in Dr O'Brien's trawl that we  
13 identified.

14 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

15 MS INNES: Thank you.

16 Just staying with the Part C just now, if I can ask  
17 you to look, please, at page 71, this is dealing with  
18 complaints in relation to foster care. You explain:

19 "There are very large quantities of data under the  
20 general heading of complaints in our records management  
21 system (which has a total of 2-3 million records), with  
22 no way of identifying complaints about fostering."

23 I just wanted to ask you if you can explain a little  
24 bit more about that. Is it not important to identify  
25 complaints that relate to the fostering service? Are

1           they logged elsewhere other than in this large system?

2    A.   So we answered that question in relation to the past.

3           So they currently are and have been since 2006.

4    Q.   Okay.

5    A.   We answered that specific question in relation to the

6           past.  So that's exactly what we have now, we have

7           a central complaints log in relation to fostering which

8           is managed by the Families for Children team, supported

9           by our child protection team.

10           We also, because of some of the learning from --

11           some of the instances of abuse, we keep a log of;

12           complaints, concerns and allegations, and

13           differentiating between those three.  So we have

14           a central log kept of that.

15           We did attempt in 2006 when we pulled it together to

16           look at the historical -- so we did attempt to pull out

17           from the pre-existing records any that were historical.

18           Partly because again the learning, which we would concur

19           with, was it's really important to look at any

20           accumulation and/or if something in a different context

21           from which we were working now might be called

22           a concern.

23    Q.   Yes.

24    A.   And in the current context we would view as

25           an allegation, so that kind of change in terms of the

1 context in which social work services are delivering  
2 a service.

3 So we pulled whatever we were able to identify from  
4 the pre-existing system, we have that central system and  
5 we also now do an annual analysis of the complaints,  
6 concerns and allegations, just to identify as a team if  
7 there are any themes emerging from that and if there's  
8 any learning for the Families for Children team and/or  
9 our area team social work staff.

10 So we answered that question in relation to past  
11 rather than current, because I would agree with you  
12 that's very important.

13 Q. Everything has changed now?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Thank you. Can I just talk to you a little about your  
16 approach to the Part D response in terms of the  
17 methodology adopted? To assist you, perhaps we could  
18 GLA-000001758, page 2.

19 Here you were being asked by the Inquiry to explain  
20 your case file review methodology. Were files reviewed?  
21 If so, how many? Were children's and foster carer's  
22 files examined, were samples taken? Et cetera.

23 I think you explain below:

24 "No specific files were sampled because it was  
25 agreed that the most effective way, given the scale of

1 records involved, was to review robust data held by the  
2 child protection team with Glasgow City Council."

3 Can you explain a little bit about that, please?

4 A. Yes, when we looked at how we might pull that  
5 information together, we were conscious that it was in  
6 slightly different parts of the organisation and then  
7 particularly -- so the child protection team have got  
8 responsibility in relation to the historical abuse  
9 allegations, so they'll have some of that older data.

10 They have responsibility to -- specifically in  
11 relation to child protection allegations, to chair the  
12 child protection case conferences, case discussions that  
13 relate to fostering, because we recognise that as  
14 a particularly complex issue. Child protection issues  
15 in fostering is complex so we use our experts in child  
16 protection to chair that, so they hold that information.

17 The information that was held by the Families for  
18 Children team in relation to -- because that also  
19 included concerns and complaints as well as allegations,  
20 and then we had information from our claims department,  
21 because some -- it was our experience that some people  
22 would make a claim against the council having not  
23 previously raised a concern or a complaint or made  
24 an allegation.

25 So we did have some people who our claims department

1           were dealing who didn't actually feature in our systems,  
2           because they hadn't raised anything while they had been  
3           in our care.

4           So we discussed the best way of getting a sense of  
5           the scale of that and looking at those data sets and  
6           pulling them together. And that was what we used to  
7           then submit to the Inquiry.

8   Q.   Okay. If we just look down, you say:

9           "It should be emphasised that the finding aids used  
10          by the archivist make it impossible to distinguish  
11          between children who were adopted and fostered."

12          I assume that that's referring to the hard copy  
13          records that are retained in the Mitchell Library and  
14          overseen by the archivist?

15   A.   Yes.

16   Q.   Do you also have electronic files for children and  
17          foster carers?

18   A.   We do from a certain period of time, but not  
19          historically, we haven't. We haven't scanned and  
20          retained them. They're held in the archive.

21   Q.   Okay. You refer in the next paragraph to:

22          "The CP team historical log covers allegations made  
23          from 1999 to current but refers to abuse that happened  
24          from the 1960s to the 2010s."

25          I think as you've explained, that's a specific team

1 identifying allegations -- I think this might be  
2 separate from claims; is that right?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So it's different to claims, but it's where somebody has  
5 come forward since 1999 and made an allegation which  
6 perhaps relates to the past?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So there's a specific piece of procedure that we have in  
10 terms of responding to historical abuse allegations and  
11 it's led by the child protection team with a senior  
12 officer with specific responsibility. So that's the  
13 person who when we receive that does all the work in  
14 terms of attempting to find a case file working with  
15 Dr O'Brien and team at the Mitchell, so although it only  
16 started in 1999 -- so that was why we were looking at  
17 that information that was held by them, the information  
18 held by the Families for Children team and also the  
19 claims department.

20 It was quite a significant piece of work because  
21 there was crossover, but also distinct bits of  
22 information in each of those places.

23 Q. So there's that log, so people that have come forward  
24 since 1999.

25 Then you have foster care investigations held within

1 the CP team, and that covers investigations from 2006 to  
2 2019. So that was another source of information?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Then you say:

5 "The CP team were provided with a copy of details of  
6 claims in 2018 for allegations of abuse made against  
7 Glasgow City Council ... covering dates ... in claims  
8 from 1966 to 2018 ..."

9 Just to try to understand a little bit more about  
10 this data. Is that claims that were live in 2018 or did  
11 it refer to all claims that had been made up until 2018  
12 against the Council?

13 A. It related to all claims that had been made up until  
14 2018 that they had a record of.

15 Q. That they had a record of, yes.

16 Then you refer to the relevant retention periods and  
17 at the bottom of the page you refer to historians hosted  
18 by Glasgow City Council reviewing and sampling case  
19 files. Is that Professor Abrams and her assistant  
20 Linda Fleming? Is that who's being referred to there or  
21 is it somebody else?

22 A. Yes, it is.

23 Q. It is?

24 A. Yes, it is, yes.

25 Q. Okay, thank you.

1 I think that summarises the sources of information  
2 that you used to compile your answers to Part D of the  
3 section 21 response.

4 I suppose it might be said that there's a whole  
5 period from 1930 up until maybe the 1960s and then  
6 perhaps even up to 1999 where you've not been able to  
7 provide the Inquiry with much information. I'm just  
8 wondering whether there are any other sources that could  
9 be looked at or whether that's something you need to go  
10 away and reflect on.

11 A. Again happy to go away and reflect on. That was the  
12 discussion at the time. I think it might be helpful for  
13 us again to consider evidence from others. We might  
14 learn something from some of the evidence that you've  
15 taken from other authorities in terms of where else they  
16 looked. But that was the information that we had  
17 available to us. But, again, happy to go away and  
18 reflect and particularly take any lessons from any other  
19 authorities that are providing evidence as to where else  
20 we might look or what else we might do.

21 It was subject to significant discussion at the  
22 time, but happy to reflect on that.

23 Q. Thank you. It's helpful to have an understanding of the  
24 material that you used when responding to the request.

25 I'd just like to take you now to Part B, which is at



1 page 38. At the bottom of the page, at 3.1 you're  
2 asked:

3 "Does the Local Authority accept that between 1930  
4 and 17 December 2014 any children cared for in foster  
5 care were abused?"

6 And the answer to that is, "Yes".

7 If we go on to the next page, please, the next  
8 question posed is:

9 "If so, what is the Local Authority's assessment of  
10 the extent and scale of such abuse?"

11 The answer is:

12 "There has been no assessment of the extent and  
13 scale ..."

14 But you say obviously you're aware of a number of  
15 cases of sexual/physical and emotional abuse of children  
16 and young people.

17 I wonder if you can just explain why there has been  
18 no assessment of extent and scale?

19 A. Yes, so again there was quite a lot of discussion in the  
20 group in relation to that. So the work that we had done  
21 that we've previously described in terms of pulling  
22 together the different sources of information, our view  
23 was that gave us information in relation to what was  
24 reported, what was investigated and what was the subject  
25 of claims, some of which did cover people who hadn't

1 raised issues with us or made complaints or allegations.  
2 So we had a sense of the extent.

3 Again, it might be a language issue, but our view  
4 was about an assessment had -- because again  
5 professionally the extent and scale of abuse is not the  
6 same as the extent and scale of reported abuse in our  
7 opinion, and particularly when you look at -- the Biehal  
8 report in particular really kind of strongly resonated  
9 with myself. So for us to do an assessment of the  
10 extent and scale of something that people haven't yet  
11 told us about -- so we took it quite literally. There  
12 was quite a bit of discussion back and forward in the  
13 group. So we took it quite literally to mean we  
14 couldn't undertake an assessment of the extent because  
15 we have no sense of what has gone unreported,  
16 particularly in relation to that time frame, and the  
17 changing context in which children may or may not have  
18 been -- children and young people may or may not have  
19 been believed.

20 So we had quite a significant professional  
21 discussion about our responsibility to answer that as  
22 honestly as we could.

23 LADY SMITH: Did you not even attempt an assessment of the  
24 extent and scale of reported abuse?

25 A. Yes, we did, but that wasn't -- so I think that's the

1 point I'm saying in terms of the question. So we were  
2 clear we had an assessment of the reported abuse, but we  
3 didn't actually in that have an assessment of the extent  
4 and scale of such abuse.

5 LADY SMITH: Did you not think of answering that by saying,  
6 "Our assessment of the nature and extent of reported  
7 abuse is this ... we can't say anything about nature and  
8 extent of all abuse, including unreported abuse"?

9 A. Again, we can certainly reflect on that. The reason we  
10 didn't do that was because of our particular concern  
11 about the potential scale of unreported abuse,  
12 particularly in foster care.

13 LADY SMITH: It might have been helpful to us.

14 A. Happy to reflect on that. And we did seek further  
15 discussion with the Inquiry team on some of the  
16 questions on how we might answer them and I appreciate  
17 that that option's not available until we get to this  
18 stage, so this stage where we reflect on it, but it was  
19 very specifically about we couldn't say what's  
20 unreported and I think there are particular risks in  
21 relation to foster care.

22 LADY SMITH: Did you ask us about that? Whether we wanted  
23 to know what you could tell us on the issue of reported  
24 abuse?

25 A. My recollection of the questions we asked were in

1 relation to 3.2. I can't recall if we asked about 3.1,  
2 but we were advised to answer the question as best we  
3 could at that point in time and not -- that there wasn't  
4 an opportunity for dialogue.

5 LADY SMITH: We've asked similar questions, very similar to  
6 this, of institutions and organisations in other case  
7 studies and they have typically come back telling us  
8 what they have recorded on reported abuse.

9 A. Mm.

10 LADY SMITH: Very well.

11 Ms Innes.

12 MS INNES: If we can move on to acknowledgement of systemic  
13 failings. The question is:

14 "Does the Local Authority accept that its systems  
15 failed to protect children in foster care between 1930  
16 and 17 December 2014 from abuse?"

17 And the answer to that is, "No". Why is the answer  
18 "no"?

19 A. So this was a question that I'm certain we came back to  
20 the Inquiry team on, because there was a lot of debate  
21 about systemic failures and systemic abuse.

22 The question was framed in the same way as the  
23 question in relation to residential care, and we  
24 struggled with that because of the differences between  
25 the provision of residential care and foster care.

