

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

EQZ

Support person present: No

1. My name is EQZ I was known as EQZ as a child. My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. My mother was and my father was She was born in 1927 and he was in 1925.
3. My earliest memory is of being in Stockbridge. We lived in a basement flat in My memory before children's homes is that we didn't have a lot but we were fine. We used to just go out and play all the time. I lived with my mother, siblings and my Auntie My auntie stayed with us until she joined the RAF in 1953. It was my mum and two aunts, Auntie and Auntie who really brought us up, they all loved us. We got Christmas presents and peanuts and oranges at Halloween. After dinner, we would watch Robin Hood and my mother would put the wee ones to bed.
4. My dad was away at sea. I think my dad ran away to the trawlers when he was fourteen so he was guaranteed to become an alcoholic. He worked as bosun in the Merchant Navy. We weren't frightened of my dad because he wasn't a danger to children.
5. My sister was born on 1948. So there were thirteen months between us. My sister was born in 1952. Then there was

my brothers, [REDACTED] in 1955, [REDACTED] in 1956, [REDACTED] in 1960, my sister [REDACTED] in 1964, my brother [REDACTED] in 1965 and my brother [REDACTED] in 1970. My mother had another baby who died before my sister, [REDACTED] I think my mother was badly depressed following his death.

6. My mother was compassionate and she loved us. She was also artistic. My father was paid fortnightly. I think it was nine pounds. My mother had a full fortnight to look after us with no money. I can remember her always having to borrow money and, sometimes, having to go to the headmaster at the school to ask for free dinners. I think she was in a difficult situation whereby she didn't have any money and wasn't able to feed us.

Polworth Children's Home, Edinburgh

7. I read years later that it said in my 'care package' that it was 'desertion' which led to us going into the first children's home. At the time, my mum had three wee girls. There was me, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] She was pregnant with my brother, [REDACTED] I think she just needed some help. I don't think it was 'desertion'.
8. I can remember playing with some wee bricks, with my sister, while we waited to leave. I found out years later that it was a policeman who took us from our house to the children's home. How was that desertion? Why would my mother have been waiting for a policeman to come for us? I can also remember reading in my 'care package' notes that it said the house was a "mess".

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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11. There was a big gap between Polworth and the next home. However, when I was eight or nine, my mother started having an affair with another man. My father was at sea and when he was home he was drunk. Anyway, it wasn't a good move because he turned out not to be a nice man.
12. When I was ten, I came home from school one day to find my mother lying at the bottom of the stairs in the close. She was unconscious with blood coming out of her head. I saw my father at the top of the stairs. He had nearly killed her. I couldn't even recognise her face. The police came and mother was taken to hospital. At the time, I made the assumption that my father had thrown her over the bannister onto the stairs. I don't know if my father had come home and found out that she was having an affair, but there had been some sort of argument.
13. The case went to court and I had to give evidence at the trial. The lawyer who was questioning me made me realise that I hadn't actually seen my dad push my mum over.
14. For some reason, my mother always had some compassion for my dad. Although, it must have been a difficult marriage. He was quite a principled man.
15. It was after this incident that we were taken to Lagarie Children's Home in 1961. I was ten. I think, because my mother had almost been murdered. I think my mum had a broken skull. I can remember my Uncle [REDACTED] crying when we left.

Lagarie Children's Home, Rhu, Helensburgh

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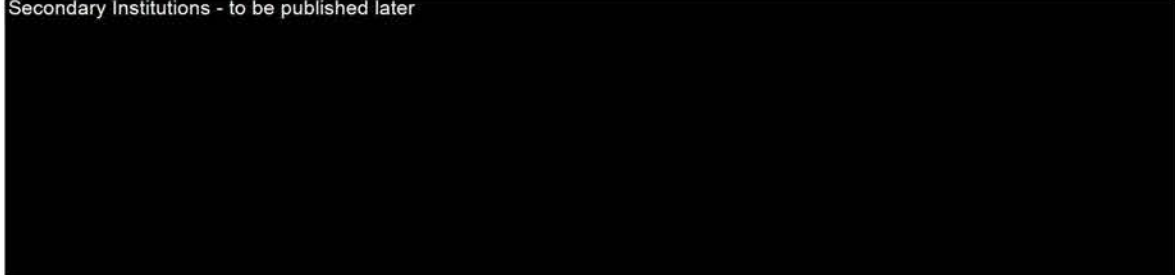
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Home

