

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FAZ

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FAZ My birth surname was FAZ I was known as FAZ all the time that I was in care. My date of birth is 1943. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. My mother and father were and I think his name was I have never known or had anything to do with my father. I had a brother although I called him He was two years older than me, but he died at the age of 22.
3. I was born in Caithness and all I know about my early childhood is what my mother later told me. Apparently when my mother met my stepdad, his mother wanted and me put into care. I have no recollection of the first places we went to because I was just a baby. I have been told we were in Airth Castle which is near Letham and then Weedingshall Home in Polmont. I don't know how long we were in each of these places. I have no idea if there was any social work involvement in putting me into care. The first place that I have any recollection of is Aberlour Orphanage which is near Elgin. my brother was in there with me. I think I was about five or six when I went to Aberlour. I cannot remember arriving at Aberlour. I was too young.

## **Aberlour Orphanage**

4. My first recollection from my childhood is being within Aberlour. The girls' wing was on one side, the school was in the middle and the boys' wing was on the other side. We were divided up into houses depending on our age. The youngest children were in the nursery. The first house I would have been in was called 5X, then F1. After that was the Rectory and then St Margaret's. I left before I went into the Rectory. I am not sure what age the girls were in each house. I was in a dormitory but I don't know how many other girls were in there. The girls in my dormitory were all around my age but I don't remember any of the other girls' names.
  
5. The man in charge of Aberlour was BLK I didn't see him very often. There was a woman who was the Matron and we saw a lot of her, probably every day. There was another member of staff and she was in charge of us. I can't remember the Matron's or her name. Sometimes the woman in charge of us would sit on a chair in the corridor outside the dormitory. You had to ask her if you could go to the toilet, but only if none of the other girls were already there. I don't know if there was someone in that chair all night. There was a nun I sometimes saw at night time as well. She was Sister Margaret and she wore the black nun's robe and white round her head. She just wandered about. I was scared of her because she looked scary. I never saw her through the day at the home. She was the only nun that I remember being there. There were other members of staff but I can't remember their names.

## **Routine at Aberlour**

### *Mornings and bedtime*

6. I can't really remember much about the routine. We got up in the mornings, got washed and dressed then went down for breakfast. After breakfast we would go back to our dormitory and get ready for school. I was in my bed by six o'clock. That was because I was a bed wetter. The other girls, who didn't wet their beds were allowed to stay up a bit later.

### *Mealtimes/Food*

7. We had our breakfast and evening meals in the dining hall. There were no boys in there. They had their own dining hall. When we were at school I think we went back to the dining hall for our lunch. Food was alright but there were certain things I didn't like. If anything was left you would get it to eat at the next meal.

### *Washing/bathing*

8. I was made to have a bath every day because I wet the bed. The bath water was cold and the member of staff would watch, making sure I washed myself. I can't remember this person's name. I am not sure what the routine was when we were allowed to have a hot bath.

### *Clothing/uniform*

9. We were given clothes to wear when we were at Aberlour. We just had to wear what we were given. We wore different colours of clothes if you were in 5X or the Rectory.

### *Leisure time*

10. We didn't have any leisure time, or time to play. After school we had our tea then got ready for our bed. There weren't any games, toys or books to read.

### *Trips and holidays*

11. I remember sometimes we went to stay in a boys' school in Hopeman for a holiday. I can't really say that I enjoyed it because I still wet the bed.

### *Schooling*

12. I am not sure where the teachers came from. I think I was a bit of a rebel at school because I was regularly sent out of the class. I can't remember what I had done in the

class to get sent out. I regularly got belted on the hand when I was at school but I can't remember what I got it for. I am not sure if the classes were mixed or if the boys and girls were kept separate.

#### *Healthcare*

13. I got treated for a wasp sting and I also got Impetigo when I was at Aberlour. With the wasp sting I was kept in the nurses hospital ward for a few days. I don't remember ever seeing a doctor or a dentist when I was there.

#### *Work*

14. I don't remember being given any chores or jobs to do.

#### *Birthdays and Christmas*

15. I remember getting a pillowcase full of presents at Christmas. I was in there every Christmas. Birthdays were never celebrated. I am not sure if I even knew or if anybody told me when it was my birthday.