1           So again, even in terms of preparation for today,  
2           I'm happy to go away and reflect on this and  
3           particularly reflect on some of the evidence beyond our  
4           own. A lot of debate -- so some of our experiences of  
5           where abuse has occurred, it has occurred with systems  
6           and processes in place that absolutely match if not  
7           exceed all of the policy and guidance and abuse still  
8           happens.

9           That was our specific consideration in answering  
10          that question, because systems in and of themselves will  
11          not protect children in foster care from abuse.

12          So there was a lot of debate and we did come back to  
13          the Inquiry team with some questions and we were advised  
14          to answer that particular question from our own  
15          perspective because there wasn't that opportunity for  
16          dialogue.

17   Q.   Again going back to Professor Abrams's evidence, she, as  
18          you know, speaks about the boarding-out period and we  
19          know that that practice, the practice of boarding out  
20          outwith the city into the country areas, was something  
21          that was criticised in the Clyde report in 1946 --

22   A.   Yes.

23   Q.   -- and subsequently. Professor Abrams says that  
24          notwithstanding that, Glasgow Corporation, as it then  
25          was, continued that practice.

1           That might be said to be a system which has failed  
2           to protect children. Do you have any reflection on that  
3           at this stage or is that something that you would need  
4           to think about?

5    A. I think we would need to think about it. So we  
6           conflated the first -- part (a) and part (b), because  
7           systems failed and systemic failures, I know that sound  
8           a bit pedantic but those were the genuine conversations  
9           we had within the group, and about systemic failure and  
10          systemic abuse. So we did get caught up a bit in the  
11          question and how we might answer it.

12           It was genuinely not from a defensive point of view,  
13          it was from a point of view of making sure that we  
14          weren't making an assumption that systems in and of  
15          themselves would protect children, because in our  
16          experience they won't, and we have instances where, as  
17          I say, systems and processes have exceeded national  
18          guidance of practice policy and where children have  
19          still been abused, particularly in relation to sexual  
20          abuse, because the nature of sexual predators is such  
21          that in our experience systems are not in and of  
22          themselves able to prevent them from abusing children.

23           So there was significant debate within the group and  
24          discussion within the group and it was genuinely not  
25          from a position of defence. It was genuinely from

1 a position of understanding the risks to children and  
2 they won't be mitigated just by systems.

3 We have already reflected on that in terms of some  
4 of the feedback and a length of time between submitting  
5 the section 21 response and today. I'm more than happy  
6 to commit specifically on that one to go back and  
7 reflect on whether or not we would resubmit. Perhaps it  
8 would be helpful for us to articulate exactly that that  
9 I've just articulated about.

10 LADY SMITH: I'm wondering if there was some  
11 misunderstanding here, Susanne. The question was not  
12 whether or not Glasgow had systems but whether or not  
13 such systems as they had worked in a way that prevented  
14 abuse. I well understand that you can have many systems  
15 and children can still be abused. I'm very interested  
16 in that as I go forward looking at prevention of abuse  
17 in the future and protection of children from abuse. It  
18 may be a little confusion crept in here.

19 Thank you.

20 MS INNES: If we can scroll down a little bit to see the  
21 rest of the answer here. Again you say:

22 "No assessment has been carried out."

23 And then at (d):

24 "What is the Local Authority's explanation for such  
25 failures?"

1           The response there says:

2           "This abuse was unpredictable and because of the  
3           very nature of fostering, extremely difficult to  
4           detect."

5           I think that is probably what you've just been  
6           saying --

7   A.   Yes.

8   Q.   -- in your responses:

9           "Also relative to the significant volume of children  
10          and foster carers within the Inquiry's timescale, the  
11          abuse of children was an exceptional event."

12          Can you explain that a little bit more, please?

13   A.   I'm think I've missed the word "reported" in that as  
14          well, "in terms of the reported", so that relates  
15          specifically to the work that we had done in terms of  
16          the information that we had in relation to reported  
17          abuse. So again a reflection for us on the importance  
18          of language there, because in terms of the numbers of  
19          children that we knew in foster care over that time  
20          period and the reported abuse, so we've missed the word  
21          "reported", I think perhaps, to put that in context.

22   Q.   Are you aware if following, for example, any claims,  
23          complaints, any findings that foster carers have abused  
24          children, whether the Local Authority has carried out  
25          any kind of internal review to look at those



1           circumstances and to learn -- to perhaps look at its  
2           systems and say, well, were the systems all operating?  
3           Or what went wrong? And if it was something in the  
4           system, then fix it. Are you aware of any of that type  
5           of analysis having been undertaken in the past?

6    A.   In the past? We didn't come across any specific  
7           evidence in relation to that.

8           In current terms, so in the late 1990s and 2000s,  
9           that's specifically the work that we undertook in  
10          relation to that annual analysis of complaints, concerns  
11          and allegations, because I think again my perspective on  
12          that is you couldn't just look at allegations of abuse,  
13          you have to look at concerns and complaints because some  
14          of what we know from the abuse that has taken place in  
15          the past, when you go back and look at it, there may  
16          have been concerns and they've accumulated and again  
17          they've been miscalled, in the professional opinion,  
18          they've been miscalled as concerns.

19          So the work we do in terms of that annual analysis  
20          is specifically to look at whether or not there are any  
21          themes and then any changes that we need to make to our  
22          systems and processes.

23          The biggest one in recent times has been the  
24          supervision, the role of the supervising social worker  
25          and the recruitment issues in terms of how we work with

1 people at the point of the enquiry and work on  
2 a competency based approach.

3 And the other significant shift, which is more  
4 difficult to evidence, is a cultural shift. So my own  
5 observation would be, again congruent with Nina Biehal's  
6 report, is that the late 1990s, even into the early  
7 2000s, the foster care service was about the adults in  
8 the service and wasn't actually a child-centred service.

9 So how I would evidence that to the Inquiry I'm not  
10 sure, but I'm happy to think about that. We did call it  
11 out in the early 2000s that this was a service that  
12 needed to shift and you see the shift in terms of the  
13 fostering procedures and the foster care handbook, where  
14 we explicitly say the welfare of children is the  
15 paramount focus of this service, including for the  
16 supervising social worker, because there is specifically  
17 an issue about cultural approaches in the foster care  
18 support to foster carers that was miscalled as support  
19 to the adults as its primary function.

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. In supporting the adults your primary function is --

22 Q. Supporting the child.

23 A. -- to ensure the welfare of the child.

24 We could certainly again reflect on how we might  
25 provide some evidence to the Inquiry, but, yes, we do

1 look at that and it's not just allegations or reported  
2 abuse, it's the concerns and complaints as well, because  
3 I think that tells us something else about our service.

4 Q. Yes, and those sorts of reflections are very helpful to  
5 us, so if you do have more information to share with us  
6 in relation to that, that would be most helpful.

7 A. (Witness nodded)

8 Q. Then finally in this section we have a heading:

9 "Acknowledgement of failures/deficiencies in  
10 response."

11 The question here is:

12 "Does the Local Authority accept that there were any  
13 failures and/or deficiencies in its response to abuse  
14 and allegations of abuse ..."

15 The answer to that was, "No".

16 Then it's in relation to the following questions  
17 where it says:

18 "What is the Local Authority's assessment of the  
19 extent of any such failures?"

20 Following on from that it simply says:

21 "No assessment has been carried out."

22 Again, can you perhaps explain why the answer was  
23 no, that the Local Authority doesn't accept that there  
24 were any failures in responding to abuse?

25 A. I think again on reflection that's a language question,

1 because we took the question to mean in that entirety of  
2 the period and we couldn't answer that question. We  
3 could answer the question if we broke down some of that  
4 time frame. So we couldn't answer the question from  
5 1930 to 2014 --

6 Q. No.

7 A. -- in a single response. So that was our particular  
8 issue in relation to that.

9 So, again, happy to take that away, because I think  
10 we can particularly more recently, when I say "more  
11 recently" probably from the early 2000s and it is some  
12 of the reports that have been provided to the Inquiry  
13 already, the Abrams report and the Biehal report, are  
14 evidence that's already been presented to the Inquiry,  
15 so we can make the reference to that. So, again, happy  
16 to take that away.

17 I think that would be our response. That would be  
18 perhaps to chunk it down a bit. We had taken it as:  
19 Can you answer that as a single time frame?

20 Q. It's certainly possible to provide an answer that  
21 divides between different timeframes or show us where  
22 any significant changes occurred.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Again, that would be very helpful.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You've indicated on a number of occasions that there are  
2 matters that you're going to go away and reflect on.  
3 I think particularly you've said that you arranged for  
4 a senior member of your team to be available to listen  
5 to the evidence of applicants --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- when they give oral evidence and that you intend to  
8 reflect on that as well. I think I've already indicated  
9 through your legal representatives that it would be  
10 helpful if at the end of this case study, which will be  
11 some time away yet, it would be helpful if you could  
12 come back and give evidence again to us, just reflecting  
13 on some of the issues that we've discussed today, and  
14 most importantly on the evidence of applicants.

15 A. (Witness nodded)

16 Q. I think you're prepared to do that; is that right?

17 A. Absolutely. I'd welcome that opportunity. I'm keen to  
18 do that.

19 MS INNES: Thank you very much for your evidence, Susanne.  
20 I have no more questions.

21 LADY SMITH: Susanne, I have no other questions at the  
22 moment. Thank you for the homework that you've agreed  
23 to take away. It would be very helpful if that could be  
24 attended to.

25 Thank you also for agreeing that you'll come back at

1 a later stage. Obviously we'll be in touch with you  
2 about the timing of that.

3 A. (Witness nodded)

4 LADY SMITH: But that's all for now --

5 A. Thank you.

6 LADY SMITH: -- and I can let you go with my gratitude for  
7 you being here today.

8 A. Thank you.

9 (The witness withdrew)

10 LADY SMITH: Ms Innes.

11 MS INNES: I have another witness scheduled for the  
12 afternoon from Stirling, so --

13 LADY SMITH: We could rise now and sit again -- 2 o'clock  
14 the witness is expecting to start; is that right?

15 MS INNES: Yes.

16 LADY SMITH: Very well. I'll sit again at 2 o'clock.  
17 (12.35 pm)

18 (The luncheon adjournment)

19 (2.00 pm)

20 LADY SMITH: Good afternoon.

21 We turn to Stirling Council, is that right,  
22 Ms Innes?

23 MS INNES: Yes, my Lady, and we have Wendy McKitterick, who  
24 is a team leader at Stirling.

25 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

1 Ms Wendy McKitterick (affirmed)

2 LADY SMITH: If we could begin by you telling me how you'd  
3 like me to address you, I'm happy to use your first  
4 name --

5 A. Yeah, just, please, Wendy, thanks.

6 LADY SMITH: Very well, Wendy.

7 You'll see you have a hard copy there of the  
8 Council's written responses. Documents will come up on  
9 screen as well, you might find that helpful.

10 If you have any questions or concerns at any time,  
11 please let me know. If we haven't finished your  
12 evidence at about 3 o'clock, and I suspect we won't,  
13 I'll take a short break then, but if you want a break at  
14 any other time, do tell me --

15 A. Okay, thanks.

16 LADY SMITH: -- because it's important that you're as  
17 comfortable as you can be while you're giving your  
18 evidence.

19 If you're ready I'll hand over to Ms Innes and  
20 she'll take it from there.

21 Ms Innes.

22 MS INNES: Thank you, my Lady.

23 Questions from Ms Innes

24 MS INNES: Wendy, I understand that you are a team leader  
25 for adoption and fostering at Stirling Council. Is that

1 correct?