56. When I went home, my dad was at sea. We lived at [REDACTED] My mother's boyfriend, [REDACTED] was there. I think he was in his early thirties. I can remember wishing he wasn't there. I think I was used to my dad and he felt like a real intrusion to me. I suppose, in a way, it also felt like he was taking my mother's attention away from us.

57. [REDACTED] was quiet and plausible. My mother didn't see his deviance. She didn't know what he was really like. When I was twelve, [REDACTED] sexually assaulted me. I don't feel able to speak about it. I became pregnant as a result. I had no idea I was pregnant, I was totally oblivious. It was noticed in the gym hall at school. There had been a couple of incidents prior to it where I had to get away from [REDACTED]

58. The only reason people knew about it was because I became pregnant. The school sent me home, and an appointment was made for me at the family doctor. I didn't tell anyone who it was, my mother asked me but I wouldn't tell her. I completely shut down. I was scared that I would be sent to jail.

59. I went to a mother and baby home in Tollcross in Edinburgh. The social worker didn't speak to me on the way there. When I was in the home, two, tall, policewomen came to see me. They asked me questions and according to the care package, [REDACTED] admitted it right away. He got eighteen months in prison.

60. The baby was born on [REDACTED] 1963. I didn't know if I'd had a boy or a girl. The doctors and nurses wouldn't let me see the baby for ages. I was crying and shouting

for them to let me see him. Eventually, a nurse wheeled him in and when I saw him, I thought he was lovely. He was a big, beautiful baby boy. I just couldn't feel anything. I can remember thinking this isn't anything to do with me. I can remember looking down at him and saying, "I'm sorry, I can't keep you."

61. He was adopted by a Catholic family who lived in Dundee. The adoption was arranged by the St Andrew's Adoption Agency. There was no consultation. His parents told him he had been adopted when he was thirteen.
62. The council evicted us from our house. My mother lost her house and I was fostered. After I'd had the baby, nobody told me what was happening. They just came and got me from the mother and baby home.
63. I don't know if [REDACTED] abused any of my siblings. I have since learned that people who do that kind of thing can be crafty. My mother probably thought he was helping her. My mother loved us and tried her best. I don't think he assaulted my sister [REDACTED] because she seemed to have more gall than I had. I think if I hadn't been so terrified in that children's home, I might have been able to stand up for myself. I might have been able to tell my mother but instead I just went about in wandering shock. ^{Secondary}

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Mrs ^{zEKD} Foster Care, Brechin

64. No one told me where I was going. I was only thirteen. The social worker didn't speak to me at all. I was taken to a house in Brechin. The woman, Mrs ^{zEKD}, was quite old. When I first arrived, I didn't know what was happening. When the social worker was there, Mrs ^{zEKD} showed me to my room. It had a big, beautiful bedspread on it but as soon as the social worker left, the bedspread came right off. There was an eight year old girl and a seventeen year old girl there too. I can't remember either of their names.

65. On my first day, Mrs zEKD left me alone in the living room with a young man who had a severe facial disfigurement or disability. He lived there too. I can remember feeling very scared. However, once I got to know him, he was a 'big, gentle giant'.
66. I can remember getting mince with an egg in it and lentil soup. In the mornings, I got a buttered roll and cornflakes.
67. The wee school I went to was old fashioned but it was alright. I would come home and get soup and bread. I was supposed to get pocket money, four shillings, but Mrs zEKD didn't give me it. I would say that she wasn't very interested in me. She was doing the job for the money.
68. The older girl who lived there slapped me in the face once. I did 'tattie picking' during the holidays. I hadn't heard of it so I asked the teacher what it meant. I enjoyed it because I got away from Mrs zEKD
69. I never had any change of clothing. I used to have to wash my things in the sink. Mrs zEKD didn't buy me clothes even though she was given money for them. I can remember people not talking to me. It was as if I didn't exist.
70. Brechin was a small 'backwater' compared to Edinburgh. I can remember missing the colours of the buses in Edinburgh. I must have been homesick. Mrs zEKD wrote in my care package that I wrote three letters home every day and that I cried a lot. I think I was there for about ten months.
71. I came back from Brechin and went straight to my Auntie s. I can remember my cousin opening the door to me and letting out a yell. She put on a record and made us a cup of tea.
72. My mother was still homeless at the time so she was moving around between various rental properties. It took three years for my mother to get a house after the incident with She was separated from my dad but they weren't divorced. My Auntie

