

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

FWA

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is FWA although prefer to be known as FWA My maiden name was FWA My date of birth is 1949. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Personal background and qualifications

2. I left school at the age of 15 with no qualifications. My first job was in a furriers as a hand sewer then became a waitress which I did for a few years. I married my husband FWB when I was 18 and we had three children by the time I was 22. I did some more waitressing then child minding and then became a foster carer. I was never career minded and didn't want to work in an office or be a hairdresser. I came from a very big family and I was the oldest girl so I was used to having young children about me, helping my mum and I loved it.

Becoming a foster carer

3. We became foster carers in 1978. I was 28 when I took my first foster care child. Initially I was open to taking children of all ages but decided after a few years that we only wanted babies up to 2 years old. During my time of fostering I adopted one of the little girls who we were fostering. I am still fostering now but there are very few babies needing fostered because they are far more often using kinship and going to their own family. I don't have a foster baby just now and I feel empty and lost.

4. I went to the social work office in Milngavie and I was given forms to fill in to become a foster carer. My husband and I went through the forms and started the process. We went to quite a few classes and met other people who were carers and they explained to us the reality of what fostering actually meant. At some point we were asked what age of children we wanted to foster and that was followed by asking if our house was big enough and suitable. It was all very general discussions. I think it was around a year from us first applying until we received our first child.
5. At some point someone came and checked the suitability of the house and I am sure they would have checked our personal backgrounds. I am not aware of them asking for any personal references but I never gave them any. Police checks were presumably done too.
6. When we were given our first foster child we were visited regularly by my allocated social worker from Milngavie social work office. She came often because we were new to fostering and had just been given a baby straight from hospital.

Training

7. I remember being given paperwork on the legislation and being told what we could and couldn't do. I don't recall being given any other specific training. I definitely didn't get any training in dealing with children who had been neglected, physically abused or suffered bereavement. Most of the kids I dealt with initially came from a background of drink or drugs. I might have been given some child protection training but I can't be sure.
8. My husband and I went to a couple of meetings in that year before our first foster child but to be honest I am not sure what the meetings were about. As far as I recall for discipline we had to use our own discretion. It was as simple as that. I can't recall the training I was given in the first few years. We started off just taking older children then decided to only take babies up to two years old so discipline training wasn't relevant for me. There was no different training for those that were taking foster

children on an emergency basis, short term or long term. There was no ongoing training once we had foster children. There were no other courses that we could have gone on.

9. There were no handbooks or guidance manuals when we started fostering but over the years, probably about fifteen years ago they were introduced and occasionally updated. They were fairly basic with information on how to interact foster children with your own children.
10. I think training in discipline has to be more relevant to the age of the children you are fostering. I also think that more information should be made available to the foster carer. When I get a baby it is important that I get told about the parents and more about the reasons the baby has been removed. For example I collected a baby from the hospital, which is quite often what happened, and I met the parents because they wanted to meet the carer. They were both drug addicts, and while this didn't alter my relationship or how I treated the baby, I think I should have known. Not all foster carers would have been able to cope with that.

Foster care arrangements

11. From the very start of fostering I considered myself to be employed by Glasgow city council. They are the ones who paid me. I chose in the very early stages that my preference was for short term placements as opposed to emergency and long term placements. Although I asked for short term foster placements it often didn't work out that way and I had foster children much longer than I should have.
12. When I started off I had a few older children but after less than ten years I decided to stop taking older children and asked only for babies. My own children didn't like sharing their rooms, their toys and their mum and dad with other children. They got upset because they got disciplined for things that the foster children got away with. My children resented them because of it. These foster children had already had a lot of trauma in their lives and I didn't feel it was right to add to it.