2 A. Yes, that's correct.

3 Q. You've provided the Inquiry with a CV giving us some of  
4 your background and career history, and I think you have  
5 been a social worker with Central Region and then  
6 Stirling thereafter, so you began with Central in 1994.  
7 Is that right?

8 A. I did, yes.

9 Q. Initially you were in what's called a locality team  
10 I think, up until 2001. Is that right?

11 A. That is right.

12 Q. And a locality team, I think, correct me if I'm wrong,  
13 is a team in a local area that do generic social work?

14 A. Children and family social work, yes.

15 Q. Then from 2001 to 2007 you worked with the emergency  
16 duty team, again in Stirling. Is that right?

17 A. That is right, yes.

18 Q. In 2007 you moved into the adoption and fostering team;  
19 is that right?

20 A. Yes, that's correct.

21 Q. In 2013 you were appointed team leader for adoption and  
22 fostering?

23 A. Yes, I was.

24 Q. So essentially since 2007 you've specialised in the area  
25 of adoption and fostering?



1 A. I have. In addition to that, I've been on the fostering  
2 and adoption panel from 1996.

3 Q. Okay. So much earlier in your career, in 1996, you  
4 became a member of the fostering and adoption panel?

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. That's continued throughout, has it?

7 A. Yes, so originally was a panel member and currently I'm  
8 the panel adviser.

9 Q. Okay, thank you.

10 I'd like to take you to part of the response that  
11 Stirling have prepared to the section 21 request made by  
12 the Inquiry. On the screen now you can see  
13 STC-000000023. Under 1.1(a), if we just scroll down  
14 a little, we can see the predecessor authorities for  
15 Stirling Council. There are were a number of different  
16 authorities, Stirling Burgh, Stirling County Council,  
17 part of Perth and Kinross, Bridge of Allan, Callander,  
18 Doune, Dunblane, all prior to 1995?

19 A. That's right, yes.

20 Q. Then the period of Central Regional Council, with  
21 Stirling District Council being one of the district  
22 councils around at that time and since 1996, Stirling  
23 Council?

24 A. That's correct, yes.

25 Q. Then I think you set out some of the background material

1           that the Council holds for each of these periods. Am  
2           I right in thinking that Stirling holds the Central  
3           Regional Council archive?

4    A.   That is correct.  If cases -- unless they were open  
5           cases.  So at the time of disaggregation, when Central  
6           Region became Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmannan  
7           Councils, Stirling would retain any closed social work  
8           files.  If they were open, they would have gone to the  
9           respective authorities.

10   Q.   Okay, thank you.

11           I understand that you have been heavily involved in  
12           the preparation of the response to the Inquiry's notice.  
13           I'd just like to ask you a little bit about how you went  
14           about that.  I'm going to come to the case file review  
15           separately, but apart from looking at case files, what  
16           did you do?  Did you set up a team?  Who was on the  
17           team?  That sort of thing.

18   A.   Stirling Council received a notice in August, it would  
19           have been 2019.  We set up a strategic team involving --  
20           so the lead on that team was Marie Valente, who is the  
21           senior manager for social work and she's the Chief  
22           Social Work Officer.  And also we had legal people on  
23           that time, we had finance people, we had records people,  
24           we had service manager for children and families and  
25           myself, I was on that team.  That team took an overview

1 of how we were going to gather the information for the  
2 section 21 and they were also able to allocate tasks or  
3 bring in additional staff.

4 In addition to that, we had an operational team that  
5 managed the file-reading project and that was separately  
6 managed by our service manager children and families,  
7 along with a project manager from the council.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So there was the strategic team that also tracked them,  
10 ensuring that we were getting the information, that we  
11 were on track in time for submissions and that we were  
12 getting the right people to give us the right  
13 information.

14 So there was two strands to how we approached the  
15 response.

16 Q. Okay, thank you. Again, apart from looking at case  
17 files themselves, what sort of documents did you  
18 consult?

19 A. So we were able -- so the finance people were able to  
20 access archives, so the records -- the records and  
21 governance people were able to provide us with minutes,  
22 committee records, as we can see, the list of records  
23 that were provided. In addition to that we were able to  
24 source -- we also have service records from social work.  
25 We had -- yeah, governance reports. So the legal people

1 were able to get us some insurance information, for  
2 example. And some limited legal records we were able to  
3 access.

4 So there was a range of records that we were able to  
5 access across the council. HR, actually, we used HR  
6 records as well. So there's a range of people we  
7 brought in to be able to answer very specific questions  
8 for us and be able to access information for us.

9 Q. Okay, thank you.

10 I'll come to the case file review, but to assist  
11 you, please, if we could have STC-000000035. At the  
12 bottom of this page -- I'm not looking at the substance  
13 of your answers to this at the moment, but if we look at  
14 (b):

15 "What is the basis of that assessment?"

16 We see here:

17 "The authority undertook a review of social work  
18 cases which include cases of children in foster care  
19 throughout 1930 to 2014. The authority has identified  
20 a limited number of allegations of abuse and confirmed  
21 abuse."

22 Initially you say:

23 " ... Stirling Council retain approximately 17,000  
24 childcare files in total to screen for admission to  
25 foster care between 1930 to 2014."

1           Is that paper files or electronic files? How are  
2           they held?

3   A. So they're held primarily through paper files, although  
4           from around 2015 all files for children are digitally  
5           held. But at the records centre there are about 17,000  
6           files in total and we knew early on records had  
7           indicated to us we had that number, but we also then had  
8           to consider how we were going to look for specifically  
9           children in foster care files.

10   Q. You noted that those had to be screened --

11   A. Mm-hmm.

12   Q. -- so can you just tell us what that involved?

13   A. Yes, so Stirling Council took an approach that we would  
14           attempt to find as many allegations/complaints as  
15           possible and read as many files as possible. That was  
16           our aim. We had a team of 50 file readers in an attempt  
17           to do that.

18           So what we originally used was -- we have a social  
19           work inventory and that social work inventory indicates  
20           to us retention rules for files. So, for example, we  
21           initially used the 100-year retention rule and what that  
22           did for us was able to find us children who had been  
23           accommodated.

24   Q. Yes.

25   A. But that also finds you children who have been in

1 residential care, as well as children who have been in  
2 foster care.

3 In addition to that, we used the 35-year retention  
4 rule. That helps you locate foster carer files.

5 So initially we used that approach.

6 In addition to that, records had indicated to us  
7 that there were many files that didn't have retention  
8 rules in the records centre. So what we did was to  
9 ensure we were trying to gather information from across  
10 the decades, we had records that didn't have retention  
11 rules brought up to do some file reading. Sometimes  
12 they were child in foster care records that didn't have  
13 a retention rule and sometimes they weren't relevant  
14 records. So that was our approach.

15 Q. Okay. If we go over the page to page 2, at the top of  
16 page 2, we see that from the review of 2,512 files, of  
17 which 880 were children's files and 40 were foster  
18 carers' files, so I'm not going to go into the rest of  
19 the statistic there, but am I right in understanding  
20 that out of the 17,000, you identified just over 2,500.

21 A. (Witness nodded)

22 Q. I think you've later told us that some of those were  
23 children who weren't in foster care?

24 A. (Witness nodded)

25 Q. Out of the 2,500, you identified 880 children's files

1           and 40 foster carers' files. Is that right?

2   A. So Stirling Council have an apology to make here,  
3           because there is a typo and there should be a 1 in front  
4           of the 880.

5   Q. Okay.

6   A. Because actually the figure is --

7   LADY SMITH: I did wonder.

8   A. Yes, yes. Our accountant helpfully pointed that out to  
9           us. So the actual figure is 1,880 children in foster  
10          care files. So we do apologise for that.

11   MS INNES: Thank you for explaining that.

12                You had 1,880 children's files and 40 foster carer  
13          files?

14   A. (Witness nodded)

15   Q. Did you read all of those files?

16   A. Yes. File readers read all of those files, yes, and  
17          completed templates where relevant.

18   LADY SMITH: Can I just check one other thing? In that  
19          section, 5.2(b), you tell us you've identified 17,000  
20          childcare files. We then get 2,512 children's -- of  
21          which 1,880 were children's files and 40 were foster  
22          carers'. So do we start with a group of files 17,000 in  
23          total, many of which weren't the children's files --

24   A. No.

25   LADY SMITH: -- but they were other files to do with

1           childcare?

2   A.   Some of those files, children's files, were children  
3       that hadn't been in care.  So, for example, they'll be  
4       children's files where they might have been on  
5       a supervision order.

6   LADY SMITH:  Of course.

7   A.   There'll be voluntary arrangements.  So those other  
8       reasons that we'll have children's files that aren't  
9       necessarily in care files.

10  LADY SMITH:  So in care in terms of some form of  
11       residential --

12  A.   Exactly.

13  LADY SMITH:  -- including foster?

14  A.   That's right, my Lady, yes.

15  LADY SMITH:  The figures had to make sense in some way --

16  A.   Yes.

17  LADY SMITH:  -- I could see that they were all to do with  
18       that service, but we get down to 1,880 children's files,  
19       40 of which were foster?

20  A.   Yes.

21  LADY SMITH:  That is for the period 1930 to 2014?

22  A.   That is right.

23  LADY SMITH:  Thank you.

24  MS INNES:  You said that those files were all read by file  
25       readers with the assistance of a file-reading template.



1 Can you give some kind of indication of the things that  
2 you put on this template?

3 A. So what the project team did was looked at the foster  
4 care study and considered how we would best get the  
5 information to populate -- because if you can imagine if  
6 you're reading 2,512 files, ultimately 1,880, you need  
7 to be able to translate that information in a way that  
8 makes sense and ultimately to be able to accurately  
9 answer the Part D response. So we needed eventually to  
10 be able to have numbers and answers for all these that  
11 could be pulled across to make sense.

12 So we used the foster care study template itself and  
13 populated that into file reading templates that the file  
14 reader would answer the questions and they were  
15 eventually pulled over, with the help of the project  
16 team and accountants to do that, to get numbers.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I hope that makes sense.

19 Q. It does, thank you.

20 You're talking about the Part D here and getting  
21 numbers. Did you use the file-reading template to allow  
22 you to extract information from files that would inform  
23 other parts of your response to the Inquiry's notice?

24 A. So I also had my team sit -- so I manage a fostering and  
25 adoption service, and I had another template that my

1 team completed to allow us to gather further information  
2 for the wider foster care study as well as the work that  
3 I was doing around extracting information from committee  
4 minutes, service records, et cetera. So my team  
5 separately did file reading in respect of wider  
6 questions and we had a different template for that.

7 Q. For example, in Part C of the notice, you'll know that  
8 there are questions that talk about policy and practice,  
9 and in the practice questions it asks for the Council's  
10 assessment of whether their policies were being adhered  
11 to in practice. Did you use the file reading that was  
12 undertaken to inform your answers to those types of  
13 questions?

14 A. I used the file readers from my team's templates to  
15 answer those questions.

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. The other file readers were answering very specifically  
18 in respect of allegations of abuse.

19 Q. Did the file readers for your team, were they looking at  
20 a selection of the large number of files that the file  
21 readers were going through?

22 A. They looked at a smaller number. You'll see, I hope,  
23 that I reference some of those template answers in the  
24 study -- I couldn't refer you specifically to that point  
25 because it's a big study, but I did use some of the file

1 reading from my own team to inform some of those  
2 answers, as well as wider reading of information in  
3 respect of governance, committee, service et cetera  
4 records.

5 Q. Thank you very much for explaining that.

6 I wonder if we can look at something in your Part A  
7 response. So STC-000000023, I want to ask you about  
8 a couple of matters in this.

