

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

FDE  
[REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is FDE [REDACTED]. My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1966. My contact details are known to the inquiry.

**Background**

2. I was born in Edinburgh and lived with my parents initially in Edinburgh for four years before we moved as a family to Banff. I have four sisters and two brothers. My dad worked in the oil industry and he worked two weeks away from home then was home for two weeks. My dad was drunk a lot of the time when he was home.
3. When I was about ten years old my mum and dad had obviously been having problems in their relationship and a pen friend of my mums came over from New Zealand to stay with us. It turned out to be a very strange situation because my mum slept in one room and my dad and this pen-friend, who he had formed a relationship with, slept in the other. Eventually my mum and dad split up and my dad went off with his New Zealand girlfriend and her two children. I was asked who I wanted to go with and I stayed with my mum along with three of my sisters who were all younger than me.
4. My mum fell to bits and I suppose I kind of assumed the role of mother after that. My mum started taking in boyfriends and there always seemed to be men in the house and they were of all nationalities. One man she took in was Portuguese and he abused me. He told me that if I told my mum he would leave her. Another man got in

my bed when I was ten years old. Another boyfriend was a cousin of her sister in law. He was nineteen years old and my mum was thirty. They would often go out the house and leave us on our own. It seemed all the money was being spent on her new boyfriend.

5. I can't remember my mum ever cooking a meal for us and we never seemed to have enough food to eat. When my mum and her boyfriend went out I would go through the cupboards and try to find something to eat for me and my sisters. They often went off on day trips leaving me with my younger sisters.
6. We were all bed wetters until a late age and bed sheets weren't getting changed and we didn't wash. I had no friends at school and I was shunned by other pupils. Sometimes I was kept off school and my mum would send me to do the laundry.
7. My mum's nineteen year old boyfriend would get me to take photographs of them doing certain sexual acts. He took pictures of me and my mum both standing naked. Sometimes he would threaten to kill us. At one point my mum and her boyfriend decided to go on holiday without us so me and my three sisters went to my mum's brother who lived five minutes away. We had a fantastic time, we got a clean bed and we got good food. They picked up on what was happening either by things we said or through observations, and the social services got involved for the first time with us.
8. The next thing I knew we were bundled in to a car and taken to foster parents. We didn't know what was happening and I just went along with it. I was still ten years old and I think this was in [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] 1976.

#### **Foster Carers - [REDACTED] Aberdeen**

9. Me and my sister <sup>FDY</sup>[REDACTED] were taken to Foster Carers in [REDACTED]. They already had two of their own children. Two of my other sisters went to foster carers at [REDACTED]. The only issue I had about living with them was that we weren't really treated fairly and

they gave their own children special treatment and I suppose you have to accept that. I can't remember their names.

10. I can't remember much else because I think I just shut myself off from everything. I think we were with them for two to three months but weren't there for Christmas. I didn't see my mum and dad when we were there and I have recently checked my records which tell me that my mum didn't want to see us. Nothing really happened with these foster carers at [REDACTED] that concerned me. Compared to what I had been used to at home my time at [REDACTED] was good, although I can't remember any affection.
11. I know I had a social worker but I can't remember their names. I just really remember them coming to take us from there to the next foster carer. I don't know what happened at the end or why we were moved again but we were just bundled in the car and moved to [REDACTED] where two of my other sisters already were. Nothing was explained to us what was happening.

**Foster Care - JS-JBS [REDACTED], [REDACTED], near Peterhead**

12. We went to [REDACTED] which is kind of split into the bottom village and the top village, separated by a long country road and an area of grass. It is between Peterhead and Fraserburgh and we were initially in the lower village. It was a terraced house. Two of my sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were already there. I remember I was glad to have gone there to be with my sisters and very much accepting that we were all back together again. There were no other children in the house. After a while we moved to a bigger house in the top village.

*First Impressions*

13. The foster parents were John Sinclair and JBS [REDACTED], and we called them Dodo and JBS [REDACTED]. They were already getting called that before we got there by other people. Initially Dodo seemed to be okay, a good member of the community and ran

badminton classes in the local community hall. He taught me how to play badminton. I am not sure if JBS worked. Dodo used to be a Gordon Highlander soldier and I know that because there were pictures around the house of him wearing the uniform. I don't know why he left the army but I remember at some point he had a job as a coalman.