13. For the last 30 to 35 years I have only taken babies up to 2 years old. Occasionally the social work department have asked me to take other older children and they have used emotional blackmail to try and push me into taking them. I have had to be strong to refuse them but it really didn't suit me and at this stage I really need to think about my own needs.
14. I can't remember the name of the very first social worker who was allocated to me. The second one was Liz Kearny who has now retired. The one I have now is Georgina Currie. That is the only three I have had. I have had Georgina for more than ten years and she is brilliant. I have never been offered any other support by the local authority and if they had I would probably have refused.
15. I found that if I needed support from the social work department I could get it but quite often it was a last minute arrangement. If you were going away or needed someone to cover for holidays they might not tell you until that day so there was a lot of uncertainty. FWB and I always just got on with things and managed ourselves. Georgina is currently off sick otherwise I would have asked her to come with me to give this statement.
16. I do not consider fostering to be my profession, it is my vocation. I love fostering and it has been my life. A lot of people don't realise the practicalities of fostering and how difficult it can be. It is a 24 hours a day job.
17. I don't believe that foster carers necessarily need to have child care qualifications but they must have proven experience and show understanding. I think it should definitely be recognised as a profession as it is more than just a job. It is a position of responsibility because you are looking after someone else's life in your house.
18. Knowing the family background of the babies I am fostering is not essential but sometimes it would be good to know. This is probably more important to foster carers who are taking older children.

Financial Support

19. I really don't know how much I got from Glasgow city council when we first started fostering but I know it wasn't a lot. It was almost a voluntary service we provided. It barely covered the cost of keeping that child. Initially they might have given money for a new bed or bedding for the child or a letter to go to Mothercare where you could spend so much towards material stuff. When I started just taking babies I was given a letter to go to Mothercare with money to go towards a pram and a cot. I think that still happens today but I wouldn't get anything because I am supposed to have everything I need by now. If I was phoned and took a new baby today I might be given a discretionary payment of £100 to get an emergency supply of baby milk, nappies, and if required, clothes. If the baby had come straight from hospital the baby might just be wearing the clothes the hospital staff provided.
20. Nowadays I get £500 every two weeks for each child I foster from Glasgow city council. I don't get anything else. I feed, clothe and provide everything they need from that money. Half of that money is for the child's upkeep and the other half is my pay. If you don't have a foster child you used to be given a retaining fee of about £25 per fortnight so they didn't lose you. They stopped paying that years ago. I haven't had a child since September 2021 so technically I haven't worked in the last six months. If I don't have a foster child I don't get paid so cannot say that I get a guaranteed yearly salary.
21. I don't think it is fair that a parent gets given a new pram for a baby yet a foster carer who has children all the time gets nothing because we are given a wage. I think this should be reviewed and I think the monthly wage should be looked at too. It isn't a lot of money to provide and care for a child 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and everything that looking after a child entails.

The foster home and household

22. When I started fostering there was myself, my husband FWB and my three children in the house. I had two boys and a girl. They were ages five, seven and ten. Before any new foster child came I would tell my own kids that a child was coming who was needing help because they maybe didn't have a family of their own. I think they thought it would be nice to begin with and they were willing to help. They probably thought it was someone else to play with in the house.

23. The house was one of four in a block. It had an upstairs and a downstairs. There was a kitchen, living-room, five bedrooms, one bathroom and at the back of the house was a utility room. When we started fostering we had our loft converted into two bedrooms so that my own children didn't have to share. The house was clean and tidy because I like to always keep it that way.

Children fostered

24. I am not sure in total how many children we fostered over the years. It was a lot but possibly not as many as you think because we had children for two years, sometimes more. When my husband was alive we could have had two foster babies at a time but now that it is just me I only ever have one. We fostered one girl 38 years ago and we got her the day after her first birthday. We fostered her for 5 years then decided to adopt her.

25. At the start of our fostering I had three lots of older children before we decided only to take babies. In that period I only had eight children over the age of five. We had three children from one family and that was FVZ and That was the only family of three children that we took. Others were two girls aged about five and nine, then a brother and sister then one boy on his own. He was still at primary school and went to school by taxi. FVZ and didn't go to school. I don't think we had them long enough. I recall getting the phone call from the social worker asking if we could take three kids and we got them that day on a short

term placement. I can't even say how long we had them for. This was an exception to take three children and for the rest of the time my husband was alive we only took two.

