

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

BCT

Support person present: No

1. My name is BCT although my maiden name is BCT My date of birth is 1958. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Life before going into care**

2. I was born at Paisley. That's what it says on my birth certificate. I stayed there with my parents, and My mother's maiden name was
3. Until recently I thought I was from a family of six or seven. I now know that I actually had nine siblings. Two of these were babies who died very young. was the youngest then me. There was only fifteen months between me and The rest of my siblings in order of age were, and who was the oldest.
4. When I was about three I have a memory of the police coming to my house and breaking down the door. Me and my sister, were there on our own. At that time my mother and father had split up. My mother was living with another person, a Mr
5. After this happened and me were put into care. I can only assume it was because of neglect after being found in the house by the police. We had been in care before for a short time. We were then allowed home again. I'm not sure what the

exact circumstances were when we were put into care the first time. I think that the first home we were in was Blairvardach.

**Blairvardach Childrens Home**

6. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

7.

**Leavecross Children's Home**

8. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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### **Moving to foster care**

20. Nobody ever told us what was happening the whole time we were in care. All I remember about leaving the home was [REDACTED] and me being driven a very long way to Inverness to meet our foster parents. It was a man who was driving. I had never seen him before. I was crying because I didn't know what was happening and where were going.
21. I have found out from my records that [REDACTED] and me went into foster care in [REDACTED] 1964.

### **Foster care with** <sup>BGU-BGV</sup> [REDACTED]

22. I remember meeting our foster parents, <sup>BGU-BGV</sup> [REDACTED] They were both very old. We had never met them before. The address was [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Inverness. It seemed liked a nice house and there was a garden.
23. It wasn't until the person who took us there left that we realised we would be staying there. They didn't really speak much other than to tell us we were to call them mother and father. There was no effort to welcome us.. We learnt very quickly that

you didn't speak unless you were spoken to. This continued the whole time we were in foster care.

24. I found out later that they had agreed to take both of us. That was the reason that we ended up there. We were to be the last children they fostered. They had apparently fostered countless children before this.
25. There was another grown man, [BGW] who stayed at the house. All the time we stayed there I thought he was a lodger. I later found out he was actually their adopted son. [BGW] went out to work every day. I think it might have been with the council or something like that.
26. There were four bedrooms in the house. Three upstairs and one downstairs where [BGW] slept. Me and my sister shared a room with a double bed. Mother and father had another room. There was also a spare bedroom for visitors. Sometimes me and my sister would be separated and sleep in separate rooms.

### **Routine**

27. My foster father was a train driver. He retired a year after we arrived. Mother always stayed in the house. She never went out because of her leg ulcers.
28. My mother's leg ulcers were bandaged and had to be changed every day. She would do this herself first thing in the morning. When I was older I had to do this for her. Mother showed me what to do. Every now and then a district nurse would come in and check on mother.

### *Washing/bathing*

29. I would have a bath and wash my hair once a week. This would be on my own. The door was always closed although you weren't allowed to lock it. After my bath I would get dried in front of the fire.

*Chores*

30. I was taught to clean the house and clean it very well. We would have to clean all the time. I remember cleaning the windows inside and out. This was even on the second floor of the house. I had to hang on outside the window and clean them. I wouldn't let my sister do it as she was scared of heights.
31. In the spring I had to lift the linoleum up and change the newspapers that were underneath. We would Hoover, polish and clean the fire out. I had to stand in the sink and trample the sheets down when they were being washed.
32. I was given an electric shock once when I had to stand on a chair to clean an old Bakelite socket that was high up. I was thrown to the floor and hurt my arm.
33. On one occasion I was given a belting for not doing the ironing right. I scorched a big cotton handkerchief that belonged to my father. My mother gave me a right leathering.
34. I had to wash our school skirt every week. I would have to tack the pleats to keep them in place before they were washed.
35. Mother supervised everything. If it wasn't done right she would hit you on the head with a brush.

*Visitors*

36. There were always visitors coming to the house. [REDACTED] who was mother and father's real daughter, would be there most days. She would bring her two children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] would sometimes stay at the weekends. When she did she would sleep in the bed with mother and father. I really hope that nothing ever happened to her. I would have hoped not with her being their granddaughter.

37. There was also a man called [REDACTED] who would visit. He drove the ice cream van. I don't know what the relationship was between him and my mother and father.
38. Another visitor was [REDACTED], who was in the army. He was born out of wedlock and was the son of [REDACTED]. Due to this my mother and father had brought him up. When [REDACTED] was home there were a lot of violent clashes between him and my father. One night I heard him say to my father "You leave those kids alone".
39. [REDACTED] who was in the marines, used to visit when he was on leave. [REDACTED] had been in foster care with mother and father. He was very nice.
40. Our neighbours had two children [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. They used to come to our door and ask us out to play. We were never allowed to go out with them. We weren't even allowed to play in the front garden. It was always the back garden.