9 Just bear with me a moment. (Pause)

10 LADY SMITH: I am wondering whether somebody connected by  
11 WebEx has not silenced themselves. (Pause)

12 Thanks.

13 MS INNES: Thank you.

14 Looking at STC-000000023, which we have up now, if  
15 we can look please initially at page 7. In the bottom  
16 part of this page at (e) you're addressing the question:

17 "To what extent was financial support from the Local  
18 Authority available to foster carers?"

19 Then below that you summarise, I think, material  
20 that you drew from some of the records that you looked  
21 at.

22 A. (Witness nodded)

23 Q. For example, we can see here Stirling Burgh and you note  
24 some information that you obtained from that. If we go  
25 down to the bottom of the page, for example, you refer

1 to boarding-out allowances and some details of what  
2 foster carers were actually being paid at that time.

3 A. (Witness nodded)

4 Q. If we go on, I think we can see that you extracted  
5 information in relation to Stirling County Council as  
6 well.

7 If we go on to page 9, in the middle of this page we  
8 can see Central Regional Council, and then Stirling  
9 Council, and I think you did some additional work in  
10 relation to payments of fees and allowances to foster  
11 carers which we'll look at just in a moment. Just to  
12 put it in context, you say there:

13 "Stirling Council financially support foster carers  
14 by providing a fee element and age-related allowance  
15 element for the child, as well as Stirling Council  
16 providing payment for travel, equipment, holidays,  
17 Christmas and birthdays."

18 And then discretionary funds might also be  
19 available. So over the period of Stirling Council, up  
20 until 2014, was this the way in which foster carers were  
21 paid?

22 A. That's right, yes. As we note here, that we had aligned  
23 ourselves with the COSLA and actually NFC and ultimately  
24 Fostering Network recommendations around payments.

25 Q. If we could look, please, at STC-000000105. If we can

1 maybe expand it slightly if possible. We see here  
2 a table that has the years down one side, then we have  
3 a column of fees under different levels, allowances for  
4 different, I think, age groups, telephone allowance and  
5 suchlike. If we go on to pages 2 and 3, it appears that  
6 this information has been extracted for a number of  
7 years going back to 1994/1995?

8 A. That's right, yes.

9 Q. Was this done by your finance team or --

10 A. Yes. Our accountants drew this information for us.

11 Q. If we can perhaps just go back to page 1 again so that  
12 we understand the material that's shown here.

13 We can see over this time that there are fees being  
14 paid for level 1, level 2 and level 3. Can you explain  
15 what that's about?

16 Sorry, page 1.

17 LADY SMITH: Can we see the top of the columns just to see  
18 what the headings are?

19 That's great.

20 A. That's helpful, thanks.

21 So, yes, I can explain that. So if you note in the  
22 foster care study we commented in the introduction of  
23 payment for skills for foster carers and this relates to  
24 the payment for skills.

25 So, for example, a level 1 foster carer, all foster

1 carers would come in at level 1 when they were  
2 registered as foster carers, with the very few  
3 exceptions around if, for example, they had been foster  
4 carers previously or they may have been teachers with  
5 very specific qualifications, they maybe enter into the  
6 fee structure at level 2, but primarily most carers  
7 would come in at level 1.

8 MS INNES: Okay.

9 A. In order -- you would not be able to reach level 2 for  
10 two years, so you had to evidence over that time  
11 experience and training, and there were additional that  
12 you would have to evidence within a review report of  
13 some work that you'd managed to undertake during that  
14 period, for example specific work with birth families,  
15 transitions for young people to adoptive families, for  
16 example, and by the time you get to level 3, you have to  
17 be representing the council in some way.

18 So, for example, some of our level 3 carers would  
19 have undertaken the skills to foster course and they  
20 might have delivered that alongside our social workers  
21 who do the skills to fostering course.

22 So the structure was based on training, experience  
23 and competency.

24 Q. Okay. Then in addition to the fees, we see that there  
25 are allowances, I think different payments perhaps based

1 on age. Is that right?

2 A. That's right, age-related allowances.

3 Q. Are the allowances paid per child?

4 A. Yes, they are paid per child.

5 Q. And are the fees paid per child or --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. The fees are paid per child. However, there's a caveat  
9 to that. If the third child, they receive half a fee  
10 for a third child in placement.

11 Q. Okay. Then there's reference to a telephone allowance,  
12 which has been in place, and mileage that foster carers  
13 can claim presumably. What would that be for?

14 A. So the mileage, so in relation to the handbook that you  
15 will see that we submitted, so mileage will be, for  
16 example, if you have to attend meetings, if you have to  
17 take a child to appointments, if you have to support  
18 a child for contact, then you are paid mileage.

19 The only exception to that really is, for example,  
20 if you might take the child to the cinema or you're  
21 taking them on a family outing with you, then we  
22 wouldn't reimburse you for mileage costs because that's  
23 part of the allowance that is paid for a child. There's  
24 a transport cost within that.

25 Q. Then there's particular payments for birthday, holiday

1 and Christmas and these --

2 A. That's right, yeah.

3 Q. -- seem to be paid at a particular rate, certainly over  
4 the period that we're looking at here.

5 Has the system of payment for foster carers changed  
6 at all or is that being reviewed?

7 A. So we reviewed the payment structure to foster carers  
8 in -- we arrived at a new payment structure in 2020 and  
9 we made some changes to that payment structure.

10 We'd listened to Care Inspectorate findings from our  
11 inspections and some of the comments to us were, you  
12 know, "We think that children should spend less time  
13 away from their foster carers". Foster carers have  
14 a 28-day holiday entitlement --

15 Q. Right.

16 A. -- and what we did was we reviewed the payment structure  
17 so that we compensate foster carers for not taking any  
18 time away from the child. It was really in line with  
19 encouraging families to have children -- claim children,  
20 have a true sense of belonging, go on all the holiday  
21 activities, and that has been incredibly successful,  
22 I would say, in terms of just making sure the children  
23 are fully experiencing all aspects of the foster care  
24 family life.

25 Q. Thank you.



1           If we go back to STC-000000023 again, please, to  
2           page 22. A little bit down the page under "Numbers",  
3           and we're asking here:

4           "How many children did the Local Authority  
5           accommodate at a time in foster care and in how many  
6           placements?"

7           You provided some information in relation to that,  
8           but I think that we can see from 1987 perhaps up until  
9           the late 1990s, in some years there's zero and in some  
10          very few. Can you explain that?

11        A. So we apologise for that. Because our databases aren't  
12        able to extract the information in the way that we would  
13        like, so you'll see as time goes on -- so obviously the  
14        number zero is not accurate and we shouldn't have  
15        included that, so I will make an apology for that.

16        But as time went on, our SWIFT database, which is  
17        our database which captures all the information about  
18        children, improved being able to extract figures for us.  
19        So the earlier figures we would have had to manually  
20        count and we just didn't have the capacity to do that.  
21        We would have had to went back to records.

22        But these figures became more accurate and we  
23        actually wanted to include the -- as at 31 December each  
24        year figure, because that's very important because those  
25        figures are very accurate because they're drawn from our

1 service, from spreadsheets that we use in our service,  
2 and that's part of our fostering annual returns.

3 So as at 31 December we have to provide an account  
4 of how many children are in placement.

5 What I would say, and I don't know if you want me to  
6 talk to this, but our numbers in foster care have  
7 significantly reduced.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So our numbers look quite different to this now.

10 Q. Okay. And why is that?

11 A. So a range of reasons, actually. I think most Local  
12 Authorities are experiencing something very similar. So  
13 we've had quite a significant service redesign in our  
14 authority. We've focused resources on supporting birth  
15 families to enable children to remain with their birth  
16 families, so we have family group decision-making now,  
17 we have Includem, we have functional family therapy. We  
18 also have a therapist that's based in my team that will  
19 also support families.

20 So what we've seen our figures changed from -- we  
21 have got now 30 children in full-time foster placements,  
22 but interestingly 18 children accessing short-break  
23 placements, because that's telling us that we're  
24 supporting more children in the community to stay in  
25 their families, but we're able to provide the

1 short-break service.

2 So we've put significant supports into birth  
3 families, into keeping children at home, and at the same  
4 time our children being looked after in kinship  
5 placements has probably at least doubled. I think we  
6 have about 90 children in kinship placements in  
7 Stirling, so that's about rightly so our support to  
8 kinship placements, the legislation that's encouraging  
9 kinship placements and also all the work that's being  
10 done around the Promise and what children tell us.

11 So what children tell us is if I can be in my family  
12 or my extended family, I want the support to be able to  
13 do that, and so our service has significantly  
14 transformed and is continuing to.

15 Q. Thank you.

16 LADY SMITH: Do you record the kinship placements separately  
17 from what you're calling foster care placements?

18 A. We absolutely do. I could have brought you those  
19 figures, my Lady, I apologise, but we do separately  
20 record those and they've significantly increased over  
21 time.

22 LADY SMITH: Because of course it is still, for the purposes  
23 of my interest, care away from the birth family home,  
24 albeit with some relatives, hence the term kinship.

25 A. That's right, yes. That's right.

1 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

2 A. But it is a dramatic shift, I would say.

3 LADY SMITH: That takes you on those figures up to circa  
4 120?

5 A. So we have -- yes, that's right. So we now have --  
6 sorry, 34, sorry, we have 31 children in full-time  
7 foster placement and 3 in enhanced fostering placement  
8 and we have 18 accessing short breaks, and we have  
9 around 90 children in kinship placements.

10 But that's increasing over time.

11 LADY SMITH: Enhanced fostering placement? In your  
12 terminology, what does that cover?

13 A. So what we recognised in Stirling as part of our  
14 transformational change was that we wanted to support  
15 children where possible to stay in families, foster  
16 families, rather than to live in residential. Because  
17 what we've seen is good outcomes for children in foster  
18 families, with lifelong links, with better job  
19 prospects, et cetera, and keeping children local.

20 What we also wanted to do -- which interestingly is  
21 in line with all the Promise findings -- is if you keep  
22 children local, they can access their family, they can  
23 access their community, they can access all the things  
24 and there's much less loss for children.

25 So we decided to develop an enhanced foster care

1 project, which is a very specific project where children  
2 might have went to residential. So what we've done is  
3 the -- we have brought foster carers in with specific  
4 skills and experience. There'll be no other children in  
5 placement. And we have a wrap-around support to that  
6 foster placement, with therapeutic supports, more  
7 meetings, with educational psychologist support. So  
8 it's a much more intensive support to that foster  
9 placement, which has been very successful and has  
10 allowed -- although we have very small numbers in  
11 Stirling, and I recognise that Stirling's a small  
12 authority, even in those smaller numbers we've been able  
13 to avoid children leaving their communities and being  
14 able to stay in foster families and I'm quite delighted  
15 by that.

16 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

17 MS INNES: I'd like to take you on to something else that  
18 you looked at when you were looking at numbers. Can we  
19 go on to page 31, please, at the very bottom of the  
20 page. You were asked the question:

21 "How long did children typically remain in the care  
22 of the Local Authority?"

23 You refer to a table illustrating the children's  
24 length of stay in foster care from 2005 to 2019. If we  
25 go over the page to page 32, do we see this table broken

1 down over the various years referred to. At the  
2 left-hand side we have under six weeks, between six  
3 weeks and six months, six months to a year, one year to  
4 three years, three to five, five to ten and at least ten  
5 year. And then numbers against each of these  
6 categories. Why did you attempt this type of analysis?

7 A. So I think this is quite helpful for us, because it  
8 helps us think about -- so you see that figure 18? That  
9 allows us to see the increase in children -- the less  
10 than six weeks is including children who access short  
11 breaks, so that increased figure of 18 allows you to see  
12 those children as well.