14. The first house we lived in at was a two bedroomed terraced house. Upstairs at the front there was a big bedroom where Dodo and JBS slept. The smaller room at the back of the house had a double bed and all the children slept in that room. The sitting room was to the right when you went in the house. It had a normal back garden.

#### *Schooling*

15. I went to Peterhead academy and I found this period quite hard. Because standards of care were starting to slip, cleanliness had taken a back step and I was still wetting the bed and not washing and because of this I had few friends. I wanted to be the same as everybody else but I got all the horrible clothes, old ladies shoes and a satchel which wasn't the done thing then. I also had national health spectacles. I wanted to be like other lassies and get bonnie things but didn't so I felt different and I didn't get invited to anything. I tried to fit in but I felt like the odd one and wasn't one of the popular crowd.

#### *Bed Wetting*

16. I can't really remember much about bed wetting when we stayed in the bottom village but I remember we were still bed wetting when we moved to the top village. When we moved to the new house our wet bed sheets often wouldn't get changed. We would then go out the house stinking. When I came home from school the JS-JBS had found out by that point that the bed was wet. I was put in an ice cold bath and it felt like it was a punishment for wetting the bed. I knew every day that I wet the bed I could expect the cold bath.

17. John had put up a rota and whoever wet the bed got the muckiest jobs. He called me [REDACTED] which is a slang derogatory term for someone who wets the bed. It is really nasty. We were all bed wetters. One of the jobs might be scrubbing the bath with Vim. John would always get the bath first and he was a coalman so you can imagine how dirty the bath got. Even the younger ones had to do that. Once I wanted to go out and play with everyone but I wasn't allowed and had to take everything out the cupboards, wash it all then put it back.

#### *Food*

18. We never seemed to get much to eat. If they went to the chip shop they would have full suppers but we would just get chips. We would be force fed the most horrible food. I remember getting cabbage soup, fish soup and brose, which was proper brose with horse's oats and water. We wouldn't actually be forced to eat it, but if we didn't eat it we wouldn't get anything else. We got fed well at school because we qualified for school dinners.
19. I was so hungry I used to go into the kitchen cupboards and see what I could find. Once <sup>JBS</sup> [REDACTED] caught me in the act trying to root out a bit of beetroot from the jar so I knew I would have to think up something quickly. It was Halloween so I told her that I was going to dye the turnips hair purple.
20. One Christmas they told me there was a five pence piece in the Christmas pudding. I made myself extremely ill eating the whole thing and at the end they produced the coin and said "Oh here it is" and it wasn't in the pudding at all.

#### *Christmas / Birthdays*

21. One Christmas when I was 13 years old they told me that I wasn't getting any presents, nothing at all and when I came down on Christmas morning there was nothing for me and everyone else was opening their presents. A good while later I did get a couple of things. They just did this because they thought it would be funny and they enjoyed it.

22. I don't remember ever celebrating my birthday when I was with JS-JBS. The only happy experience I can think of with JS-JBS was being taught badminton by John.

*Visits / Supervision*

23. I never saw my mum or dad in the time we were with JS-JBS. I remember the social workers coming once to the first house we were with JS-JBS and once in their new house. She never spoke to us. We could always tell when the social worker was coming because the house would be tidied. I don't know the social worker's name and I can't say for definite if it was the same woman who came both times.

*Trips / Excursions*

24. We never went on holiday anywhere with JS-JBS.
25. John was working and I think they got some extra money by making up sand bags because we used to help. They had a car and he built a garage behind the house so they must have had some money. We got to go in the car when we went food shopping but we got left in the car. We also went a couple of times to relatives who lived just outside Fraserburgh. Once John took me to a dance competition in Fraserburgh but I had to get all my stuff ready and I was left to try and get it all myself.