#### *Social work visits*

41. The social work visited about every six months. I think they came from Glasgow. The only name I remember was Miss Richmond. She was there for the last three of four visits before we left foster care. There were never any spot checks. I think the social work would always phone ahead to arrange a visit.
42. My mother would speak to the social worker on her own. We would be brought in later, always well dressed. The social worker would ask how we were and then we would leave the room. I don't think I would ever have said what was happening to us. I was too scared.

#### *Schooling*

43. I started primary school when I was in foster care. I went to St Joseph's Roman Catholic school. It was terrible. The teachers were mainly nuns. There were one or two civilian teachers.

44. The nuns would hit you with the wooden dusters and you would be punched. My sister had her hand tied behind her back as she was left handed.
45. I think I spent a year in secondary school at Inverness High. I was very scared at school and had no confidence. I found it hard to mix and communicate without being told what to do.

#### *Clothing*

46. I would say that we were always reasonably well dressed. When we were first given a pair of shoes they were always too big. We had to wear them for ages until we grew into them.
47. We also had a school uniform for primary and secondary school.

#### *Holidays*

48. My mother's sister [REDACTED] had a guest house in [REDACTED]. We went there for a holiday with [REDACTED] and our foster mother. This was a good experience. It was the only time we were allowed a bit of freedom. We could cross the road and go to the beach.

#### *Food*

49. My father did the cooking. He was an excellent cook. We never went hungry and were always well fed. Compared to some of the other stories you hear I class us as quite lucky in that respect.

#### *Birthdays/Christmas*

50. We did get toys at Christmas. I'm not sure if my foster parents were given an allowance to buy presents. When we were playing with the toys we had to play quietly. You weren't allowed to make any noise.



51. As far as I can remember we did get a present on our birthday from our foster parents. We never had a cake or a birthday party.

### **Abuse**

BGU

52. Within a couple of months of arriving at our foster parents, the abuse started. It continued right through until I started my periods. I always tried to protect my sister. My father tried to make her rub up against him but I would stop him. I made sure I put myself in between him and her to try and keep him away.
53. Father would come into our room. I can't remember how often, but often enough. He would rub himself up and down against me. He tried to go inside me once but I was too tiny.
54. There was a cupboard at the back of the house near to the kitchen. It was called the coal hole. Father would abuse me in there. Sometimes mother would open the kitchen door and see what was going on. She would slam the door shut. After this she would give me a beating. I would be hit with a wooden spoon called a spirkle. I was also hit with pots and pans. Mother would call me a bad, evil little witch. This was time and again every time she saw what was happening.
55. When he was doing things to me my father would ejaculate into one of his cotton handkerchiefs. This is another horrible memory for me as I would have to iron these once they were washed.
56. It seems weird now but even though father was abusing me he was never as cruel towards me as mother.

57. My mother would never call me by my name. She would refer to me as "big yin" or "bitch". Mother would call my sister [REDACTED]. Father called me by my name but not often.

BGV [REDACTED]

58. I had eczema when I was young. I don't know if this was because of what I was going through. It was really bad when I was around nine. My skin was cracking and bleeding. I ended up with psoriasis on my scalp. I had a fleecy hat that I had to wear to school. I had no visible hair as it was all stuck together with the scabs. I used to get teased at school. I remember the pain being so bad because of the infection. I wouldn't even take the hat off for the teachers.
59. One day when I got home from school my mother ripped the hat off my head. She then held my head over the sink and scrubbed it with a brush that was used for cleaning the floor. I can take any beating but this was horrific. I eventually had to go to hospital. I was treated with oils and eventually got better.
60. My mother also hit me on the head with a pan. It ended up making a dent in the pan. As a result of this I was given another beating with another pan because the first one was damaged.
61. Mother never beat us in front of anyone else other than my father.
62. My mother told us that they had a brother and sister in foster care before us, the [REDACTED]. She said they weren't bad, evil and wicked like I was. This affected me for the rest of my life. That's why I have no confidence, because of how I was spoken to by my mother.