#### *Bed Wetting*

16. I regularly wet the bed and I was punished. There were about five other girls who wet the bed and our beds were all positioned together behind the door in the dormitory. When the staff came into the dormitory in the morning to wake us up we had to tell them if we had wet our beds.

#### *Visitors*

17. I never got any visitors when I was at Aberlour. I don't remember ever seeing a social worker either. The first time I saw a social worker was Mr McDonald when I was leaving. I didn't even know that I had a mother.

*Review of care / detention*

18. I never went to any children's panels and no one ever told me how long I was going to be in there or what was happening with me.

*Sibling Contact*

19. The boys and the girls didn't mix. I was always desperate to see my brother. The only time I got to see my brother was in the school playground at playtime. We were in separate playgrounds but I saw [REDACTED] where the playgrounds met.

**Abuse at Aberlour**

20. I didn't like stew and couldn't eat it. I was told that if I didn't eat the stew it would be re-served for me at the next meal. Sometimes I would get the same plate of food served up for three or four days. I saw this happening to other girls who didn't eat their food. This was the staff who would do this but I can't remember their names. I didn't get anything else to eat so could go for four days without any food. They would then give up and give me other food. I also remember the nurse belting me for not eating my food.
21. I regularly wet the bed. When I wet the bed the member of staff who was supposed to be looking after us, whose name I can't remember, used to rub my nose in the wet sheets on my bed. I would get sent to the nurse and I would be made to remove my pants, bend over the settee and she hit me several times with a leather belt on my bare backside. It had a split in the end. She would hit me several times and only stop when I was screaming with the pain. She was the only one that battered me.
22. After she belted me she would make me take medicine to stop me from wetting the bed and it made me really dry. I wasn't allowed by any of the staff to take a drink of water through the day. The only time I sneaked a drink was when I was brushing my teeth and I sucked the water off the toothbrush. Staff would be standing at the

bathroom door when we were getting ready for bed but there were too many of us for them to see what I was doing.

23. Every time I wet the bed the staff made me take a bath and the water was really cold. This happened nearly every second day. If any of the other girls had wet the bed they would have to queue and wait for their turn to get in the cold water. There may have been two or more baths in the bathroom. I saw the same things happening to other girls that happened to me. I can't remember the other girls' names.
24. On a Saturday morning the staff would come round the dormitory with a bag of toffee. When it got to me the member of staff refused to give me a bit toffee and told me in front of everybody that I wasn't getting a bit because I had wet the bed.
25. When I think back I cannot actually remember any any good memories from my time at Aberlour. I was unhappy and just wanted to leave. I can't remember any member of staff being nice to me and there were none that I could trust or open up to.

#### **Reporting of abuse at Aberlour**

26. There was no one at Aberlour that I could trust enough to tell what was going on. All the adults were in it together and it would have been worse for me if I had told anyone about the nurse.

#### **Leaving Aberlour**

27. I only found out that I had a mother when I got a letter from her a short while before I left Aberlour at the age of eleven. It was Easter time and along with the letter me and [REDACTED] got a big Easter egg. In the letter she said that me and [REDACTED] were going to be leaving Aberlour and going to live with her. I was flabbergasted when I heard I had a mum. I don't know what had changed that she wanted us back. I wasn't happy about

going home but I wasn't sad either. I didn't know what life was going to be like with her.

28. The social worker, Mr McDonald, came to Aberlour and he took us down to [REDACTED] in Stirlingshire by train where my mum was living at the time. I don't think I had ever met Mr McDonald before. My mum was living with my step father, my half-brother and half-sister.
29. I went to Carron Shore secondary school when I was there and I stayed with my mum around a year, maybe less. I just didn't settle in at my mums because I felt she had let me down by putting me into care. Things didn't go well with my step father because he started interfering with me. When Mr McDonald left me he gave me his phone number should I wish to contact him but I never did. I wrote a letter to Mr McDonald when things got bad and I told him that I wasn't happy at home and wanted to go back to Aberlour. I didn't mention my step father interfering with me.
30. It wasn't long after I had written that letter that Mr McDonald took me away from the house. I think I was back at home possibly for a year, maybe less. I never saw Mr McDonald between him dropping me off and him coming back for me. I never went to any children's panels or anything like that. Mr McDonald took me to a girls' home in Newton Stewart, Dumfries. I can't remember the name of this home. My brother [REDACTED] stayed living with my mum.