13 The other thing that it allows you to see is the  
14 permanence planning that we have developed over time.  
15 I did get the current figures actually in relation to  
16 permanent placements and what we see is -- we did some  
17 PACE work in Stirling, the permanence and care  
18 excellence programme that was supported by CELCIS, we  
19 were the very last of the collaborative to that project,  
20 and that allowed us to have additional supports and I'm  
21 one of the leads on that project for the service, and  
22 that allowed us to look at the Scottish Government's  
23 aims to have children reach their permanent destinations  
24 as early as possible.

25 So in Stirling we've done a huge amount of work

1 around permanence planning and our figures that you're  
2 not able to see today will show you that around children  
3 much more with their permanent decisions made,  
4 including, as we all know, permanent means that some  
5 children go home. So that's also perhaps why you're  
6 seeing the lower figures in foster care, that children  
7 might come in but we are making plans for them to either  
8 return home quicker or we're seeing them go to kinship  
9 placements, for example.

10 So there has been a lot of change over time, and  
11 certainly many more efforts in relation to permanence  
12 planning for children, because it is very important,  
13 children living with uncertainty in their lives is very  
14 unhelpful for them. They don't -- they have a right to  
15 a sense of what's next for them. You know, for example,  
16 if you're a child and you don't know where your next  
17 Christmas is going to be or when you're going to live  
18 with the next family you might live with, you know,  
19 I think we can't underestimate what any drift in delay  
20 means for children in our foster care. And Stirling  
21 Council has worked very hard, along with our legal  
22 services, our team leaders, and we're continuing to do  
23 work on that actually.

24 So that's where we see a lot of planning is focused  
25 on permanence for children.

1 Q. We see in the breakdown here that essentially the  
2 largest number of children across the piece, I suppose,  
3 were in foster care for between one and three years,  
4 fewer on either side of that, I suppose.

5 A. (Witness nodded)

6 Q. From what you're saying, this type of analysis would  
7 help you feed into your own planning as well?

8 A. Exactly, and that's where we use this. What we did  
9 during our PACE work, it was very helpful process wise  
10 actually, because sometimes you think you know things  
11 but we had wonderful graphs that helped us look at  
12 trends and we realised the work that we needed to do.

13 So some of that -- like, for example, we're focusing  
14 a lot currently on our children that are subject to CSOs  
15 currently, around children not being in statutory  
16 systems, you know, so we've done a lot of work using  
17 data with the support of our PACE work, so that children  
18 are not in for long periods of time without there being  
19 a plan for them.

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. So I think that's -- data has been very helpful and  
22 that's something I've learned as a social worker.

23 LADY SMITH: Wendy, another question for you in relation to  
24 understanding this table. If you take, for example, the  
25 top line, in foster care for less than six weeks, right



1 over at 2018 to 2019 for 18 children. I'm just  
2 wondering where the 18 figure came from and whether it  
3 was because you just looked at a particular point in  
4 each year for children numbers. Do you see what I mean?  
5 Because I can imagine that at different points in the  
6 year you'll have different numbers of children who are  
7 in foster care for less than six weeks. Did you fix  
8 a date?

9 A. I agree with you, my Lady, because that figure also  
10 includes -- so the less than six weeks will also --  
11 because of our systems will capture children who might  
12 go to a short break carer for -- once a month, for  
13 example. So that's why you've got a high figure like  
14 that.

15 The other thing that it's worth thinking about  
16 I think here is my experience is children are in for  
17 shorter periods of time now because they may go to  
18 kinship earlier, so for example that is definitely  
19 happening.

20 What you'll see is you'll see children that may be  
21 in for a couple of weeks in an emergency and people  
22 recognise that there is family that are able to look  
23 after them. So you'll have children in for a short  
24 period of time with quick plans made.

25 LADY SMITH: So in that 18, you could have the same child

1           actually appearing several times --

2    A.   You could.

3    LADY SMITH:  -- for those short-burst foster care breaks?

4    A.   We are resigning our system.  We're trying to rely much  
5           less on spreadsheets and we're currently looking at  
6           commissioning a new computer digital database that will  
7           be able to accurately record more information.

8           I think we didn't use our annual returns for this,  
9           because actually your annual returns do provide you with  
10          much more detailed information over time, the annual  
11          returns have asked us for that, but that has helped us  
12          in our planning, some of our annual return information.

13          So I guess it's quite a blunt tool, but hopefully  
14          helps people understand a bit of context.

15   LADY SMITH:  Thank you.  It's reassuring that I'm following  
16          it correctly.

17          Ms Innes.

18   MS INNES:  Thank you, my Lady.

19          Can I ask you about a couple of other things.

20          One is something that's referred to at page 48 of  
21          this document.  This is dealing with structures and  
22          oversight and supervision arrangements.

23          If we go to the middle of the page under (b):

24          "What were the oversight and supervision  
25          arrangements by senior management?"

1           There's reference within that answer to a scrutiny  
2           panel on the fostering service. Are you able to tell us  
3           what the purpose of that panel was?

4   A. Yes. It is in the appendix, that document. I think it  
5           says modernising social work scrutiny panel.

6           This was ensuring that the services were ready for  
7           the new standards in -- the new fostering standards.

8   Q. Okay.

9   A. As well as that they'd improved -- as you will be  
10          familiar with in reference to other aspects of our  
11          report, there was the Sandy Jamieson report that we're  
12          asking -- that implemented some changes.

13   Q. We'll come back to that in a bit more detail.

14   A. All right. Not all of that was around that, but it was  
15          looking at putting more funding into the service and  
16          making sure we were ready for standards that were being  
17          implemented at that time.

18   Q. Okay.

19   A. That was an interesting panel, actually, when I looked  
20          at it because of the nature of the make up of who was on  
21          that panel, including some councillors, I think actually  
22          were involved with that. So I thought that was quite  
23          an interesting thing to make reference to.

24   Q. Okay. If we could look briefly at the minute that  
25          you've referred to, so it's STC-000000102. If we can

1 just scroll up a little, please. We see this is from  
2 2003, the ad hoc scrutiny panel on the fostering  
3 service.

4 If we go down a little, this is a report for the  
5 Children's Committee on the findings of the panel. At  
6 2.2 we see the membership of the panel. As you have  
7 said, it comprised some councillors, officers from  
8 children's services, Chief Executive services and civic  
9 services supported the panel. At 2.3 it is noted:

10 " ... the panel agreed to scrutinise the fostering  
11 service's readiness for its first inspection by the Care  
12 Commission in terms of the [relevant parts] of the  
13 National Care Standards."

14 That's what you have mentioned. It says:

15 "The panel met on seven occasions and individual  
16 members met with foster carers and social work staff  
17 involved in the fostering service. Panel members also  
18 attended training days for foster carers and foster  
19 carer annual reviews."

20 That seems to be the type of work that they carried  
21 out and I think that, as you've mentioned, there were  
22 various recommendations, as we see listed on the bottom  
23 of this page and onto the next page.

24 For example, at the top of page 2 we see one of the  
25 recommendations was publishing a revised foster carer

1 handbook and making sure that that contained the  
2 information relevant to satisfy the standards. There  
3 are various other recommendations that were made at that  
4 point.

5 You do say it was an ad hoc panel, so it seems just  
6 to have met for a few occasions --

7 A. Mm-hmm.

8 Q. -- and then fed into that work. Is that correct?

9 A. Yes, from reading the minutes, it was a very specific  
10 purpose. The national foster care standards were  
11 a significant improvement and scrutiny of the services  
12 actually, and I think it was as very helpful thing that  
13 the council did to make sure they were ready, they were  
14 putting the right resources around it, that they had the  
15 right processes in place. And actually, when  
16 I reflected on this, being in the fostering world for  
17 a long time, I do commend Stirling Council to at that  
18 point making sure they were ready for it actually. It  
19 was quite reassuring for me when I reflected on it, that  
20 I saw this, actually.

21 Q. Okay.

22 I would like to ask you about another thing that  
23 Stirling did, which is my understanding that it operated  
24 a shared services model, I think, with Clackmannanshire  
25 between 2013 and 2015. Is that right?

1 A. That is right.

2 Q. Was it a shared services for children and families or  
3 what was it?

4 A. So they talked about a shared service. If we look back  
5 at reports, committee reports in respect of the shared  
6 service, they began to talk about it in 2006. At that  
7 point they thought there might be some cost-saving  
8 benefit/some organisational benefits and they just  
9 didn't seem ready to proceed at that point.

10 By the time we arrive at 2010, when we looked at  
11 minutes from then in committee reports, it seemed that  
12 there were some practical things that were happening  
13 across the two local authorities in respect of vacancies  
14 and also there was -- still seemed to be a welling  
15 belief that although they would have political  
16 independence from each other, the councils, that they  
17 could benefit from sharing costs, organisations, there  
18 would be efficiencies and they decided therefore at that  
19 point in 2010 to start a shared service.

20 The lead authority for the shared service in respect  
21 of social work was Clackmannan Council.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And I also have personal experience of that, because  
24 I was involved, I was obviously as a fostering social  
25 worker and I became the manager just at the beginning of

1 the shared service, actually, and although there was  
2 a great deal of hope around how it might benefit both  
3 authorities, there were significant challenges across  
4 the councils in managing that.

5 LADY SMITH: How was it thought it would be better than the  
6 previous system?

7 A. So having worked in the Central Region Council, we  
8 recognised, so for example Falkirk and Stirling are  
9 actually quite small authorities, so sometimes economies  
10 of scale -- there had been some auditing done actually  
11 around cost savings with particular services, so for  
12 example if you only have one service manager across two  
13 authorities, then you only -- and staffing costs are  
14 significantly high in Local Authorities, it's one of the  
15 biggest costs in a Local Authority. So some of the  
16 organisations they thought sharing some of those might  
17 save costs.

18 But the challenge was if you have political  
19 independence and different political agendas, different  
20 processes, different communities to respond to,  
21 different priorities, then -- and existing structures  
22 within your own authority. I can talk to it  
23 specifically if you want in relation to fostering.

24 LADY SMITH: I get the feel -- I think I'm also right in  
25 saying it was something that was picked up by the

1 Competition and Markets Authority in the paper, the  
2 review paper, they published last October under specific  
3 reference, if I remember rightly, to this shared service  
4 that had operated in Clackmannanshire and Stirling area.

5 A. So one of the comments in the committee report said that  
6 Stirling had significant costs attached to it.

7 LADY SMITH: Yes.

8 A. So Stirling then withdrew from the arrangement.

9 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

10 MS INNES: I'd like to move on to your Part B response now,  
11 Wendy. This is at STC-000000127. This is a revised  
12 Part B response which the Inquiry has received from you,  
13 I think. You'd taken the opportunity to review the  
14 terms of your Part B and reflect on what was originally  
15 in it and this is now the Part B that you rely on.

16 A. (Witness nodded)

17 Q. In respect of the acknowledgement of abuse, we see that  
18 the Local Authority accepts that children were abused,  
19 children in foster care were abused.

20 In terms of the assessment of the extent and scale  
21 of such abuse, I think you say there that you -- as we  
22 saw, although I didn't take you to it in the Part D,  
23 that you had identified 62 children in foster care who  
24 had made complaints of abuse.

25 A. (Witness nodded)



1 Q. That is from a sample of 1,880, so we see the number --

2 A. The corrected one.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. It's said there:

6 "The council identified additional cases between the  
7 time of the original Part B response and the submission  
8 of the Part D response."

9 So there were some -- they were submitted at  
10 different times, I think, and there were some changes,  
11 but this is the final position, having done all of the  
12 analysis.

13 A. (Witness nodded)

14 Q. You say:

15 "A cautious approach was taken and any incident  
16 which it was considered might fall within the Inquiry's  
17 definition was included."