BGW [REDACTED]

63. If [BGW] came in drunk at the weekends he would come into our room. He would try to get into bed with us. [BGW] abused me as well. I would push my sister against the wall so that he couldn't get near her.
64. One night after [BGW] had been in our room [REDACTED] came in and sat at the end of the bed. I was terrified as I didn't know what was going to happen. [REDACTED] told me that everything was going to be okay.
65. If we were making a noise in the room either mother or father would come in and give us the belt. When father came in he would reach over me and hit [REDACTED] with the belt. If it was mother she would hit me with the belt but not [REDACTED]

#### **Leaving foster care**

66. When I was around eleven or twelve my mother had a stroke and had to go to hospital. When she came home I had to help feed her and take care of her. She eventually recovered and was able to start speaking again.
67. I don't think it was long after this that Miss Richmond, the social worker, started to visit. I think that she had some suspicions that something was going on. When mother wouldn't let her speak to us on her own there was a big argument. I'm sure that this happened twice. My mother said, "If you want to speak to the girls you do it in front of me."
68. Shortly after the second argument we got up one morning and our suitcases were packed for us. Mother said I was bad and evil. She told us that she didn't want us in her house anymore.
69. We didn't have the opportunity to say good bye to any of our friends at school. It was as quick as that.

70. We were picked up in a car. This was driven by a social worker called Miss Rogers. She drove us from the foster home to Aberlour Children's Home in Keith. Miss Rogers never said anything on the journey about why we were leaving.
71. Again from the records that I have recovered I now know that we were moved to Aberlour on [REDACTED] 1972.

### **Aberlour Children's Home, Keith, Aberdeenshire**

#### *First day*

72. I remember arriving at Aberlour. It was a big house at the end of a street. It was very modern. The house was built on the edge of a hill. The living room, dining room, kitchen and utility room were all on the ground floor. There was also a spare room and bathroom on the same floor.
73. We were introduced to the house parents, Ethel and Robert Smith. They were a married couple who stayed at the home. We would call them Auntie Ethel and Uncle Bob. There was also an assistant, Anne Grant, who we would call Auntie Anne. She lived in the home as well.
74. They were all very nice. We were given a nice warm reception. Miss Rogers left and we were shown around the home. We met the other children. There was only about ten children in the home. The oldest was about fourteen.
75. I don't know if Ethel and Bob knew what had went on in the foster home. All they said was that they thought our foster parents were too old now. We were always called by our name. After having never been called by your name for so long this took a bit of getting used to.
76. I had a lot of trust issues with authority after being in foster care. Even though Ethel and Bob were really good, myself and [REDACTED] didn't know what was going to

happen. We didn't know if we were going to be beaten. After a while we realised that things were going to be okay and started to relax.

### *Bedrooms*

77. The bedrooms were all upstairs with a bathroom at either end of a long corridor. [REDACTED] and me were given our own room. The other four girls had their own bedroom next door to ours. The boys were on the same floor but at the other end of the corridor. The house parents also had their own room on the same floor.

### **Routine at Aberlour**

78. In the mornings we would either get up when our alarm went off or Auntie Ethel would make sure we were up. We would then get ourselves ready for school before going for breakfast. I think it was more family orientated. It was a really nice place.
79. Ethel and Bob encouraged us to do different things that we hadn't been allowed to do before. It took a while to realise we were allowed to do certain things without asking permission. With our foster parents sometimes it would have taken weeks to build up the courage to ask permission to do something we wanted.
80. There were still ground rules you had to stick to. Ethel and Bob would still want to know where you were going.
81. We used to get thrupence pocket money. I can't remember if this was every week or every month. We were allowed to spend half of this but had to save the other half. This was good as it taught you the value of money. If you wanted to buy something you had to save for it.

*Mealtimes*

82. Mealtimes were great. The food was really good. Auntie Ethel would do all the cooking. She would also show us how to cook. If Ethel was out then Auntie Anne would do the cooking. You could get yourselves something from the kitchen whenever you wanted within reason. You wouldn't be allowed sweets if it was too near teatime.

*School*

83. [REDACTED] and myself both went to [REDACTED] School. We would walk to and from school. There was the usual abuse at school. We would be called "hommies". The other pupils knew we were from Aberlour. It was the only children's home in the area.
84. [REDACTED] was identified as a very good swimmer by the school. As a result Ethel and Bob allowed her to join the swimming club.
85. I left school when I was about fifteen or sixteen. I managed to pass three O grades.

*Hygiene*

86. There were no restrictions on bath or showers. You could have one whenever you wanted.

*Chores*

87. There was a lady called Mrs Gordon who used to come in and do the cleaning. We would help out with the dishes and make our own beds. Auntie Ethel used to say to me that you would never know I had slept in my bed. I always had to make sure it was pristine. I never did any housework other than when I did Mrs Gordon's job whilst she was on holiday. I was paid for doing this.

*Bed wetting*

88. There was a brother and sister, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who were twins. They were only small, maybe two or three years old. They used to wet their beds. They weren't punished for doing this. There was just a lot of love and attention. We all used to mother them because they were so young. I think they had suffered really bad abuse before they were in care. Both of them had cigarette burns on their arms and legs.