26. It was always Glasgow local authority who contacted me to take children. I was never contacted by any other group or charity. I never had any older children for longer than six months.
27. I never changed any of the foster children's names.

Placement preparation

28. I rarely get a lot of notice that I am getting a child. If I am getting a new baby straight from the hospital I might get a call to say that the mother was in labour so I may be getting the baby within a few days. This seldom happened. The normal process for me taking a foster child would start with a telephone call from my social worker or a duty social worker asking if I was able to take a child.
29. If they called and for whatever reason I couldn't take the child I could refuse and they would have to find a placement somewhere else. I am not aware that they matched children with suitable foster carers. I think they had a list and if your name was on the top of the list you were contacted and asked.
30. When I agreed to take a child the social worker would arrive, usually that day with the child and be introduced to me and my husband. After being told any relevant information I would then bring my own children into the room and introduce them to each other then ask my children to show them to their room. Having my own children sometimes helped the child settle in because they had someone else and different toys to play with. The only bad point was the feeling of resentment from my children and because the foster child didn't want to be there.

31. Although I was supposed to be taking babies on a short term basis most were with me at least two years, in fact I think all of them were with me for over two years. Sometimes you would take a child and be told it was only going to be for two weeks but six months later I still had them. More recently all of the children who left me were adopted by families.
32. I took a wee girl once, about thirty years ago, and I found her to be unsuitable for me to look after. She was about two and had considerable special needs and wasn't suited for me. I cried most of the time when I had her. I kept her for a while then she went back home to her parents. I told the social worker afterwards that the girl wasn't suited for me and I wasn't happy that I got her.
33. When I was asked to take a child they would give me very basic background details on the child. The child would usually come that day and you just had to get on with it. Sometimes my own social worker might try and find more information in the next few weeks.
34. Around about six weeks later there would be a meeting where there was more paperwork given to me. Sometimes it could contain simple information that the child didn't like particular food or that it made them sick. I know we often didn't get the whole story because some children were taken into care so quickly that no one knew the full background. We were only told what they needed to tell us. A lot of other information only came to light much later on. I rarely got told about educational history or medical information.
35. I never got to see or read any of the social work records that were kept for the child. I often would have been given a care plan after it had been discussed what they were looking forward to achieve in the future. This was usually at the first meeting we had which could be six weeks after the child arrived. Sometimes it would be things like getting the parents into a bigger or better house. Sometimes it would work out but sometimes it didn't because the parents had disappeared.

36. I don't think anything was done for children to prepare them to come into foster care. If the child had been at other carers before they came to me I never got to meet these carers. I only once met the children who I was going to foster before they arrived and they didn't come to visit me. The first time I would see the child was when they arrived and came into my care. Pre visits just never happened and the child came to me on the day that I was asked if I could take them. The one time it did happen was a child who was coming over from Nigeria with their mother who was a nurse. She was coming to study and they needed someone to care for her child until she finished her studies. I met that child once a few days before he came to stay.
37. The older children who I had in the first few years were the hardest ones to help settle in although they quickly got into the actual daily routine of getting ready for school and things. The difficulty was that the foster children didn't want to be there and my own children didn't really want them to be there either. There was a lot of resentment.

Notice of Leaving

38. When a child is being removed from my care I am given a fair bit of notice. Years ago when a child was being put up for adoption and leaving my care I was given paperwork on prospective adoptees and asked to give my opinion on their suitability. I gave my opinion although I am not sure if anyone paid any attention to what I said. I don't have any input nowadays or any say what I think is best for the child.
39. I don't blame the social workers for the short notice I was given to take a child. I understand that these things happen very quickly. Almost all the children I fostered either went back home or were adopted so I cannot think of anything that could be done to improve or change that.

