

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ESQ

Support person present: No.

1. My name is ^{ESQ} [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My mum was [REDACTED] and my dad is [REDACTED] My mum died when she was only 29, my dad is still alive and is 83 now. I had two brothers, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was four years older than me and [REDACTED] who was two years older than me. Both my brother are now deceased.
3. I was born in Aberdeen and the family home was in [REDACTED] in Aberdeen but I have no memory from that far back. We then moved to [REDACTED] still in Aberdeen, I have vague memories from there. That's where my mum would be staying if she wasn't in hospital. My mum was very ill with cancer. I remember she had a leg amputated and was in and out of hospital a lot. It was my grandmother, on my mother's side, that looked after us a lot of the time, she was very precious to us. My father was a trawler man at that time and was away a lot so my gran and quite a lot of different family members had to look after the three of us.
4. In my childhood I was generally blissfully ignorant to everything that was going on with my mother but you did pick up on it when the adults were in our company. I have very few memories of my mum. Most are of visiting her in the hospital or of her being in her bed. I was five when my mum passed away.

5. After my mum died the family all said they would take shots at looking after us individually. I remember I ended up with an aunt, [REDACTED] stayed with my grandmother and I can't remember who [REDACTED] went to stay with. I know it was too much for me not being with my brothers, even though we were all with family. I just didn't understand and I wanted to be with my brothers.

6. I remember I went to Drumgarth Infant School and my brothers went to a basic primary school. We didn't stay with family for a very long period as the next memory I have is of the three of us being together in the first children's home. I would have been coming up for six years old then.

Craigielea Children's Centre, Aberdeen

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Netherhills Children's Home, Aberdeen

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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86. When I left Netherhills I returned to my father and his wife, my step-mother, in Aberdeen. I was the youngest so it was decided to send me back first to try and integrate me. My brother [REDACTED] didn't want to go to a step-mother so my older brother [REDACTED] came next but eventually [REDACTED] came as well.
87. It was out of the frying pan and into the fire, as back home was just hellish. My step-mother really was nasty and would punch me all the time. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] She married my father not his family. My dad ended up divorcing her fairly quickly after we were all back.
88. I remember I went into primary six at that time. I was about ten or eleven. After about a year I got put to see a child psychologist, Dr Chisholm, at Aberdeen Hospital, for being beyond parental control. It was all done through the social work but at the request of my father and step-mother. It was established that I was having trouble adapting back into life with my family and I was showing resentment towards my step-mother, so I was put before a Children's Panel. I remember my old man didn't speak up for me at that Children's Panel.
89. My social worker Neil Campbell, said it would be better for me to go to a professional foster family or something like that. He was brilliant, and always did what was best for me. That was then arranged and I got put with a professional foster care family, who were paid to take on troubled kids.

Foster Care - Mr & Mrs [REDACTED], Inverurie and North Queensferry

90. I stayed with the [REDACTED] family in Inverurie. The mum and dad were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and they had two children, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Mrs [REDACTED] was a housewife and Mr [REDACTED] worked for [REDACTED]. I lived with them for a few months in their house in [REDACTED] Inverurie then Mr [REDACTED] got a promotion at his work and they moved to North Queensferry.

91. I moved with the family and we stayed in [REDACTED] North Queensferry. It didn't last too long though, I was only with them for about a year in total. The whole family thing was just a bit too daunting for me. I sort of rebelled, I was truanting from school and I started spending time with people from the travelling community who lived near the railway bridge in North Queensferry. I was helping them collect scrap and making some money from that. It maybe sounds bad but they did show me love and friendship and I loved that.
92. I would say though, that my time in foster care was one of the most positive times in my life as a child. Looking back I would say the [REDACTED] family were a proper functioning family and that I was treated well, and as part of that family. They treated me just the same as their two children and I felt loved and wanted.
93. I was anti-authority by then though and had learnt never to trust adults. I was nearly always thinking there was going to be some kind of catch. So with the [REDACTED] family I was thinking things were too good to be true. I was being shown affection and they tried to make me feel like I was their son, so there was no catch, but I just found that all so difficult.
94. [REDACTED] would take me to football matches and take me to play snooker and, as I said, it just all seemed too good to be true.
95. My social worker didn't come to see me, he really didn't need to. He just got reports back from my foster parents. Then when my behaviour started to spiral back to being anti-social towards authority, he had to intervene.
96. My foster parents were mature about my behaviour change, they saw I was a kid with issues but I was also beyond their ability to look after me. They were never violent and didn't use psychological terrors, they just saw that, at the end of the day, it was going to affect their family.
97. There was no animosity when I left, we said our goodbyes and they went about it just as you would expect intelligent adults to do. They treated me according to my

behaviour and my age. I couldn't fault the [REDACTED] family, all I can say is that I shit in my own nest.