18 Can you just explain the thinking behind that?

19 A. So if you see our Part D response tables under  
20 "Numbers", you'll see on that the nature of the  
21 complaints and allegations that we've included. We read  
22 over 2,000 files and file readers extracted information  
23 and populated the templates.

24 Some of the -- I think if you further interrogated  
25 some files, you might find some more information. Some

1 information that, with further scrutiny, you might have  
2 had more detail. So we acknowledge that the information  
3 we provided in the Part D table was limited to the  
4 template. We did want to include any comments that had  
5 been made by children where they had experienced not  
6 good enough care in all respects, actually in that  
7 table, and I think that's what we did.

8 Q. Okay. You go on to say:

9 "It is acknowledged that there will be other  
10 examples of complaints being documented ... which have  
11 not been found."

12 And:

13 "It is also acknowledged that, in some instances,  
14 abuse may have occurred and there will be no record of  
15 it."

16 Obviously the file readers were looking for,  
17 presumably, either something that they recognised as  
18 a report of abuse or something that at the time had been  
19 recognised as a report of abuse?

20 A. That's right, yes.

21 Q. But you acknowledge that there may be other cases in  
22 which no report has either been made or recorded, is  
23 that --

24 A. That is right, and we have to acknowledge that, you  
25 know. Some files may have -- some records may have 12,

1 14 files, people, and it relies on people filing in the  
2 right place, for example, if you've got a paper record,  
3 you know, is it in the right place? Has it been  
4 recorded? So you can never say you've captured  
5 everything, and I think it would be disingenuous for us  
6 to say that, actually.

7 Q. Thank you, Wendy.

8 If we can move on to part 3.2, "Acknowledgement of  
9 systemic failures". In response to the first question  
10 there, you accept that the council's systems did fail to  
11 protect children in foster care within the relevant  
12 period of the Inquiry.

13 Then you're asked for the Local Authority's  
14 assessment of the extent of any failures in its  
15 response. I think here you refer to something that you  
16 mentioned a moment ago in your evidence, a report by  
17 an independent consultant, Sandy Jamieson. Can you just  
18 tell us a little bit about how it came to be that  
19 Mr Jamieson was instructed to prepare a review?

20 A. There was a case where children had been involved in  
21 sexual abuse in the foster carer home. This invoked  
22 child protection procedures, there were child protection  
23 case conferences. Children were subject to the child  
24 protection register. Children were moved from those  
25 placements and there was an acknowledgement that in that

1 case, that after scrutiny of the specific case, that  
2 there was some issues of serious concern that the Local  
3 Authority would need to improve on.

4 Q. If we can look, please, at a couple of the documents in  
5 relation to this. STC-000000133, first of all. We see  
6 that this is a meeting of the management team of  
7 Stirling Council on 25 January 1999. If we go on to  
8 page 3 at the bottom of the page, it says there under  
9 the heading "Child protection", Peter Bates, who I think  
10 was then the interim head of child and family services  
11 or social work at that time?

12 A. Yes, he was, actually, because I remember, because I was  
13 an employee -- I was a social worker during this period.

14 Q. It says:

15 "Peter Bates advised that the investigation into  
16 a child protection issue had been completed. The report  
17 identified failure in systems and in communications and  
18 set out an action plan. Numbered copies of the report  
19 were being delivered to the chief executive and relevant  
20 directors. Peter suggested they alone read this  
21 detailed report.

22 "The chair of the care committee will be given  
23 an outline of the report and its action plan.  
24 Keith Yates will speak to the leader of the council.

25 "Sandy Jamieson is now starting a wider look at

1 other areas of social work operation, including  
2 fostering procedures and case conferences."

3 So after this initial review Mr Jamieson was asked  
4 to do a much wider review, is that right?

5 A. That's right, that is correct. I think one happened  
6 earlier in 1999, the January of that year was the  
7 specific report into the case itself, and then they did  
8 a further report on the wider aspects of children's  
9 services during that time.

10 Q. If we look on, please, to STC-000000126, I think we see  
11 that there's a notice of a meeting of the Children's  
12 Committee, 22 June 1999.

13 If we go on, please, to page 55, we see here, if we  
14 scroll down a little, I think, a report for the  
15 committee:

16 "Child protection and related childcare services in  
17 Stirling."

18 The purpose of this, as we see, was:

19 "To inform members of the background, purpose and  
20 scope of the recent independent audit of a specific  
21 child protection case and, as a consequence, of a full  
22 independent inspection of childcare procedures and  
23 services in Stirling Council."

24 Then if we scroll down again, I think we see some of  
25 the background. So at 2.1:

1 " ... matters of very serious concern were  
2 identified in November 1998. These encompassed not only  
3 child protection issues, but also the quality of foster  
4 care and supervision and support given to several  
5 children looked after and accommodated by the Council."

6 It's noted that there was a decision to commission  
7 an independent audit.

8 Again at 2.3, do we see it says:

9 "It was important to ascertain whether the concerns  
10 were specific to this case, or of wider concern."

11 Then there was an inspection, it says at the bottom  
12 of the page, from February to March 1999. If we go over  
13 the next page there's reference to the consultant's  
14 report finding that the level of service had fallen  
15 below a safe standard.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You said that you were a social worker quite early in  
18 your career at that time --

19 A. (Witness nodded)

20 Q. -- can you recall this report being issued or what  
21 happened thereafter?

22 A. So we -- social workers -- this was not widely  
23 distributed around the council, social workers never got  
24 sight of it. We were aware it existed, and I was aware  
25 there was anxiety -- I wasn't involved in the case

1 directly, but I was aware of other social workers'  
2 anxiety and I didn't know the detail of the case, but  
3 there was a lot of anxiety around it.

4 I was also aware that people were moved. You know,  
5 it's quite a small authority, Stirling, so you're aware  
6 that some staff were moved from their positions.

7 Following this also there was a couple of changes --  
8 I was on the panel at the time actually, I was a panel  
9 member, and I remember having some training in respect  
10 of registration of panel members and to ensure that we  
11 were keeping the numbers of children in foster care --  
12 we weren't having huge numbers of children being looked  
13 after in the one foster care placement. I remember that  
14 specifically, actually.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I also remember that we had a new tier of management  
17 introduced quite soon after and we had seniors that came  
18 into our offices following this.

19 So I was aware of it. We didn't directly see it,  
20 the report, but there were changes within the Council,  
21 I would say, and also the fostering service.

22 LADY SMITH: Wendy, you mentioned there was anxiety. This  
23 must have had a bit of the air of being the talk of the  
24 steamie, whereas you didn't know exactly what it was  
25 that you had to talk about.

1 A. Yes, exactly, my Lady. Yes, it was very much like that,  
2 because I worked as a social worker in the Bannockburn  
3 office at the time and there were child protection  
4 investigations going on, but it was obviously -- people  
5 were confined to what they could share. But people were  
6 anxious, colleagues were -- you could feel the anxiety  
7 and I agree with you, it was a bit like that.

8 The very odd thing about that scenario is in some  
9 respects I wonder if we might approach this differently  
10 now, because I think it's always better to be more  
11 transparent with your social work workforce, to get them  
12 alongside you when you're making changes.

13 LADY SMITH: They might be able to help the authority in  
14 learning from what's gone wrong and developing their  
15 systems and practices for the future.

16 A. Yes.

17 LADY SMITH: If you can share information, subject obviously  
18 to confidentiality, but inasmuch as you can share  
19 information, if you do it.

20 A. I agree. I think if we considered this now, we might  
21 have a more transparent approach to it and use it for  
22 learning rather than creating anxiety for people and  
23 secrecy, because we all make something out of rumour,  
24 don't we?

25 LADY SMITH: Indeed.



1 A. But I think it's helpful that we've acknowledged it in  
2 our submission.

3 LADY SMITH: Thank you very much, I'm very grateful to you.

4 A. And I think it's helpful -- what I found about this as  
5 well when I looked at it, and I've also looked at  
6 subsequent inquiries where foster care's been involved,  
7 there are some quite similar themes, you know, so  
8 supervision of staff, training, adequate staffing, you  
9 know, very similar themes. Although there is  
10 improvements, actually, and I hope I'm -- in the service  
11 that we deliver and we have a lot more learning now  
12 around research and how that informs how children  
13 communicate to us, et cetera, visiting, et cetera.

14 But it is interesting that professional supervision  
15 of staff is highlighted commonly in any inquiries, isn't  
16 it?

17 MS INNES: Would that be an appropriate to take a break?

18 LADY SMITH: Afternoon break?

19 I promised you a break at around now, Wendy, so if  
20 it's okay with you, we'll do that for a short period.

21 A. Okay.

22 (3.07 pm)

23 (A short break)

24 (3.18 pm)

25 LADY SMITH: Wendy, I hope that's been long enough to give

1           you a breather before we carry on. Was that okay?

2   A. It's fine, thank you very much.

3   LADY SMITH: Ms Innes.

4   MS INNES: Thank you, my Lady.

5           Can we go back to the document we were looking at  
6           just before the break, STC-000000126, and on page 58 if  
7           we could scroll down to paragraph 4.8, I think this sets  
8           out the various deficiencies that were noted in the  
9           review.

10          One of them, as you've already said in your  
11          evidence, Wendy, was the inadequate supervision and  
12          support to staff was one of the issues.

13   A. (Witness nodded)

14   Q. There were various other matters, such as lack of  
15          properly developed procedures, organisational and  
16          structural weaknesses and other issues.

17          Was action taken after that?

18   A. So we did submit a minute from I think it was 2003, was  
19          it, where we did refer to there had been some  
20          acknowledgement of progress made. I can talk to some of  
21          this because I was there. So, for example,  
22          organisational structures, they included new seniors.  
23          We had new staff that were introduced.

24          I also had experience of being supervised in  
25          relation to a workload management system, and that

1 system was quite -- a system that was very rigid around  
2 you would be allocated a certain amount of hours for  
3 a case that you were supervising, so you would get three  
4 hours to do visits, you would get two hours for a phone  
5 call, et cetera, et cetera, and we moved from that to  
6 a much more professional supervision template and we  
7 moved away from focusing on the hours to more of the  
8 quality and reflection of supervision, I would say.

9 One of the significant things, I think, that came  
10 out of this, and I think our service is benefitting from  
11 this, our fostering service, is that the Council  
12 committed a significant amount of funding to recruitment  
13 of foster care and also to the staffing of the fostering  
14 team.

15 So from my time as a social worker, on a panel,  
16 being a fostering social worker and a manager, we have  
17 been supported well by staff, and, for example, we  
18 recruit well in Stirling for foster carers. That allows  
19 you to be able to match within your locality. For  
20 example, we only have one external foster placement.  
21 All our children in Stirling are primarily placed with  
22 Stirling foster carers.

23 So I do think, despite there were challenges through  
24 the Sandy Jamieson time, that I think it set out a good  
25 stall for the future in relation to what a good

1       fostering service would look like.

2   Q.  If we can go back, please, to your Part B response  
3       again, so this is at STC-000000127, we were looking at  
4       page 2 of it.  That sets out the detail of the things  
5       that we've looked at in the Sandy Jamieson report.

6               Below the bullet points there's reference to another  
7       consultant, Donal Giltinan, having been contracted to  
8       formulate a complete set of standards and procedures and  
9       a further report on necessary finance arrangements also  
10       as you've indicated.

11              And staffing issues noted at the time appeared to  
12       have been largely cured by 1999 and there's reference  
13       there to the 2003 minute that you mentioned a moment  
14       ago.

15              I think it's on the basis of what happened here that  
16       the Council accepts that there were systemic failings.

17              At Part D there, the Local Authority is asked for  
18       its explanation as to any failures, and what's the  
19       explanation that is given in respect of that?