**Abuse - John Sinclair**

26. Initially everything was okay for a short period of time. We were fed and clothed and everything was fine, but then things changed and the abuse started. Dodo started touching me inappropriately. I just remember one day he took me through in to the bed and he started touching me inappropriately down below under my

clothes. I don't know what time of the day it was but he only did it when [REDACTED] JBS [REDACTED] wasn't there. I don't know where my sisters were, maybe out playing. I can't remember how I ended up in his room but he may have invited me in.

27. It progressed from touching and he got very physical and he had intercourse with me. Physically I was in extreme pain and I was humiliated, embarrassed and shocked. Emotionally I felt like I was dead inside. He would constantly say to me "Don't say anything to anybody" Sometimes it was in his bed, and then it later went in to the other bedroom.
28. When we moved to the second house in [REDACTED] there was a lot of work to be done to make it habitable so John was either at his work as a coalman or at the new house doing work so there was a lull and the abuse stopped for a while.
29. In the new house there were two bedrooms upstairs. One [REDACTED] bedroom which had a double bed and the other had two sets of bunk beds. I slept on the top bunk of one of the sets. There was a bedroom downstairs which just seemed to be used for storage and a bathroom. In the eaves there was an attic space.
30. When we moved in to the second house things got worse and almost at every opportunity he did it to me and he would engineer it that we were alone. As I got older I knew when it was going to happen because we would be alone in the house and I heard him going to the bathroom first, I presume maybe to take precautions.
31. The abuse continued but he became more violent the way he spoke to me and threatened me. When it started, John would just tell me not to say anything then by the end he threatened that if I said anything he would kill me. In the wardrobe that was in our bedroom, the kid's bedroom, he had chiselled out a hole to go into the attic space and we would take me in there and abuse me. In the attic you had to crouch and crawl over the beams because it wasn't floored. We didn't have intercourse in there, just touching, because there wasn't enough room.

32. The abuse by John would usually happen either in [REDACTED] bed or in the attic. I can't really say how often it happened but we were always on our own, apart from that one time when we were all in the bed. He never kissed me on the face and he told me this. I am not sure if it was because he didn't want to look at my face or in to my eyes. I am not sure how often this happened but it was always when no one else was there and it felt like it happened a lot.
33. Once he had intercourse with me when everyone was in [REDACTED] bed apart from JBS who may have been in hospital having her baby. I don't know what time it would have been but it was dark and I think everyone else must have been asleep. That is the first and only time that I think all of us were in the bed together. I think I had been there about two and a half years when this happened and I would have been thirteen going on fourteen years old when JBS had her baby.
34. The abuse continued until one day I said "No" to him when I was fourteen maybe going on fifteen. I remember they didn't provide me with sanitary towels so I had to try and find something and I had to use newspapers. We were alone and he went in to the bathroom and I knew what was coming and he was going to try something but I finally said 'No' to him. He didn't try it again with me after that and it didn't seem like any time at all after that we were moved.
35. Across from the door into the eaves of the attic there was another door that led into another attic space. If I was bad, as a punishment I would be put in this attic space, and he would leave me there in the pitch dark and tell me that the spiders would come and get me. I would scream. Both JBS and John put me in there. I don't know how long I was in there but I am sure sometimes I fell asleep.
36. I can't remember John ever hitting me but he verbally threatened me often that if I told anyone what he was doing to me he would kill me.



**Abuse -** [REDACTED]

37. Once I hadn't washed the dishes right and I was drying a glass, [REDACTED] went to hit me and I held up the glass and she smashed the glass and cut her arm. I never heard the end of that for a long time. Another time I was hoovering and she grabbed my wrists and dug her nails in. I don't know why she did that. One time I went to the shops and I bought the wrong potatoes and she kicked me on the leg. That's the only three times that I remember [REDACTED] hitting me.
38. On a freezing cold morning I would get put outside to hang the washing out. I couldn't feel my fingers and was crying. [REDACTED] would be watching from the window and when the neighbours spoke to me and asked if I was okay she quickly brought me in.