#### **Unnamed girls' home in Newton Stewart, Dumfries**

31. [REDACTED]  
Secondary Institutions - to be published later

32.

33.

34.

35.



36.

### Leaving unnamed girls home in Newton Stewart

37. Sometime later, but I am not sure how long, Mr McDonald took me out of this home. We got a train to Polmont. On the train Mr McDonald told me that I was going to stay with foster parents. I remember feeling really scared because I didn't know what I was going to.

### Foster Carers, FAW-SPO in Polmont

38. I was taken to their house in the area of Polmont. I might have been twelve or thirteen at that time. They were both quite old. Mr was very quiet and he never really spoke very much. They lived in an ordinary council house and they had their bedroom and I had my own. There were no other children there. I didn't have any toys or games to play with in my room. I went to Redding School when I was there but I don't remember much about it. After school I just remember going out to play with my friends in the street. I can't really remember much about the food or what the routine was in there but I know that I hated living there. I was with FAW-SPO for a few months.

### Abuse at Foster Carers FAW-SPO

39. Mrs FAW was horrible to me. She told me that she wanted to foster a boy and wasn't very happy when she got me and told me that she didn't want me. I wet the bed when I was there and when I did she hit me over the head with a brush. It had a wooden handle like a pole and had a hard bristle brush. She hit me every time I wet the bed

which was quite a lot. She probably hit me two or three times each time. It was sore but it never really left any marks.

#### **Leaving Foster Care - FAW-SPO**

40. I must have contacted Mr McDonald again and told him that I wasn't happy living with FAW-SPO and that I wanted to leave. Around that time I was shopping in Falkirk and I met my stepfather. He told me that my mother wanted me to go back and live with her. Mr McDonald told me that this was probably because I was nearing working age and could take some money into the house. I think I must have been nearly fifteen by that time. I can't actually remember leaving FAW-SPO house but it must have been Mr McDonald or another social worker who came and took me out. I am not sure but I think I went back to live with my mum in

#### **Life after Foster care**

41. Life still wasn't great with my mum. I didn't get on with her and I think it was because I couldn't accept that she had put me into care. I don't remember much about this period of time that I lived with her. I left there and I was put into another home but I can't remember where it was. I have a vague recollection of having been in a girls' home at some time in either Pollokshields or Pollokshaws in Glasgow. I can't remember much about it but I hated being there and I ran away a lot. Along with another girl called we ran away and hitch hiked to London. By the time we got to London it was dark and I was scared so I gave myself up to the police. I might have been fifteen or sixteen by then. We were taken back to the home in Pollokshields or Pollokshaws. I don't think I was there for very long after that.
42. I can't really remember leaving there or what I did after that but I ended up back living with my mum.

### **Life after care**

43. I got a job in a paper mill when I was fifteen or sixteen when I was living at home with my mum. I can't remember how long I worked there. After that I worked in a hotel in Falkirk and I lived in there. I can't remember how long I worked there. I am not sure where I worked after that.
44. I have been married three times. I first got married at 21 and it lasted six years. I re-married and this one lasted twelve years. I married my current husband in 1986. I have one daughter but she has been adopted and one son.

### **Impact**

45. My time in care has had a big impact on my life. I cannot actually think or say how it has. I still occasionally think about my time in care now and again. It wasn't my fault I was put into care and have always felt that I was being punished for something I didn't do. I have always blamed my mother for that.

### **Treatment/support**

46. I have never felt the need to get any counselling as a result of my time in care.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

47. I have never reported any of the abuse that I suffered to the police or to anyone in authority.

**Records**

48. I have never tried to get any of my social work records.

**Lessons to be Learned**

49. I would like children to be treated better than when I was in the care homes. I was treated like a number and not a human being.

**Other information**

50. I went back to the girls' home in Newton Stewart in Dumfries a few years ago with my husband. The girls' home has gone and I was told it had been burned down. There are new houses there now.

51. 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..... 14.9.20 .....