Daily routine and sleeping arrangements

40. The house had five bedrooms. My husband and I had one room. The two rooms in the loft were where my oldest son and my daughter slept. My younger son was in another room along with the other girl we adopted. The smaller room would have been for the foster child. I always tried to keep the foster child in their own room like all my own children.
41. When I had the older children at the start we would get up and have breakfast. If there was nothing planned the children would laze about for a while. If the children were school age they would get ready and head off to the school which was not far away. Those children would probably come back for lunch then go back to school. I would meet them after school or they would make their own way home. If they had homework they would do it or just colour in or play in the garden if it was nice outside. It would then be dinner time, bath time, television time and then bed time.
42. With the babies I would get them up, washed, changed, fed, dressed then probably in the pram and out for a walk. I love walking and would take them out hail, rain or shine. I might go to the shopping centre where I would meet a couple of friends.

Daily chores

43. The children weren't really expected to do any chores in the house. I was and am the sort of person that did it all. I was in the house a lot of the time so I just did it all.

Mealtimes

44. At mealtimes we would all sit together and eat whatever I had made. My husband was a chef but I cooked most of the meals in the house. If the children didn't like a particular food they were offered an alternative. This didn't happen very often because the children ate everything.

Bedwetting

45. Bedwetting amongst the children was very common. I put nylon sheets on the bed so they were easy to wash and hang out. I even had two girls who soiled their beds and decided for some reason to spread it on the walls. I tried asking them not to do that again but they didn't know any better. It was almost like the children who wet the beds were too scared to get up through the night to go to the toilet. There was nothing that we did that could have frightened them.

Washing and bathing

46. We had one bathroom and the children had free access. They could lock the door so had privacy if they wanted.

Clothes and shoes

47. Sometimes children came with clothes but that would have been unusual. If they came with nothing I might get a discretionary payment so that I could get them clothes quickly. Nowadays I don't get a discretionary payment and I would be expected to buy them clothes. On occasion, through the social worker, the parents were able to provide clothes which I might get within a couple of days. If they were the same size as my children they could share clothes. I did all the washing and ironing.

Leisure time

48. The children could go out and play football, walk or play on their bikes. We have a big garden which is fenced in so it was safe for the children to play. There were plenty toys, games and books for them to have in the house. There was a television in the kitchen and in the livingroom, and one in my bedroom. I don't recall taking kids to the cinema.

49. My own kids did clubs like the BB's and things like that. The older foster children I got probably weren't with us long enough to join anything like that. The older children we had were probably only with us a matter of months.
50. Some children came with personal possessions and they were allowed to keep them. We didn't give them pocket money, but we never gave our own children pocket money either. We got them treats. Sometimes my mum might bake and send over cakes. If we were out at the weekend we would get them ice cream or sweets.

Trips and holidays

51. We never really took many of the older foster children on holidays. The only time we did was when we took the three children, FVZ, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to Oban. We stayed for a week in a caravan.
52. Holidays when I first started were discouraged. You were not allowed to take the foster children away on holiday in case the parents wanted to see their child. This meant if we went away we would have to put the foster children into respite care. We weren't prepared to do that. Several times I have asked to take children on holiday abroad at my expense but the senior social work refused it. The last time this happened wasn't that long ago.
53. When the social worker makes the initial call to ask if I could take a child the second question they would ask is if I have any holidays booked. I would probably just say I hadn't and cancel my holiday otherwise they might refuse to give me the child. It is not fair on us or the child.
54. On the occasion that the senior social worker refused me permission to take the child abroad, I was friendly with the child's parents and I had discussed it with them and they were more than happy for me to take their child on holiday. I brought this up at my annual review that the parent was happy but my senior social worker spoke to the child's senior social worker and it was refused and that was the end of the matter.

Schooling

55. All the children I had who were of school age walked to school apart from one boy who got a taxi. I would have provided the children with their uniform. No one was with me long enough to change school.
56. The children weren't with me long enough to see any improvement in the child's education. I only knew what level they were at when they were doing their homework after school. I have no doubt that changing school when they came to me was bound to affect them. I had two girls, who were five and nine, and one time I was called to the school to take the younger one away because they deemed that she wasn't ready to start school. I never went to any parent's night.
57. Homework was done in the kitchen and I was there to help if they needed it. None of the children I ever had were old enough for me to teach them skills or to equip them for adult life.