**Foster Carers- The** [REDACTED] **, Mintlaw near Peterhead**

39. I am not sure why we were moved from [REDACTED] but me and [REDACTED] were picked up by the social work again and taken to another family, [REDACTED] in Mintlaw, which is near Peterhead.
40. We went back to [REDACTED] for a short while at some point because the [REDACTED] wanted to go on a family holiday by themselves. When we were with [REDACTED] for this short period nothing of any note happened and there was no abuse, and then we went back to the [REDACTED]
41. The [REDACTED] were generally good and I probably pushed things quite far with them and they had their own girl who had other problems and within their own marriage. Me and [REDACTED] were there for about a year possibly less.
42. I don't know what I did towards the end of our time there but Mr [REDACTED] had a swipe at me and hit me on the arm and I think after that they must have told the social work that they couldn't cope with me so we got moved.

**Foster Carers -The [ETG-SPO], [REDACTED] near Elgin**

43. Just before Christmas a male social worker met with us with a view to us going to the [ETG-SPO]. The [ETG-SPO] said that they couldn't take me straight away because they were going to Bradford either the next day or the day after. I said to them that I would go with them so they arranged it that I could go.
44. Both myself and [FDY] lived with the foster carers [ETG-SPO] in [REDACTED] which is near Elgin in Morayshire. I had a great time with them. They let me go abroad as part of the school exchange. I was with them for about a year but got taken away leaving [FDY] there.
45. I had to move school again which was half way through my third year in [REDACTED] 1981 and I went to Milne's High in Fochabers. I had to change subjects at school and I was there for about a year.
46. I thought I had settled in well with [ETG-SPO] but according to my records they say I was a bit troublesome. We were in a bungalow and I used to climb out the window.
47. I can't remember what I did but I got a slap on the face from Mr [ETG] because of something that I did. The social work got involved and they asked me what I wanted to do. I had a choice for the very first time in my life of what I could do. I didn't know what to say and I just clammed up and they decided for me that I should leave. I went to a temporary house possibly in Elgin for a night or two but I don't know their names.

**Buckie Children's Home, Buckie, Moray**

48. I went from there to Buckie Children's home in [REDACTED] 1981 because I know I was there for [REDACTED]. Everything at this home was fine and there were no issues there. I think I was there maybe there for two to three months then I went back to live with

my mum and my new step dad who I had never met before when I was about 15 years old. Apparently my mum wanted me back so I went home.

49. I didn't get on with my new step dad [REDACTED] and he was violent to my mum so it ended up that the social workers got involved and I got moved to a temporary home in Turriff. Two to three days later they both appeared full of apologies and got me to go back home with them. I went back but it didn't work out so I left and moved in with my grandparents. The social worker got involved and was quite happy with this. I was still quite unruly I suppose, and because they were older they couldn't cope.

#### **Foster Carers - The [REDACTED], Portsoy**

50. The social work got involved again and I was then taken from there to foster carers in Portsoy where I had my 16th birthday. Portsoy was [REDACTED] It was a big house with the [REDACTED] attached.
51. I was only with them two to three months and when I turned 16 the social worker came and picked me up and took me back to my mum. The [REDACTED] were brilliant people and the food was great. They had their own children too. I would have loved to have stayed there.

#### **Life after care**

52. I stayed for a while with my mum and didn't like the way mum was being treated by my step dad [REDACTED]. I wanted to stay at school but my mum and step dad encouraged me to work and they got me a job.
53. I don't know when my contact with the social work department stopped but I don't think there was any contact after I turned sixteen years old.

54. I met a bloke when I was sixteen but he was a lot older than me and it turned in to a bad relationship and he abused me until I was twenty-five. At twenty-five he threatened me that if I didn't leave I would get killed. I left him and got digs. I had two children to him but because I walked out on him and I had nowhere to stay I didn't get custody of them and he brought them up. I have no contact with them.
55. I have four children to my new partner and I am in a very stable relationship now. My children don't know about my past.
56. I have occasional contact with my parents but I don't consider them as being part of my life. My mum is now on her own.