20   A.  So interestingly that would concur with my experience,  
21       so they were understaffed.  We had went through  
22       a hugely -- a whole social work service that relied on  
23       Central Regional Council structures and I'm sure other  
24       authorities did -- may mirror this, in that that  
25       disaggregation process left us as individual authorities

1 to establish our own teams, our own fostering systems,  
2 our own panels, for example. We had to set up  
3 a fostering panel for Stirling Council at that time. We  
4 had also to set up a new fostering service so there was  
5 more staff, et cetera.

6 But I do wonder on reflection, it just took time to  
7 establish our new systems and recover from and separate  
8 from the policies and procedures and staffing and  
9 structures around the Central Region time.

10 I can't comment on the funding, I'm not sure at that  
11 time whether there were particular funding pressures for  
12 Stirling Council. But if you are going from shared  
13 management organisations, there would have been  
14 additional costs, I guess, for Stirling Council.

15 So, yeah, there seemed to be a lot of things going  
16 on at the time that may have contributed to some of the  
17 staffing support and supervision, but it's difficult on  
18 reflection to identify specifically what it is, with the  
19 exception of being able to see what Sandy Jamieson's  
20 findings were, but without the whole report it's  
21 actually difficult to understand it completely, which we  
22 tried really hard to find that report, because that  
23 might have helped us more, you know.

24 Q. Over the page at the top of page 3 there's reference to  
25 the time that this happened, and there's reference to

1 the fact that the Dunblane massacre had taken place in  
2 March 1996 and that required a significant amount of  
3 resource and placed enormous pressure upon the social  
4 work service, and particularly the children's service.

5 Again from your recollection of that time, does that  
6 resonate with your own experience?

7 A. Very much so. It was a very -- actually, on  
8 reflection -- and it was only over time I realised this,  
9 when I was -- because I'd searched lots of committee  
10 reports looking for evidence for this section, the 21  
11 foster care study, that there was no reference to it  
12 anywhere that we could find in any reports, which really  
13 is of some surprise to me as a social worker in the  
14 Council at the time, because it had significant pressure  
15 in a very specific team that covered the area. It had  
16 significant pressure for child protection staff, who  
17 supported children, education, significant resource  
18 issues across the authority.

19 I remember at the time we had some insistence from  
20 other authorities actually, I think Glasgow helped us at  
21 that time, and being a social worker in the authority,  
22 it had a significant cost to staff and to availability  
23 of staff.

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. And it just really surprises me on reflection that

1 I couldn't find that anywhere.

2 LADY SMITH: When you say cost to staff, and also on their  
3 availability, are you talking firstly about vicarious  
4 trauma that some of them will have suffered?

5 A. Yes, of course -- emotional costs to staff, of course,  
6 I'm talking about that. And I think now, if we had such  
7 an event, we might have had a different response to our  
8 staff.

9 LADY SMITH: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

10 MS INNES: Then if we look at acknowledgement of failures  
11 and deficiencies in response, so the question here is:

12 "Does the Local Authority accept that there were any  
13 failures and/or deficiencies in its response to abuse  
14 and allegations of abuse ..?"

15 The answer to that is no. If we go down, you say  
16 that you've not identified any failures on the basis of  
17 the evidence reviewed.

18 If we look a bit further down, what's the basis of  
19 that assessment? You had previously thought that there  
20 were some of the cases I think that you identified in  
21 the case file review, where you thought there might have  
22 been failures in responding to abuse or allegations, but  
23 having reflected on that, you concluded that the  
24 responses, once the allegations had been made, were  
25 appropriate.

1 A. (Witness nodded)

2 Q. I think you set out the two examples there that you  
3 thought was maybe giving rise to an issue here, but  
4 ultimately not.

5 A. That's right. What we did was -- and we'd agreed on our  
6 Part B response to go back and review those files more  
7 thoroughly because the information on the template  
8 indicating it was quite limited, so we wanted to ensure  
9 we had more information and when we went back to look at  
10 these files, they were appropriate responses.

11 In fact, I think there'd been some confusion around  
12 an allegation against a foster carer, but it was  
13 actually a birth father and we went back to look at  
14 that, there was a completely appropriate child  
15 protection response, case conferences, child protection  
16 register and a child protection plan.

17 So we were satisfied, after thoroughly reviewing it,  
18 that there weren't deficiencies, and we submitted those  
19 templates as a follow-up enquiry, we'd been asked after  
20 submitting the response to provide more information and  
21 we submitted in more detail the templates that are part  
22 of the follow-up queries.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 In terms of changes, if we go on to page 4, the  
25 first paragraph there refers to the changes that took



1 place after the Sandy Jamieson report, as we've referred  
2 to.

3 You then, in the next paragraph, refer to  
4 a presentation which you gave to the whole of children's  
5 services as a result of what you had learned when  
6 carrying out the work required to respond to the  
7 section 21 notice.

8 A. (Witness nodded)

9 Q. Can you just explain -- I'll take you to the  
10 presentation in a moment, but just can you explain why  
11 you did that and when you did that?

12 A. So it was a very interesting thing as a person who's  
13 been involved in fostering for a significant part of my  
14 social work career. As well as that, actually Stirling  
15 Council had put significant efforts into providing the  
16 Inquiry with as much information as we could possibly  
17 provide. So we did not want to lose that learning, it  
18 really was important and I'm sure at the end of this  
19 Inquiry there'll be findings that we could further learn  
20 from.

21 But I think it was so crucial that we used the  
22 learning to improve the support for our foster -- the  
23 children that are in foster care and for improving the  
24 care that is provided to them by improving the support  
25 to foster carers.

1           So there was very interesting learning from it.  
2           Some of it I wasn't surprised, because I also work in  
3           an adoption team, I manage an adoption service and we  
4           read very old files because we help people look at their  
5           files, so some of the things about language didn't  
6           surprise me. But it's really important for us to go  
7           back to think about what children's experiences are and  
8           how we talk about them and how we use our learning,  
9           really, and this process was very helpful, I have to  
10          say.

11 Q. Who was the presentation for?

12 A. So it was for all of the children's services staff, and  
13          that included our education staff.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Because what's really important is that a significant  
16          change in fostering over time is a team approach to our  
17          children who are looked after, so it was important to  
18          include as many professionals as were appropriate to  
19          learn from this as well as just social work staff  
20          actually.

21 Q. Can I take you to the presentation, please, it's at  
22          STC-000000134. In the initial part of the presentation  
23          I think you set out things like the terms of reference  
24          of the Inquiry and the timeline of the Inquiry and the  
25          headlines of the section 21 notice that you were sent.

1 A. (Witness nodded)

2 Q. If we can move to page 11, please, you note here some of  
3 the challenges that you faced in responding to the  
4 notice. If you can just talk us through some of the  
5 main challenges, please?

6 A. Yes. So you'll see when we were providing information  
7 in the study that there were many councils that have  
8 been involved in boarding out and the fostering of  
9 children, so that was a challenge to gather all that  
10 information and how that information is kept.

11 The retention rule was also a challenge for us,  
12 because it hadn't always been applied so we weren't able  
13 to find files very quickly and we would have liked  
14 a more readily able system that could have done that for  
15 us, but we've got some learning and we are looking at  
16 that now.

17 And, actually, a really significant thing here was  
18 people not recording children's lives. Not just in  
19 relation to allegations but many aspects of children's  
20 lives were not recorded and you could see that in the  
21 files that were being read.

22 And, yeah, as you can imagine, there was lots of  
23 things around big paper files and the storage that was  
24 very challenging. Sometimes files -- information just  
25 wasn't there, we couldn't quite work out why there

1           wasn't more Central Region information, so we couldn't  
2           really understand that.

3           It's a great learning thing for me about how you  
4           pass on your service records, but it's much easier now  
5           because we have all the folders and it's digital and  
6           everything would be transferred. So when you relied on  
7           paper, paper is very vulnerable was my impression. But  
8           the sad thing is that for -- I know from working with  
9           people who have been adopted, they like to see paper  
10          records. They like to see written records, and I don't  
11          want to lose sight of that.

12          So if you have 12 files to read for one person, it  
13          takes a very long time, so that was a challenge.

14          And staff really ... asking them to make judgements  
15          sometimes became quite difficult. So the quality of  
16          your file reading is -- every staff member is different  
17          and brings different skills. Yes, standardising that  
18          approach became a challenge. So it was supervising that  
19          file reading was a challenge.

20          So although we got there as best we could, there  
21          were things that were challenging on the way.

22    Q.    If we can move on, please, to page 14, I think you also  
23          provided some overview of the historical developments,  
24          main historical developments.

25    A.    (Witness nodded)

1 Q. Then you come to a slide, "Lessons learned", and the  
2 first one there:

3 "Skill of file reader reflects quality of template  
4 completion."

5 I think that's something that you just mentioned  
6 there.

7 A. (Witness nodded)

8 Q. The next bullet point:

9 "Direct work with children to understand why they  
10 were in care often absent."

11 Can you tell us about that?

12 A. Yes, I'm very familiar with that, being a social worker  
13 as long as I've been a social worker, and also -- yeah,  
14 they're just -- children not being told why they are  
15 where they are, not having understanding of who is in  
16 their family, not understanding their story.

17 I think if you looked at current files, there's  
18 a completely different approach to that. You know, we  
19 do a lot of work around life story work now, for  
20 example, with children, therapeutic life story work with  
21 children. We will do family trees or child and adoption  
22 and permanence reports, for example, give very detailed  
23 descriptions of events for children and who's in their  
24 family. So that gives you sadness because when people  
25 come to read files, sometimes they're disappointed

1 because they aren't getting the information in the file  
2 that they had the right to.

3 And when we prepare foster carers in our preparation  
4 groups, we remind foster carers about how you keep  
5 children's memories alive, and it's not just files, it's  
6 objects, it's events, it's -- so we do a whole  
7 preparation with our foster carers at a session called  
8 "Keeping memories alive for children", and that's partly  
9 also social workers need to understand that. So that  
10 was interesting. The electronic paper file things,  
11 although there's benefits to electronic files, I think  
12 there is benefits, as I say, sometimes when people are  
13 accessing files, they like a bit of paper.

14 Although I suspect younger people might like that  
15 less.

16 And the language. This is so significant, but the  
17 Promise has done lots of work on this and I think that  
18 will really help. Just very cold social work  
19 business-like language, I just find it quite unbearable,  
20 because it's children's lives. You have to think about  
21 a child in the future that comes back to hear this story  
22 and if you're reduced to this language in this traumatic  
23 life events, separation from your birth families and  
24 it's reduced to very cold language, I think -- we are  
25 improving on that, I would say. I think the Promise

1 work will definitely improve that. You know, and stop  
2 talking about placement -- I've used the word placement,  
3 but that's because we've used it in the past and  
4 I apologise for that. But when we begin to change our  
5 language around children, I think that will really  
6 improve the recording.

7 This is very significant, this bit. If you look at  
8 the use of language and understanding children's  
9 experiences in the context of their early life. So if  
10 you look both at legislation, if you look at children's  
11 files, for example, very early files really give very  
12 little comment on the impact of neglect, abuse, loss,  
13 separation, trauma. Not much attention was paid to  
14 that. And actually, frankly, if you read old files,  
15 children were blamed.

16 So I feel that this has really shifted now. So, for  
17 example, I have a therapist in my subcontractor. All  
18 our foster carers, they're delivered therapeutic  
19 parenting approaches, we provide nurturing attachment  
20 groups, we do reflective spaces where we encourage  
21 foster carers to have empathy for children and you can  
22 have empathy for children if you remind yourself of  
23 their experiences.

24 So that's really important and has shifted hugely in  
25 what you might see in a file now and what you might see

1 in the past.