*Religion*

89. The first few years I was at Aberlour I still went to the chapel every week. The priest was an alcoholic and this made me think they were all the same. I also went to girl guides in Keith. The guides were run by two nuns. One was good the other one was really bad. That's when I decided that I had enough and stopped going to chapel.

*Running away*

90. When I first arrived at Aberlour I ran away a couple of times. Ethel would reassure me that Aberlour was my home now. I still thought I would be going back to Inverness. After a while I settled down and became part of what was a family unit.
91. There was no punishment for running away. It was completely different. You would be scolded but there was never any smacking.

*Christmas/Birthdays*

92. Everyone was always made a fuss of on their birthday. Some of the children would get visitors. My sister and me never had any visitors on our birthday. You would always be given a cake.
93. Christmases were also always celebrated. You would be made a fuss of by the house parents. We were given lots of presents on Christmas Day. It was like a normal family Christmas.

*Social work visits*

94. I think Miss Rodgers visited us at Aberlour. We would have meetings with her on our own.

*Trips/holidays*

95. We would go on trips to Portobello in Edinburgh and also St Andrew's. We stayed in the student flats when we went to St Andrew's.

*Other information*

96. Whilst we were at Aberlour my foster mother and father died within a year of each other. My father died first. We were then told that our foster mother was in hospital at Inverness.
97. For some strange reason I had a sense of loyalty. [REDACTED] and myself went to visit her in hospital. At first my foster mother didn't recognise us. Then when we were leaving she took my hand and said sorry. She went on to say we weren't evil and we weren't bad. I said to her that it was okay. It was maybe because she was such a staunch catholic she was trying to atone for what happened. I think this in some way helped me heal. A few days later we were told our foster mother had died.
98. You were allowed to stay at Aberlour until you were eighteen if you paid digs. I managed to get a job at a supermarket so I stayed on at the home. Everything was just the same. I still stayed in the same room with [REDACTED]
99. I was actually married for the first time before I was eighteen. We moved into a flat above the supermarket.



**Life after being in care**

100. I stayed in Keith for a few years. [REDACTED] also left Aberlour and moved into her own flat and started working.
101. My first daughter was born when I was twenty. I then discovered that my husband was cheating and I moved out into a friend's house.
102. After getting a divorce I later married for a second time. I had another daughter. My second husband also cheated on me. I began to think that it was me. I eventually divorced again. I would rather have been on my own than be cheated on.
103. I have had numerous jobs. Most of these were with customer service in the retail industry.

**Impact**

104. I am very protective of my daughters. A lot of what I have been through has given me strength to deal with things. Despite this there have been a few times where I felt suicidal. I would never tell anyone about this. I would keep it to myself.
105. My time in care has made sure that I am never judgemental or horrible towards other people. I will always fight for fairness on other peoples behalf.

**Reporting of Abuse**

106. I had never told anyone about the abuse until I met my second husband. I told him everything. When he cheated on me it hit me really hard. This was because it had taken years to build up the trust to tell someone what had happened to me.
107. I have never reported the abuse to the police.

**Records**

108. In 1991 I contacted Renfrewshire Council about our records from when we were in foster care. I received a letter from Eric McKenzie who was the adoption counselling co-ordinator. I phoned him and he told me that he was the person that had originally arranged for us to go into foster care. He also said that he had visited us when we were in foster care. I told him that he had sent us from the frying pan into the fire. At that point the phone went dead.
109. The council eventually contacted me about our records. I was initially informed that our records from the Aberlour care trust had been destroyed in a fire. However I have now received some records from our time at Aberlour. Within the records there are copies of letters from my mother to Miss Richmond. These are dated September 1972. My mother has asked for us to be moved although there is no reason for this in the letters.
110. There are a lot of letters from my mother to the council asking for money for clothing and things. There is also a letter from Mr McKenzie of Renfrewshire Council to me dated 21 June 1996. This provides information made by Miss Richmond. The letter says that Miss Richmond had visited our foster parents after we left to go to Aberlour. Miss Richmond stated that our foster parents had said they missed us but had to come to the decision to let us go as they could not cope due to ill health.
111. This information left me feeling angry given what we had been through with our foster parents.

**Lessons to be Learned**

112. I think that there were thousands of children taken out of a bad situation and put into a worse place. If this can be documented then hopefully it will ensure things like that will not happen again. It needs to be recorded why things like that happened.

113. Children need to have a voice and be listened to. There should have been better checks on foster carers. If a child is in care they should be monitored by different people. When they are being assessed it certainly should not be in the presence of the carer.

*Counselling*

114. I have been to see a counsellor once, when I was in my twenties. She told me that from the way I was speaking I had dealt with it all. In a way maybe I had.

115. 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..... 13 - 06 - 2018 .....