### **Impact**

57. Because of what happened to me my schooling was affected by all the moves. I wanted to stay on at school but didn't. I have since been to college and I have done okay so I did get an education.
58. If I am in any crowds or any sort of arguments take place I think the worst is going to happen and I have a feeling of dread. I get very nervous in front of people.
59. I used to be very outgoing and confident at school until I went to JS-JBS I used to be good at debating and standing up and speaking. The first time I had a panic attack was when I was twelve years old. I stood up and couldn't speak and ever since I have social anxiety.
60. I don't really keep in touch with my sisters and didn't really have a close relationship with them.
61. Between six to ten years ago I went through a bad stage where I lost track of things and it was like I was in a parallel world. I lost all sense of who I was and had panic attacks. It was like a mental breakdown. I can't really describe it but I just felt

strange. Every day I wake up and I can see myself back when I was ten years old and everything that happened to me. I live with what happened to me every day of my life.

62. Maybe between ten to fifteen years ago I went through a bad spell and I seriously considered suicide and I thought about doing it quite a lot. The only thing that stopped me was how it would affect the people I was leaving behind. It wouldn't have been fair.
63. I blame the social work for taking me from one situation and putting me in to another place that was supposed to be a place of safety but it was as bad or even worse.
64. I am over protective of my own children. Whenever they are out I need to know where they are and when they will be home. I am always going on at them about not eating properly but they just tell me to stop fussing. If they fall out with their friends I feel it as much as they do.
65. If there is no food in the fridge I feel it is a disaster.
66. I have had two steady partners in my life and I am sometimes distant from my current one. I can't tell him, who I have been with for twenty-five years, that I love him. I can say it to my kids but not to him.

### **Treatment**

67. I have had Psychiatric help including two or three periods of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy. I went for help when I was forty years old and I am currently awaiting counselling. I am on Beta Blockers because I was taking quite severe panic attacks.

**Reporting**

68. It never occurred to me that the social work department could have helped me at any time. I didn't see that they were there to help me, just to take me away and move me to the next home.
69. The first people I ever told about JS-JBS [REDACTED] was when I tried to tell some of my fellow Girl Guides when I was between twelve and fourteen years of age but I only really mentioned it to them in conversation and not really seriously.
70. The first official time was to the police. Two uniformed police officers came to my door at a flat where I was staying in Bridge of Don when I was twenty-one years old and they asked me for a statement. I was told that a family member had reported to them that John Sinclair had tried it on with their daughter. They wanted to know about my time at JS-JBS [REDACTED] so they came in to the house and I told them the whole story. I hadn't told anyone else before this. If the police hadn't come to my door I may never have reported it. It was quite a relief when I finally told the police and gave them a statement.
71. It was only four years ago when I was speaking to two of my sisters that I found out that similar things had happened to them, including getting taken in to the attic space and abused there, although at the time I thought I was the only one.

**Other Action Taken**

72. I know I gave my statement at the procurator fiscals office and there was a pre-trial but I never got a witness citation. I was told at some point that there were eleven charges committed against me, my sisters and other family members by John Sinclair. I never gave evidence and I never heard anything back about what happened to John Sinclair but it must have been settled out of court. I have written to the police forces involved and the courts but I have been told that because of data protection they can't tell me anything.

73. I have never been to a lawyer to try and find out what the outcome was for John Sinclair and whether he was convicted, but we are not eligible for legal aid because my partner works.

### **Records**

74. I have asked for my social work records and I have been helped by In Care Survivor Scotland but they were told that my files have been lost in the Grampian / Aberdeenshire area. About a year later, which was three years ago they found them at Banff but there are bits missing from them. I have had a brief look through them but don't want to read them all as I didn't like the bits that I had read. The chunk when I was at JS-JBS is missing, so I don't know where that has gone. There is a lot of information not there.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

75. I really hope that by coming forward I will provide a voice for everyone from the 1970s who were in care to make sure that it just doesn't happen again. It shouldn't have happened then and it shouldn't happen now.
76. I would like the social work to acknowledge that what happened then, not just to me but to everybody else, was because they had failings. They should never have placed four girls with a young couple in their early twenties with all that had happened to us. You can't change the past but I would like the social work to acknowledge the part that they played, and that it doesn't happen again.
77. 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. It has been explained to me about anonymity but I do not wish to be anonymous and I am happy

for my details to be published and I would want to give evidence at any future hearings.

Signed..... FDE [REDACTED] .....

Dated..... 25/1/17 .....