Healthcare

58. When a child first arrived with me we had to take them to my doctors to get them checked over. I had to get them temporarily registered at my surgery as soon as possible to do that. They were taken for a medical before they left too. The medicals on arrival and when they left were basically to check for bruises or any other marks. I never had any issues health wise in relation to any of the foster children. Any time I went to the doctors I would take the child's blue book where they would record things. If this was before the blue book was given to us I would record things in the diary I had been given. The social worker would be able to see this diary and the blue book when they wanted.
59. I didn't register the children immediately for the dentist because most were there for such a short period.

Christmas and birthdays

60. I don't remember having any of the older foster children over Christmas. At birthdays I would get children a cake and presents but I don't remember this happening for the older ones.

Discipline

61. My way of disciplining children would be to shout at them. Generally I talk quite loud anyway and I would shout at my own kids exactly the same. I never smacked a child. Before I came to give my statement I asked my children if they had ever seen me smack a child. They more or less all said the same thing that I smacked and shouted at them but never smacked the foster child. My own children resented this too.
62. I was never given any advice or guidance on disciplining children or how to manage their behaviour. The worst I would do would be to deny someone a cake after tea or something like that. I don't even remember doing that. The only time I can remember something that really upset me was when one foster boy stole money from me. I didn't punish him but I probably spoke to him for a long time and tried to get through to him how wrong what he did was. I never sent children to their room if they were naughty and I didn't ground them.
63. I never recorded any discipline issue in the blue books because I don't remember there ever being an issue where I had to discipline them.

Relationship with foster children

64. I think I had a good relationship with all the children I fostered. I always felt sorry for the children because of their background and how their lives were so different from mine. I wanted to give them a bit normality in their life. That was all I wanted to do. I did not have any real issues with any of the children I fostered. I probably let them away with far more than my own children.

65. Quite often I would try and show affection to the foster children but some of them didn't want it. I am not sure if this was just because they didn't want to be there or because they were not used to it.
66. The relationship between my children and the foster children was difficult. The foster children didn't want to be there and my children didn't want them to be there. It was alright for my children initially but they resented that I treated the foster children differently, and probably better than they got treated and they got away with more. I didn't really appreciate this at the time but my children have since told me. I don't think there were any major issues between the foster children and my own children. I treated the foster children differently because I felt sorry for them.
67. My husband FWB worked so wasn't in the house all the time. He was far more relaxed than I was about everything. He never shouted at the children.

Contact with family

68. If foster children had contact with their families it was usually very regular. Very early on after taking a child I would be advised whether the parents were going to be given access to the child and I would be told what the contact would be. They would get to see their child at the social work office. The child's social worker would come and pick the child up from my house and take them to their office or wherever. If the social work office was local I would be asked to take the child there. Very rarely did I have anyone visit their child at my house. It was discouraged and would only happen if I was happy for it. The foster children could also sometimes have contact with their siblings.
69. The foster child's parents wouldn't call me. The older foster children wouldn't call their parents from my house.
70. If it was a baby going to visit it's parents I would complete the book which went with the baby so the parents knew when the baby had been fed and the parent would complete it and sign it saying what they had done.

71. The foster child's social worker would usually keep the foster child up to date with any changes in circumstances at home or any developments in their care. It wouldn't be left for me to pass on information like that. The social worker would do it when they visited the child.
72. The foster child's social workers would listen to my views I had on anything I had an opinion on but I am not sure whether anyone actually took cognisance of anything I said.
73. I would like to see children being allowed to have more contact with their families although I know it isn't always possible because of shortages of staff. Some carers, like myself, have offered to make contact with the families and arrange the contact between the foster child and their parents. This would cut out the social worker from being involved and taken from other duties. The social workers don't like this and I can understand why because there has to be someone official representing the social work department.

Siblings

74. I only ever had one group of three siblings. That was FVZ [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I have also had two sisters and another time a brother and a sister. If any child who I had fostered had a sibling not in care or in care elsewhere then arrangements would be made for them to see each other. It would be similar arrangements to how the foster child met their parents. I didn't experience any occasion when a foster child met another sibling without the parents being there.