2 And what electronic recording has done, sadly, in  
3 some respects, is encouraged a cut-and-paste culture.

4 Q. So you see the same thing repeated over and over  
5 again --

6 A. Mm-hmm.

7 Q. -- with maybe a slight change?

8 A. Yes, and file readers were seeing that and I would echo  
9 that. So it's about -- we've got some actions from  
10 this, because we need to change how we write reports  
11 about children, how we record reports. And giving  
12 social workers time to record appropriately,  
13 meaningfully, I would say. If an adult comes and reads  
14 a report and it's the same cut and pasted story ten  
15 times, then what value is that in a child's experience  
16 and what real review is that for a child, if all you  
17 have done is regurgitated a report from ten years ago?

18 So I think that really is shifting, so a lot of work  
19 around that needs done.

20 And the analytical assessment of foster carers.  
21 Over time, because I've written and read many Form F  
22 assessments in respect of foster carers, there has been  
23 huge improvements around encouraging -- in fact I think  
24 it's the 2011 Form F, really encouraging us to link  
25 foster carers' experiences and the skills to how that



1 might translate to how you're going to be a foster carer  
2 and how you are going to look after a child.

3 I think that's really helped in analysing, well,  
4 what does it mean, your early life experience? If you  
5 include that in a Form F, for example, some events in  
6 someone's early life, you need to explain how that will  
7 translate to the task that we're asking you to do. And  
8 I think the new Form Fs have really encouraged that,  
9 both in foster care and adoption, because I read those,  
10 and I think that is helpful.

11 There's very good tools around now in relation to  
12 assessing foster carers that assessing workers can use,  
13 and the new standard framework for the Health and Social  
14 Care Standards, that's also very helpful because that  
15 separates out some responsibilities for children, foster  
16 carers, but asks us to provide evidence for the quality  
17 and the reflectiveness of our assessments, so I think  
18 all that's really helpful.

19 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

20 MS INNES: That last thing that you just mentioned, I think  
21 that's a quality framework --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- issued by the Care Inspectorate.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. You're saying that you would use that to inform your

1 practice?

2 A. Yes. So currently, for example, we have a standard --  
3 we have the framework that we will populate with  
4 evidence of how we are building on and improving the  
5 service and make sure we're meeting the quality  
6 framework.

7 I have a -- what's very helpful is they have  
8 committed resources to our service, so I have  
9 a fostering and adoption development worker who can  
10 support us in ensuring we are fulfilling the standards.

11 I think you have to be a learning and improving  
12 service all the time, you know, and I think you have to  
13 be open to that. However long you've been doing this,  
14 there is always new things to learn and my team are very  
15 much -- a lot of them have done securing children's  
16 futures, we use research to inform our practices. So  
17 I think that's what we need to do to keep children well  
18 and safe.

19 Q. Continuing your lessons learned in your presentation  
20 here, if we move on to page 15, you list some other  
21 things that are learned. So:

22 "Voice of the child often absent, particularly in  
23 early records."

24 That's something you observed?

25 A. Yes, I mean I also looked at -- like even records from

1 the 1930s, there was very little even reference to  
2 anyone talking to a child. My own experience is that  
3 it's very important you speak to children outwith foster  
4 placements. It's very, very critical. And any of the  
5 inquiries and reviews will tell you that you have to  
6 make relationships with children. Social work is all  
7 about relationships, you know, and if you don't have  
8 relationships with a child, they're not going to give  
9 you information.

10 So I encourage good practice is very much around  
11 spending time with children, gathering their trust,  
12 hearing their voices, in order that they will tell you  
13 things that they are unhappy about. But that was very  
14 absent in early records. We do much more work around  
15 that. So, for example, we've got wee digital --  
16 something called MOMO, where a child can report their  
17 views at any point, they can go directly to a social  
18 worker, so these small things really help.

19 And, of course, legislation has helped us with the  
20 voice of the child through the 1990s -- well, originally  
21 with 1968, but through 1995 and in 2009 it was much more  
22 part of our tac meetings, hearing what children have to  
23 say, and I think that's a huge improvement.

24 LADY SMITH: Wendy, you'll be interested to know that early  
25 in the life of this Inquiry I heard evidence from

1 a woman who then was age 90 and she was sharp as a tack,  
2 she was one of the early children's officer  
3 appointments. She had a practice of going to meet  
4 children as they were coming out of school, because she  
5 knew she needed to talk to the children on her own then.

6 Now that, at the age of 90 before us, I think that  
7 was the early 1950s she was working, and she'd got it.

8 A. And I'm delighted to hear that, because I think children  
9 don't tell you things if the foster carer's present and  
10 you need to have confidence to do what you're just  
11 describing. And we need to have -- I mean a lot of the  
12 inquiries have shown us that if you have very high  
13 regard for a particular foster care household, that  
14 might limit your curiosity. That's kind of if you look  
15 at some of the very specific cases that we've talked  
16 about, there was some of that.

17 LADY SMITH: I was told yesterday that curiosity is a key  
18 skill for a social worker.

19 A. Oh!

20 LADY SMITH: You've just confirmed that.

21 A. Yes, absolutely.

22 LADY SMITH: Thank you.

23 Ms Innes.

24 MS INNES: I think you've covered the other points there,  
25 issues in relation to file recording and suchlike. I'd

1       like to move on to page 17, where you look at impact on  
2       children. There you have separated from siblings,  
3       delays in permanence plans, loss of school,  
4       relationships, psychological, criminal injuries  
5       compensation awarded, additional risk assessments and  
6       support and increased visiting.

7             Are you talking about the impact of allegations of  
8       abuse on children or abuse that was suffered by them?

9   A. Impact of abuse in foster care, this was specifically  
10   considering that.

11            I mean what you can see in files when there's  
12   allegations, children are quite often separated from  
13   their sibling and they may well be singled out in  
14   relation to that. So I think that all our -- the  
15   placement, for example, cannot continue, and therefore  
16   you were not able to place them together in a new  
17   placement, for example.

18            I hope some of the new legislation around keeping  
19   siblings together might help us address this, because we  
20   need to address our recruitment around the capacity for  
21   Local Authorities to have enough foster carers to look  
22   after siblings, for example, and that's high on most  
23   Local Authorities' agendas.

24            A delay in permanence plans quite often happens,  
25   because you have to start at the beginning, assessing

1 their new homes, getting views et cetera, so that's  
2 quite often the case.

3 And of course educational achievement impacted by  
4 having to go to a different school. I mean, it's very  
5 obvious that one, isn't it?

6 Relationships. They might not have the relationship  
7 that they had with their wee friends at school, the club  
8 they went to, because they might have to go to another  
9 house that isn't near that place that they might have  
10 been accessing those things. And that's why also some  
11 of the Care Inspectorate stuff is helpful around keeping  
12 children closer to home if we're keeping them in foster  
13 placements.

14 Obviously psychological impact. We saw that some  
15 children were given psychological supports following  
16 allegations of abuse. In one of the cases, the girl had  
17 many years of additional therapy around that, so we've  
18 seen that.

19 Not much criminal injuries, we saw that but not  
20 a lot, but there was additional risk assessments and  
21 additional support went in, and obviously increased  
22 visiting, so ...

23 Q. Then I think on the next page, page 18, you record some  
24 of the outcomes, so what happened when you saw that  
25 allegations were made or established.

1 A. (Witness nodded)

2 Q. You refer to: foster carers being de-registered;  
3 re-assessments of foster carers; additional risk  
4 assessments, as you've just mentioned; additional  
5 training; foster carers' own relationships impacted;  
6 implications for care of their own children; and foster  
7 carers commenting to the authority that they were  
8 struggling with the allegation being made against them.

9 Just generally, why did you want to draw to the  
10 team's attention these things that you'd found in the  
11 file reading?

12 A. I think it was just trying to let people understand that  
13 there were consequences, you know, that the Local  
14 Authority did respond appropriately in that foster  
15 carers were de-registered, that there were additional  
16 risk assessments undertaken, and rightly so.

17 There may have been implications for foster carers'  
18 own families, you know, and if there had been  
19 allegations within those households. So I think it was  
20 important for us to understand that there were  
21 consequences in respect of the foster carers'  
22 circumstances when allegations were made.

23 Q. Then if we go over the page, please, to page 19, you  
24 have a slide, "What next?"

25 Can you tell us what this is about, please?

1 A. This is us just consolidating the learning and  
2 translating it into better practice, really. That's  
3 what this was about.

4 So we have an action plan that's drawn up in respect  
5 of this. So obviously the Promise is a significant  
6 change in Local Authority planning and we're all putting  
7 together promise plans -- the Promise plans are  
8 completed, actually, the Local Authority's completed our  
9 promise plan. And obviously within that we would  
10 addressed the child's voices is -- I mean, I could go  
11 through the list for you.

12 I think it was very important that we used the  
13 learning and, as I say, translated it into practice.

14 Chronologies is a very interesting one. I just want  
15 to highlight that. Chronologies have come up in  
16 a number of inquiries.

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. That's about accurately recording events that have  
19 happened so you're able to see patterns of things that  
20 might happen in foster carers' houses.

21 Interestingly, what we saw through file reading is  
22 you might have information in a foster carer file and it  
23 wasn't in a child's file and respectively. It's  
24 important, and we've referred that earlier about the  
25 recording in respect of allegations in both files,



1 because foster carers have their own file. So I think  
2 that is pretty critical.

3 Of course the important thing is therapeutic  
4 supports for children, that is certainly a focus within  
5 our service.

6 Updating fostering policies and procedures. Some of  
7 the work that's being done here will translate into --  
8 we've had a draft one that's just been completed and we  
9 will incorporate some of these findings into our new  
10 policies and procedures, particularly in respect of  
11 visiting, et cetera.

12 Also I think it's worth commenting on what's changed  
13 over time is, you know, structured supervision for  
14 foster carers. So we will now -- we had updated our  
15 structured supervision policy for foster carers, that  
16 included GIRFEC and SHANARRI outcomes, but we will move  
17 on to adapting some of -- using some of this material,  
18 but also particularly using the new framework, the  
19 fostering framework in relation to standards.

20 That links in to the Promise, because they've used  
21 the Promise.

22 So it's about triangulating everything to ensure  
23 that you're directly supporting foster carers to care  
24 for children with better outcomes, really.

25 Q. You're saying that you're taking the material that you

1           have from the Care Inspectorate quality framework, the  
2           material from the Promise and the material that you've  
3           learned through doing this response for the Inquiry and  
4           drawing that together to improve --

5   A.   Yes.

6   Q.   -- the experience of children in foster care?

7   A.   That is right.

8   MS INNES:  I don't have any more questions for you, Wendy.

9           Thank you very much.

10  LADY SMITH:  I don't have any other questions either, Wendy.

11           I just want to thank you so much for the time,  
12           trouble and careful intelligent thought that's obviously  
13           gone into preparing and presenting your responses to us.  
14           They're really helpful in the work that we're doing  
15           here, and, as I say, I'm grateful to you for what you've  
16           done with that.  Also for coming along today and  
17           answering all our questions this afternoon.  It's been  
18           great.  Thank you so much.

19  A.   Thank you very much.

20  LADY SMITH:  Thank you.

21                                 (The witness withdrew)

22  LADY SMITH:  So, tomorrow, Ms Innes?

23  MS INNES:  Tomorrow we have Barnardo's in the morning,

24           Ms Rattray will be leading that evidence, and then Swiss  
25           in the afternoon.

1 LADY SMITH: Thank you very much indeed.

2           Until tomorrow, thank you, all, and I look forward  
3           to seeing you at 10 o'clock then.

4 (3.57 pm)

5           (The Inquiry adjourned until 10.00 am on

6                           Thursday, 12 May 2022)

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I N D E X

Ms Susanne Millar (sworn) .....1  
    Questions from Ms Innes .....2  
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    Questions from Ms Innes .....95