98. As a result of my behaviour I was taken from the [REDACTED] family and I went back to live with my dad.

Life after being in care

99. I was fifteen when I went back to stay with my dad and step-mum but, once again, that didn't work out. Basically I became homeless, through choice, from about the age of sixteen. I hadn't been going to school very much in Dunfermline when I stayed at North Queensferry and I didn't go to school much when I was back with my dad in Aberdeen.
100. I was in squats and was homeless for a couple of years and during that time I met a lassie, [REDACTED] who was also homeless. I then started glue sniffing and getting myself into petty crime. I was just keeping company with other dodgers who were homeless. During a really bad winter [REDACTED] and I parted ways after I took her home to her mum and dad. It was just too cold and it wasn't fair on her.
101. I was still only about sixteen or seventeen but my time being homeless had been an adventure for me. I never saw it as a hardship at that age. Believe it or not survival was fun. It was difficult at times but I also had some of the funniest and best times, in just getting by.
102. I did get a no fixed abode allowance, of £19 a week, which I had to sign on for daily. I carried on either staying with friends or squatting and I got involved in a bit of drugs and did some drinking as well.
103. Then I met [REDACTED] my daughter's mum and we became really good friends. She was in rented accommodation and I spent some time living with her, off and on, but we had a relationship and we had a daughter, [REDACTED]. We do get on but we both know we're not

for each other. I do see my daughter now and again, and she has three children now so I'm a grandparent as well.

104. After a couple of years I started to develop psychiatric issues and eventually [REDACTED] and I agreed to separate. I had quite a few years where I was confused and lost and I needed psychiatric care. I am still under that kind of psychiatric care.

105. I did go on to meet a student nurse who I saw for twenty years but I've never been capable of a full commitment to a settled nine to five reality life. I never really matured properly, I did in some ways but I feel I am a little boy in an adult body. So much was taken from me when I was so young.

106. I have my own flat now, an amenity flat, which is nice and I look after it. Future Pathways have helped me with that.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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111. When I was at Craigelea I would often think about my father and ask myself why he didn't want us. I had a grudge with my father for most of my life and even now I blame him for putting me in care. It took a lot of years to form any relationship with my dad. We are the last two left really, and we've nothing much in common, but we've mutually formed a type of bond. We can't give back the lost time, but we can be nice to one another while we are both still here.

112. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

They were two beautiful people and they both ended up with pretty dysfunctional lives. [REDACTED] emigrated to Canada, but like me had alcohol problems, and [REDACTED] was in a long term relationship but they split up as well. None of us could really settle into any standard lifestyle.

113. Both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] knew our time in care had an impact on our lives and the lives of other family members. They are both dead now and their time in care certainly didn't do them any favours. They both went too soon. [REDACTED] actually died four years ago from Lyme's disease, which he got when he was on holiday. [REDACTED] was more dysfunctional. He had a drug and alcohol problem and was found in his flat three years ago now. I think his body had just had enough. [REDACTED] was much deeper than [REDACTED] and myself. We both wanted to shout things out whereas [REDACTED] just wanted to lock it all away as if it had never happened.

114. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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117. Talking about my past to others is a 'no no' for me. I always avoid my past and change the topic. I find it difficult to take people at face value and I analyse them. I am pretty quick to then judge who I think is not safe to be around.
118. Being in care in my instance brings out a dark side of me with mistrust and not giving people the benefit of the doubt. People have to prove themselves rather than be trusted by me. If I do think someone is a decent person I'm only too quick to let them know. If I get a gut feeling that they are not, then I'll avoid them like the plague, unless they prove to me in some way that they are decent.
119. I like my own company but I also like being in a relationship. I just can't help thinking that being in a relationship might lead to hurt and that will then open me up to vulnerability. It's because of that lack of trust, that I've messed up a few relationships.
120. I don't have a high sex drive because of the alcohol, it lowers my libido along with some of the medication I'm now on. I don't go for relationships as such which also covers my arse for any emotional distress.
121. When I was in foster care I felt safe and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] treated me like part of their family. I did not wet the bed there and can only think that was because of the way I was being treated and the way they made me feel.
122. When I was young I said that when I had children I would never treat them the way I was treated in care. I have a daughter now and I never did allow that to happen but I do find it hard to show love and affection to my daughter.