Visitors

75. The child's social worker's visits to my home to visit the foster children were quite sporadic. Some social workers were better than others. Some were good at keeping the children up to date with what was happening at home and some weren't. I was never asked to try and encourage the foster children to contact their parents. It was a fairly standard understanding that children would want to wherever possible.

76. I think foster children's social workers should visit the child, or at least make contact by telephone, at least once a week. When their social worker visited I would always try and leave the room to give them peace although sometimes they would go out for a walk or they would be taken to MacDonalds.
77. The foster child's social worker would often have a chat with me. It was usually a fairly general run of the mill chat. I would be asked how the child was settling in, and if they have said much about their parents, things like that. Sometimes, but not very often, they chatted with my own children.
78. Over the years I have always had very regular visits from my social workers. I am contacted just about once every week. My current social worker, Georgina Currie, is amazing and superefficient. She does regular spot checks on my house and unannounced visits. She sometimes phones me on my mobile and if I am out she tells me she is at my door looking for me. I think they do unannounced checks twice a month. She would come in and check how clean and tidy the whole house is. She doesn't bother going upstairs now but she has a good check. She would have a chat with me too and try and establish if there were any issues. My social worker often chatted to the foster children but I was usually present. No one else came to inspect my house.
79. I think there should be more unannounced visits on foster carer's homes. Kids tell stories but children should be listened to although I know that the social worker's job is really difficult to ascertain what is the truth.

Review of care/placement

80. Meetings took place weeks apart to review the child's progress and what was happening at home. These meetings often took place in my house. Decisions were made then as to whether the child would stay with me or be allowed to go home. I didn't really have any say in relation to a foster child's care plan.

81. I went to some children's hearings with a foster child. I would be asked very general questions about the child's care, and how they were when they had contact with their parents and how they were afterwards. These were to help decide the moving on plan for the child. I was restricted what I was allowed to say. It happened to me before when the foster child's social worker at one of these hearings said the child was ready to move on. I didn't think they were but it wasn't my place to say anything. The children weren't usually present at these hearings. I don't think the children were given the full update from these hearings and they were given a watered down version.
82. Sometimes the children's views were sought at the hearings and the child, depending on their age, may be asked to write a statement or their social worker would do it on their behalf. They had to say whether they wanted to remain in foster care or go home. I don't think anyone listened to what they wanted. The children always wanted to go back to their mum and dad.
83. Children should be told honestly what is happening to them. I know some children can handle more information than others but I think you have to be honest
84. I have never given up a child fostering with me. I think it is so wrong to move children about when they are relatively settled anywhere. It is wrong to move a child from one carer to another and another and so unsettling for the child.

Records

85. We were given a diary and told to keep it up to date. No one sat down and explained what to write. I think it was fairly basic what we all wrote in this on a daily basis. If anything happened out of the normal routine I would contact my social worker and let her know. My social worker would be able to see the diary when she wanted and I suppose the child's social worker could read it too and might bring it up at a meeting. When the foster children came to me, at the six week meeting I would usually be given a blue book for the child. This was their record. Quite often the child had left

before I got the blue book. It might mention who the child's health visitor was, what school the child attended and any special dietary requirements.

86. The blue book was used to record anything in relation to that child. When they left the blue book went with them. It would be given to the child's social worker.
87. The system with the blue book has changed. There are now two books. One is a red book and one is blue. The blue book still stays with the child. The red book is almost a duplicate of the blue book but I hold on to that.