████████ fostered me but I spent so much time at my mum's. My Auntie let me stay with her until my mum got a house.

73. Prior to leaving my Auntie ██████████s, I got a job in a hairdresser. I left my mother's in late 1967.

Life after being in care

74. I met someone when I was a sixteen. We got married. I thought getting married would be a 'normal' thing to do. I lived on ██████████ I stayed with him and tried to make things work. We were together for fifteen years but it was a nightmare. I was terrified to leave because I didn't want my children growing up in a children's home.
75. After my mother died in 1984, I started drinking too much. I left my husband around the same time, so I went into a real depression. I went to the doctor for help. It had been very difficult getting away from my husband. I got divorced and moved to a house in ██████████
76. I went to Rape Crisis a few years ago. I received a letter out of the blue from my son, ██████████ His parents had emigrated to Australia. I was so excited. He came to visit me in January this year. He's six foot, one. He was a professional ██████████ ██████████ He was such a gentleman but I think he found it difficult. He's happy and has a good life. I've got three grown up children.
77. My son, ██████████ told me that he felt the pain and loss every day after he had been told that he adopted. I told him that he had been in my mind every day. I think he started to look for me when he was eighteen. He didn't find me for a long time. It was a miracle that he found me. He knows what happened to me, and it made him want to find me even more.

Impact

78. I have two other children. My son, [REDACTED] is 52 and my daughter, [REDACTED] is almost 51. I think they were both affected by being afraid in the house. My daughter lost her son about eight years ago. He drowned [REDACTED]. She's had a problem with alcohol and had a bit of a breakdown recently. My son is a nice man. He gelled well with my son, [REDACTED] when they met.
79. None of my family have been able to have a relationship or to keep a job. I think it's due to the amount of trauma in the family. My brothers were compassionate laddies.
80. Every single one of my brothers and sisters were involved in either drugs or alcohol. It was the seventies and eighties, there was no work and drugs were everywhere. My sister [REDACTED] and my brother [REDACTED] both died of AIDS. One night I was at home with some of my family. My brother, [REDACTED] came to the door. If he hadn't been my brother I wouldn't have allowed him to come in based on his appearance. He seriously assaulted my other brother [REDACTED] and he died. [REDACTED] was on drugs when he did it. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
81. I think my time in care has impacted on me massively. One doctor told me that I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. I'm on a permanent anti-depressant. I just live a really quiet life. I've realised as far as my son and daughter are concerned, I can't fix everything. If they need me I am there.
82. I have this thing where I can be standing in a queue and I can hardly breathe. It's a bit like a panic attack. I've got a problem with waiting and I have wondered if it is because I waited and waited on my mother and she wasn't coming. [REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[REDACTED] Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Treatment/support

83. I went back to Rhu once. The mansion isn't there anymore. A letter was sent to my niece from Birth Link. I phoned them and received my care package. The care package gave me information about Polworth, the sexual assault and stuff about Rhu.

Reporting of Abuse

84. I have never reported any of the abuse to the police.

Records

85. I have received my care package which dates back to 1955.

Lessons to be Learned

86. Institutions aren't the best places but if they are used for children, they should be run by people who have been vetted heavily. I think that people from outside should come in to speak to the children. Children will be open to someone if they're kind to them. It should be someone who would arrive at the home unexpectedly and speak to the children on a one-to-one basis. There should be better communication with children. I think the worst thing was wondering if my mother was coming to visit or not.

Other information

87. 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... EQZ

Dated... 7/12/2020