123. I have self-harmed in my life. Once was attention seeking self-harm, for a release and the other was more serious, it was at a time when I was in a very dark moment in my life.
124. I get many flashbacks. I don't remember very much about my mother so, in a mental illness sense, my brain makes up who she is. When I've not been well I have hallucinated and seen my mother walking up a corridor towards me. I remember that terrified me.
125. My physical health isn't that great. I have Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and osteoporosis. I've also had pneumonia, a shadow in my lung and two blood clots in my lung.

Treatment/support

126. I have an alcohol addiction and I've received support and treatment for that for many years now. I see a psychiatrist on a regular basis at the MacRobin Centre in Aberdeen, which is an alcohol misuse service. To function properly I do need a maintenance drink every day or my body would shut down.
127. I have been diagnosed with psychosis and then it was upgraded to schizophrenia. I am on medication for that. The periods of schizophrenia seem to have calmed down dramatically since my move to the amenity flat I'm now staying in. It is an illness and won't go away but I have a good insight to it and know most of the coping mechanisms to use with it. I've learnt the psychological diversions to use to deal with it.
128. I have spoken about my whole life story during my treatments, and that includes all my time in care. I don't think my mental illness is coincidental, I know there is a link between my mental health and my time in care as a child.

129. To a big degree I blame the way we were cared for. I personally think that with mine and other peoples cases, if nurture isn't there it can have a diverse affect which can then escalate into an illness.
130. I am on medication for my schizophrenia and anxiety and I take pain relief for osteoporosis. I've had clots in my lungs, which I take medication for. I think that's all down to my homelessness and glue sniffing.
131. I do think that things will be what they are, and perhaps don't give them the importance that I should. I do have times when I think why [REDACTED] and why [REDACTED] as they would be better off in this world than I am, but when things are good I think I'm glad I am here. What has pissed me off is the length of time it's taken for me to get some form of stability. I believe I could have had that when I was about twenty.

Reporting of Abuse

132. As children there was no point in reporting anything as we wouldn't have been listened to and we were all too scared. Whoever it stemmed to, to actually stand up and say something, must have been a very brave person.
133. There's also the not being believed, you would just feel like you were pissing against the wind. When you know it's being taken seriously then you allow your guard to come down and let people speak to you. It actually took me a lot of convincing before I came here to speak to you. I had the feeling that I had to come and convince you that it was real and to please listen. Sadly some people just don't have the intellect to come to you and speak about the same things.
134. Even in adult life, I've always been too scared to report any of the abuse I sustained as a child in care. I spoke to my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] about it and [REDACTED] and I were in agreement to do something about it but [REDACTED] wasn't for it and wanted to let it go. I didn't want to take a side so we did nothing but I can be a voice for the three of us now.

Records

135. I never knew I could request my records from care. If that can be done then I will get in touch with the body that deals with that.

Lessons to be Learned

136. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Me and my brothers were all scared. We were shy, had no confidence and were made to feel unworthy. I feel that with the right guidance in my childhood I would have become someone better.
137. I don't know how you're supposed to vet everybody that goes into the care system. Someone could be perfectly qualified and come across perfectly well then they could be the ones who are the worst.
138. I'd like to see the people responsible sit and speak to the adult they abused as a child, to see if they have any remorse or if they are just sociopaths. I think victims of crime should all, if they can cope with it, be allowed to voice their opinion towards the instigator of all their problems.
139. I would hope the world has moved on a bit since I was in care with my brothers, but I do think the world was very naïve to the fact that child abuse was so rife. Now that it's eyes have been opened then there is something to work with and work on. It won't be an overnight cure but hopefully in generations to come there might be a perfect care system. Sadly I do still think there will be the ones that slip through.
140. I think that if staff are vetted to a high standard, and then monitored on a regular basis then having more than one family in a set unit would be fair enough. I would also have CCTV and audio on 24/7 and somebody employed to monitor that 24/7.

Hopes for the Inquiry


- 141. I will hold on, until my dying day, not to forgive the people who abused me. I see them as war criminals, like in the Nuremburg trials, and I would have them all wheeled in with oxygen, in wheelchairs. I don't like to think like that though because it means they have won. There is a side of me that thinks of them as horrible and nasty and that side will always be there. That's not my fault, that was brought upon me.

- 142. I would totally distinguish between the decent people that work within care, who are completely different, and the ones who got away with or are still getting away with abusing children in care. Even with this Inquiry happening there will still be people out there doing things and getting away with it. There will always be that.

143. Secondary Institutions - to be published later


Other information

- 144. I have no objection to my witness statement being published as part of the evidence to the Inquiry. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed. .....
Dated..... 9 11 21