Moving placement

88. Before a child left my care I would be told by my social worker what was happening and when the child would be leaving. Depending on the age of the child I would sit them down and explain what I knew to them and what the next stage was. The social worker may have already done this. I wouldn't meet with the subsequent carers or parents if they were going home. The reason most children would go back home would be that the parents had sorted out whatever the reason was that the child was in care for and everything was back on track.
89. The only time I met the people who were taking a child from my care was if the child was going to be adopted. This happened over a week when the children got to meet the people and they get to know each other.
90. I wasn't usually kept up to date with how things were going with the child once the child left me. On the odd occasion my own social worker might hear something through the grapevine and I might be told by her that everything was going well or that the child was back in care.
91. The children that I fostered were never consulted in advance of the decision for them to move. I never kept in touch with any of the older children after they left my care because they went back to their parents. I did keep in touch with a few of the babies

as they grew older. Some have asked to meet me when they turned sixteen looking for information on their childhood. I never push to have contact with foster children who have left my care. I think they should get on with their new life. It is nice if they want to keep in touch but I understand if they don't.

92. When a child was leaving my foster care I prepared an album of photographs and a keepsake box with things like their hospital tag and anything else no matter how small. Even things like tags from Christmas presents given to them by their parents. I thought it would be nice for them to look back on.
93. The child was not really prepared before they left my care. Unless the social worker told them, I would just sit down and explain to them that it was time for them to leave and tell them where they were going. I would help them pack their toys and stuff and we might have a special tea on the night they are leaving or make a special cake just to give them a nice farewell 'do'. As a thank you to my own children I used to take them out for a Chinese meal after the foster child had left. I only did this for the older foster children and not for the babies, and it was when my own children were living at home.
94. None of the foster children with me ever had the option to continue to live with me. It wasn't like that.
95. Most parents of the foster children don't like foster carers for what they are. Even the babies mothers don't like us. I think it is because they think that we are better than them because we do a better job looking after their child than they do. It only changes if I ever meet them and they see that I am a normal person. Quite often the parents didn't get to meet me especially when there was drink or drugs involved. Even at meetings arranged by the social work department the parents didn't really get the chance to know me.

Complaints

96. If I had any complaints about the service of the local authority or any aspect of the child's care I would speak to my social worker who was my first port of call. In all my time fostering I have never complained. I should have complained when I wasn't allowed to take a girl on holiday and the girl's mother was happy for me to take her but I didn't complain.
97. I am not sure if anything should change in relation to the complaints process. There is a way of complaining just I never used it. I am not sure if anyone would have listened if I had complained and in any case it could cause an atmosphere if I have to continue working with this person.

Convictions

98. I have no criminal convictions at all. Likewise I have never had a complaint from a parent or child in relation to any time when I have fostered children.

Allegations of abuse

Awareness of abuse

99. I never saw anything or any sort of behaviour that I could have considered to have been abuse of any foster child.

Reporting of Abuse

100. If a child had any issue I would like to think that they would speak to me about it in the first instance. If they were unhappy about something in the foster home they would probably speak to their own social worker. When they visited, their social worker would probably always ask if everything was alright or if they had any issues.

I am not aware of any child ever raising any issues or concerns about abuse of any kind within the foster home. I am not aware of anyone else reporting any concerns about the children in my care. We had two girls at one point and they told me about some horrific stuff involving their family. I passed this on to my social worker who dealt with it but I never heard any more about it.

101. There was probably a section in the handbook about the reporting of abuse by children or other members of the household or any other person in the handbook that we were given. It never happened in my house so it never affected me. The handbook was updated over the years but I don't actually have a handbook now.
102. I never saw anything which I think should have been reported. There were occasions when at meetings with the foster children and their parents, the parents were under the influence of drink or drugs. I think the social worker might have just ignored it at the time because they had weighed up the potential risk against the damage to the child of stopping that meeting. I think the child's needs outweighed any other considerations.

Allegations of abuse – no criminal conviction/Reporting to police/criminal proceedings/ Prior statements

103. I have never been the subject of any other complaint in relation to alleged abuse of foster children. I have never given any form of statement to the police or to anyone else about foster care.
104. The only time I had ever had police in my house was in relation to a cot death that happened in my house. The child was one of two twins and it was about thirty years ago. The baby was only four months old and we had him from birth. I went to the funeral service which was lovely and the mother invited us back to a pub for a drink. I was horrified that they wanted to drink under those circumstances but I suppose that was the way she coped with it. The other twin stayed with me until it was adopted around the age of two. For a long time after the death the surviving twin was on monitors to make sure it was okay.

105. Immediately after that cot death I didn't think I wanted to take any more foster babies. I still really wanted to foster so I persevered. After the death of the baby I never received or was offered any kind of support or counselling by the local authority. I did get involved with the Scottish Cot Death Trust to help raise funds. My social worker also arranged for me to speak on the phone with another foster carer who had also had a cot death. I never met them. It was a horrible period and it took us a long time to move on from it.
106. I was never aware of any abuse of foster children in my care being reported to the police.

Specific Allegations

107. I have read the statement of FVZ who was FVZ when she was in my care. I remember her because she came with her brother and sister and that was the only ever occasion I had three children. I am not sure why I took three children because we weren't really geared up for that many. This must have been one of these phone calls where there was emotional blackmail from the social worker saying they were stuck and I was told it would only be for a couple of days. I must have borrowed a z-bed from my mother.
108. FVZ was always very quiet and serious whereas her brother and sister were very friendly and happy to slot into anything. FVZ was the oldest and she didn't want to be with us but the other two seemed to be quite happy to be with us and have a normal life. FVZ was always watching everything that was going on. The two younger ones may have been a little naughty sometimes but I have no recollection of FVZ ever being bad or naughty. FVZ was quite a bit older than the other two. I cannot recall who she shared a room with at my house.
109. In her statement FVZ says "I can remember that and started to wet the bed and the FWA-FWB started smacking them. I recall challenging FWA about the smacking and she replied that my dad had given permission for them to do it. I also remember seeing a piece of paper which showed that the FWA-FWB were getting

£300 a week for our care. The older daughter didn't want us there and she was nasty. I can understand why she was being nasty because they weren't getting any of the attention."

110. In response to FVZ [REDACTED] allegations I can honestly say I cannot recall how much money I was getting for fostering at that time. I know we didn't get cash at the time and the money went straight into the bank. I know that it wasn't a lot of money I was getting. It was barely enough to look after the child. The only time we ever got cash would be if there was a discretionary payment when children arrived, but you don't get that now.
111. I have no recollection of ever meeting her parents but I may be wrong. I don't even remember seeing them at any of the usual social work meetings. There is no way that any father gave me permission to smack their child.
112. I never gave FVZ [REDACTED] a sanction or punished her in any way when she was with me. I never abused any of these children. There is no way I smacked any of these children. As my own children have told me, I was more likely to smack them than any foster child. I wet the bed as a child until I was fourteen so I understand what it feels like and how embarrassing and distressing it can be. I grew up with it and it was never a big deal. There was a plastic sheet on the bed so the mattress wasn't even getting damaged. I would only have been sympathetic to any child that wet the bed. I might have shouted in exasperation but that is all.
113. In her statement FVZ [REDACTED] also says 'FWB [REDACTED] *wouldn't allow us to sit in the living room when he was home from work. He would just sit smoking his cigar*'. After dinner I would be doing the dishes and he might have gone into the living room to smoke. He didn't like smoking in front of the children. I don't even remember him smoking in the living room. She also mentions the pasta and I find it quite sad that was her recollection. We were Italian so pasta was regularly served at our house and it was part of our life.

114. The passage of time has not affected my recollection about what has been alleged. I have no idea why she would say the things that she has. I feel really sorry for her after I read her statement and how things turned out for her.
115. I agree that what **FVZ** has described would be classed as abuse especially because they were not my children. At that time I may have smacked my own children when it was legal but I would never smack another person's child.

Helping the Inquiry

116. People need to listen, and by that I mean all agencies. They must listen to the carer of the child who have responsibility for that child 24/7 or to the social workers involved and they have to act on the information that is passed to them. In my experience carers are at the bottom of the pile and no one listens to what we have to say. I also think there should be independent people checking on children and workers to make sure things are being done correctly and any issues are identified at the earliest stage.

Other Information

117. I have been asked to talk at foster care recruitment events but I have refused because I think I would be too honest.
118. 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... **FWA**

Dated... 25. 4 - 22